

Statement issued by the Board of Management of Coláiste na Toirbhirte, Droichead na Banndan

As we move towards the bicentenary of Presentation education in Bandon, the Board of Management of Coláiste na Toirbhirte is pleased to announce the opening of an exciting new chapter in the history of our school.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) approached our trustees, CEIST, inviting Coláiste na Toirbhirte to begin a process of incremental growth that will see our school become a significantly larger, co-educational campus by the time we celebrate 200 years of Presentation education in 2029. CEIST has enthusiastically accepted the DES invitation and the Board of Management completely supports the decision. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has calculated that 300 extra places will be required at post-primary level in Bandon by 2025, and we, as a Board of Management, are looking forward to playing our part in ensuring that the best educational experience is provided into the future for girls and boys in Bandon and environs as we enter this period of growth in the school-going population.

The DES has offered this opportunity to our school for a variety of reasons, not least the school's reputation, earned over many decades, for providing a high quality learning and teaching environment, exemplary pastoral care, and top class facilities. This invitation also demonstrates the Department's confidence in the ability of the Coláiste na Toirbhirte community - management, staff, students and parents - to take on the opportunity of becoming a larger enterprise with all the advantages that this will offer. Girls and boys enrolling in Coláiste na Toirbhirte can look forward to an enhanced curriculum with a much broader range of subjects, expanded educational and sporting facilities, and a significantly increased teacher allocation and funding.

As the school grows over the next five to six years, change will be introduced gradually. Demand for school places is already challenging the capacity of the educational facilities in the town and we intend to be part of meeting this demand in an orderly and planned way.

This coming year (September 2021) will see minimal change, though we might expect to see some modest enhancement of facilities, the introduction of some minor curricular innovation, and the possible enrolment of a small number of boys into First Year only. Over the course of the next eighteen months, the Board of Management will be working with our partners in education – staff, parents, students and the local community – together with CEIST, and the DES, on a detailed plan that will prepare us for the arrival of increasing numbers of young girls and boys over the coming years. The Department has committed itself to an extensive capital funding programme and to increased staffing as the school grows over those five to six years.

Our school is a community comprised of students, teachers, support staff and parents. We are embedded in our local community whom we serve. In responding to the future needs of the community, we are willing to act positively and plan for the change to co-education which will benefit everyone. While significant change of this sort will bring challenges, the Board of Management has absolute confidence in the capacity of the school leadership team and of the teaching and support staff of Coláiste na Toirbhirte to embrace this wonderful opportunity.

We can assure our school community that one thing in particular will very definitely *not* change: our ethos, based on a near 200-year tradition of Catholic education and grounded firmly in the teachings of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters, will remain unchanged. In many ways, we are, in fact, going back to our roots. When Sister Catherine O'Neill arrived in Bandon in 1829 to begin her work, she stated her mission as being to provide the girls and boys of the town with an education that would nurture both mind and soul, and this helps to guide our decision making today. Indeed, our School Mission Statement states that “we dedicate ourselves to the ongoing development of the school” through developing “the full potential of each student” and to achieve this, the school “... seeks to provide a broad and balanced curriculum suited to the needs of each individual and the demands of a changing world.”

The Board of Management whole-heartedly supports CEIST's decision to change the school's status to a co-educational model and looks forward with tremendous enthusiasm to the exciting times ahead. We also look forward to working with the DES and, even more importantly, with our partners here in our own school community in realising our ambitious plans for Coláiste na Toirbhirte.

