

The Trustees present their report, year ended 31st July 2010.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

The School is a charitable company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 6 June 1932. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which sets out the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

Recruitment and Training of Trustees

The Directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law. The School elects its Trustees by a process of nominations from existing members with particular emphasis being placed on the nominee's personal competence, specialist skills and local availability. The School aims to ensure that a very comprehensive range of skills, knowledge and experience are represented within the Board. New appointments can be made at any time throughout the year and are then approved at the next annual general meeting of the School.

New Trustees are initially appointed for a period of three years following which they retire by rotation at the annual general meeting and can then seek re-election for up to a further two terms of office. Trustees are inducted into the workings of the School, including Board Policy and procedures, at an introductory training session following their appointment.

Organisational Management

The Board is legally responsible for the overall management and control of the School and meets at least six times a year. The management of the School and the implementation of all Board policies are carried out by the members of the Development, Education, Finance, Health & Safety, Property Development, Charity Compliance, Remuneration & Nominations and Estates Committees. Committees all meet on a regular basis and subsequently report to the Trustees at each Board meeting.

The Development Committee is chaired by Mr Morris. The Education Committee is chaired by Dr Findlay, the Finance Committee by Mr Yacoubian, the Property Development Committee by Mr McAlpine, the Charity Compliance Committee is chaired by Mr McClatchie and the Remuneration & Nominations Committee by Mr Currie. Miss Anderson represents the Trustees at the Health & Safety Committee. In addition, the Estates Committee is chaired by Mrs Wallace, the Depute Rector and Business Manager and is attended by the Chairman.

Each committee is comprised of Board members, the Rector and members of the School management team. The day to day running of the School is delegated to the Rector and his management team.

The School is a participating member of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, the Headmasters' Conference and the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools.

Group Structure

The School has two non charitable wholly owned subsidiary companies, St Columba's School (Developments) Limited and St Columba's School (Construction) Limited, both of which are non-trading. The Board members of these companies are also Directors of the School.

Risk Management

The major risks to which the School is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed and systems or procedures have been established to manage those risks. Any perceived changes to the risks facing the School and the company are considered at every meeting of the Trustees.

Objectives of the Trustees

The principal objectives of the Trustees are to advance the formal education of children and young people in the West of Scotland to high academic standards in a manner which optimizes the opportunities of individual pupils to develop every aspect of their characters and prepares pupils for the responsibilities, challenges, obligations of citizenship and (without compromising the company's commitment to high academic standards or the company's financial well-being) to adopt admission policies and promote bursary schemes designed to make places available to the widest practicable cross section of children and young people.

In pursuit of these objectives, the School aims:

- to encourage and assist the company's staff and pupils to participate in the wider educational community in Scotland and elsewhere; and
- to encourage and assist staff and pupils to participate in charitable and community service activities.

WORK AND ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES DURING THE YEAR

The School as a Charity

This session saw the successful achievement of the Board's aim to double the money spent on Bursaries and Financial Support. New guidelines and codes of practice had been drawn up by the Charity Compliance Committee and approved by the Board. A sub set of the Charity Compliance Committee met to decide upon awarding assistance as required by the applications being made. The larger Committee was still retained, however, to consider subsequent alterations and refinements of our procedures in the light of experience and to monitor progress. The Board was delighted that we were able to assist the enhanced numbers who, without such help, could not have been pupils at St Columba's. The difficult current economic circumstances, with the consequent need to keep fee increases to a minimum, limit the scale of the increase in bursary money we can make available but the Governors are determined to do all in their power to further develop this key part of their strategy.

The Trustees are also delighted at the continuing engagement of the School with the local community. First, in a small village with limited facilities the School is pleased to share its facilities. Regular use currently is made of the School for evening classes, along with the Astro turf pitch and the Games Hall for sporting activities. In addition, this year saw the biennial Art Exhibition which provides a venue for pupils, staff, evening class students, professional and local artists to exhibit their work. Secondly, Community Service sees a major impact on the locality. With staff support, 129 pupils were actively involved in this enterprise. Thus, pupils undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award usually carry out their service in the local area; it has been said that a visit to a local voluntary group or youth organisation will almost certainly lead to meeting a pupil from St Columba's. Further afield, pupils and former pupils have worked on challenging projects abroad, helping remote and impoverished communities. Three pupils volunteered in Nicaragua and Ghana during the summer break. Two senior pupils also held posts as young

ambassadors for Save the Children.

Music plays an important part in the School's charity and community endeavours, whether it is a fundraiser or a special occasion. This Session a number of School choirs sang at external events; such as Paisley Abbey as part of the Accord Hospice's Annual Carol Service and in Princes Square for local charity Quarriers. The Pipe Band played at Port Glasgow Remembrance Day Parade, Bridge of Weir Leatherworks with HRH The Princess Royal, Quarriers' Homecoming Event, and a number of other local occasions. Members of the community were entertained by the Pipe Band at its 'Festive Favourites' outdoor village performance and by those contributing to the School's Annual Silver Tablet Concert.

This year, as in other years, there has been much time spent in assisting and raising money for charities. Over £7,000 was raised for a variety of different appeals, ranging from Erskine Hospital and Quarrier's, locally, to Chinese Earthquake Victims, internationally.

Governance Issues

At the AGM, Mr Hugh Currie retired as Vice-Chairman, having served a six year term. Mr Currie was re-elected as a Trustee and Mr Tom Anderson was elected Vice-Chairman in his place. However, he and Mr Ward, who was re-elected as Chairman, both signified that they did not wish to serve the full three year terms and the Board accepted that replacements would be needed before then.

