

## **New era beckons for one of Nenagh's oldest schools as Killaloe Diocese and Tipperary ETB create a bright new future for St. Mary's Junior Boys' National School**

**St Flannan's Street school to become county's first Community National School as it begins the first phase of its journey to a co-educational, multi-denominational school which will cater for Junior Infants to Sixth Class from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 onward.**

**3rd December 2021:** A new era for one of Nenagh's oldest schools, St. Mary's Junior Boys' School, is about to dawn following an agreement between the Diocese of Killaloe and Tipperary Education and Training Board that will create Tipperary's first ever Community National School.

The agreement will pave the way for the reconfiguration of the 108-year-old all-boys school, which educated children up to first class only, on St Flannan's Street, to a co-educational facility catering for pupils all the way to sixth class. It will also provide a multi-denominational primary option for the first time for parents and students in Nenagh.

The decision is in line with the Programme for Government aim to establish multi-denominational Community National Schools across the State by 2030; the move to increase the plurality of school types is supported by the Irish Episcopal Conference to reflect the more diverse society emerging in Ireland. This is a pilot divestment project, the lessons from which will inform future such projects.

The ethos of the Community National School will be based on the core values of the ETB Excellence in Education, Respect, Care, Equality and Community.

This decision shapes the future of the school in the midst of an evolving landscape for primary education in the town, with both St. Mary's Convent Primary School and C.B.S. Primary School Nenagh becoming co-educational schools, also from September 2022. This includes the C.B.S. Primary also taking in junior infants for the first time.

A process is now underway to transition the school to a Community National School that will operate in a close spirit of partnership with staff, parents, the Diocese of Killaloe and parish of Nenagh, public representatives and other stakeholders.

Announcing the decision, Chairperson of Tipperary Education and Training Board, Councillor Roger Kennedy, said, "Tipperary ETB has a strong record of partnership with the three dioceses of the county, including Killaloe. The reconfiguration of St. Mary's Junior Boys' National School into Tipperary's first Community National School very much reflects that and has been achieved in a spirit of cooperation. There's such a proud history at the school, which gave so many boys in Nenagh their first experience of education over the last century and more, so Tipperary ETB is delighted to come on board and ensure that this success story is continued in the years ahead.

Chief Executive of Tipperary ETB, Bernadette Cullen, said "The school has operated with great distinction over the years, and this is going to be another proud moment for it as it becomes the first Community National School in the county. We are now looking forward to creating something very

special that will build on all that's great about this school already and turn that very much to the future, providing for the wider and fully diverse educational needs of the town and community."

As Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan said: "As patron of the school, we are very proud with what has been achieved at St. Mary's Junior Boys' National School since it was founded in 1913. We firmly believe that its evolution into a Community National School will enrich the educational offering in Nenagh as it becomes a co-educational and multi-denominational school catering for students from junior infants right up to sixth class for the first time.

"Separate to the positive impact it has on educational choice in Nenagh, the move aligns with the wider reconfiguration happening in the primary school sector nationally. This school will now have its own special place in that mix, and we are delighted to have partnered with Tipperary ETB in this divestment project to provide this new multidenominational option for parents and students."

Said Board of Management Chairperson Miriam MacGrath: "We have reflected on the possible options for St. Mary's Junior Boys' National School in the context of the changing primary educational landscape locally and societal changes happening over recent decades. We've put the children at the centre of this and looked at it through their lens and believe that this is the best way forward for them. It does a number of things, not least that it creates a much needed co-educational and multi-denominational educational option in Nenagh. That's only right in the much more diverse society that we live in today. The fact that it will also now continue right up to sixth class means there's added continuity, which parents and pupils will also welcome."

Added Ms Cullen: "We see this very much as a new chapter for the school. It will continue to build on the excellent standard of education in the school, will recognise and celebrate its religious background but, at the same time, be proactive in celebrating and recognising other beliefs and, indeed, none at all. School Principal, John Gunnell, said" There's going to be an underpinning of the ethos of the school; celebratory of all, a place where every child that comes here is welcomed. That's an ethos that will be essential in the formative years of these children's lives and will prepare them for the more diverse world that they are stepping out into." John looks forward to leading the school through this period of transition continuing to serve the people of Nenagh for many years to come.

Further information is available from the school or Tipperary ETB.