As well as the developments to the Charity Compliance Committee discussed above, the Session saw another committee change and develop its functions: this was the Remuneration Committee. It was decided that the members of this committee should also sit as a new Nominations Committee. This committee should have the function of consultation and then nomination of proposed new Governors to the Board for its approval. While the process of selection is open to further discussion and modification it seemed to make for better governance to remove the initial process from full Board meetings and give greater transparency with this more formal procedure.

The organisational change to our administration of the creation of a Business Manager has allowed a number of improvements in the way the Board operates as well as creating more efficiencies in the management of the School, such as following up late payments of fees, running our Bursary programme, overseeing refurbishment and maintenance work in the School and general coordination of non teaching functions. In this context, concerns mentioned in last year's report about fee debts in a time of economic difficulty have continued. However, past debts have been recovered, mechanisms tightened and we have been much more successful in tackling problems early, thus reducing financial damage. We are aware that the burden of fees is a very real one to parents, many of whom have seen pay freezes in the last two years, and in setting Fees for 2010 – 2011 the Governors sought to keep the rise as low as prudent. (An effect of the changes in jobs related to the new Business Manager was that Health and Safety became the remit of one designated member of staff and this has proved a successful development.)

Estate and Property

The Board was delighted to sign Heads of Terms with the Duchal Estate during the year for the possible purchase of land across Gryffe Road from the Senior School. This possible purchase had been under discussion for over a year and was alluded to in the previous Annual Report. The Duchal Estate has, throughout the negotiations, been insistent on confidentiality and required the Trustees to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. This secrecy made for difficulties when parents and others were asking the Governors for a statement on building plans. It was a great relief when the agreement was signed and a statement could be made. There are still many hurdles to be overcome, not least because the land lies in the Green Belt, but it does have huge potential for the

school and preliminary views from planners, local politicians and community groups have been favourable.

At the end of the school year Page/Park were chosen as our architects, after competitive interviews, and the planning process begun. Meanwhile the Board and the School sought to do all possible to maintain and to further contacts with all relevant local groups and interests. At the same time the Board set in motion plans to work with the Parents' Association to enhance its profile within the School community and to develop the role of the Former Pupil Association. The quality of the publication 'The Columban' was seen as playing a very important part in fostering knowledge and identification with the School by its constituents.

Other building work, mentioned in the previous Report, was the replacement of the Nursery/Prep building. It had been hoped to start this during the concluded Session but it became clear that another temporary structure was inappropriate and a permanent building was required. Plans were drawn up and consent obtained for the work to be carried out in 2010 -2011.

In addition to the extensive refurbishment of the lower corridor area in the Senior School building a large amount of necessary maintenance was successfully carried out on the estate during the Summer holiday period.

LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Once again the School achieved outstanding results in Public Examinations, by any measure amongst the very best in Scotland, and the Board recognises that this success is the outcome of a great deal of effort and dedication. In a time of economic constraint and real competition maintaining high academic standards plays a vital part in attracting pupils to the School. The production of a new prospectus this year, however, was seen as a necessary adjunct to the way we market ourselves.

This year, as previously, the Board has tried to do all in its power to assist the School in maintaining, and even improving on, its high standards; seeking to support and encourage the Rector and Staff in their work and, wherever possible, providing the required resources. I was delighted that the School won re-accreditation from Investors in People (IiP), following a successful return inspection - this demonstrates the School's belief in the need to nurture and encourage the abilities of all who work at St Columba's. Through its various Committees the Board continues to safeguard the financial, educational and general well being of the School. It seeks to exercise strict financial control, monitors teaching and learning, and probes the detail of examination results. It regularly reviews possible risks facing the School and is kept closely aware of Health and Safety issues. The wide variety of activities the School provides is reported to the Board and these activities are encouraged and supported. As in previous years, this Session saw regular review and discussion of the School's Improvement Plan. This year the development of the Curriculum for Excellence project was paramount; as well as developments in individual subjects work continued in both Literacy and Numeracy across Learning. Also under the Improvement Plan the School was concerned to further Baseline Assessment and develop the tracking of pupil progress via assessment, taking remedial action when this seemed necessary. Junior and Senior School liaison, which has been a focus in previous years, continued to be developed, as did initiatives for Able Pupils, Pastoral Care and Senior School Support for Learning.

2009-2010 witnessed the usual great variety of residential pupil trips. The widening of pupil experience was a key aim of these expeditions and, ranging from the majority of S1 visiting Paris in the October Half-Term to the leading School debaters travelling to Doha to take part in the World Championships, via SIV going to Lagganlia Outward Bound, their outcome was highly successful.

Individual pupils achieved highly in their participation at a national level, some 14 representing their country in activities ranging from Sport, to Music and Debating. Participation in activities at other levels continued to flourish: for example in sport, Charity work and fund raising, along with the massive programme with the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme – with as many as 22 pupils undertaking the Gold Award alone – bearing testimony to this. The Board sees this involvement in the wider community as essential, as it does with the way members of Staff contribute to society. As well as significant ongoing roles some individual members of staff play outside the School, which have been instanced in previous Reports, 20 members participated with the SQA in setting and assessing of public examinations at all levels, from Standard Grade through to Advanced Higher.

Following the Rector's visit to China, mentioned in the previous Report, the School hosted – through the British Council - a Chinese Assistant this Session. The role of Miss Li was to further the awareness of Chinese culture and language in both the Senior and Junior School; by the time she left in May much had been achieved. The Board was pleased to note another new development in the curriculum when St Columba's piloted the Scottish Schools' Baccalaureate in its first year as a qualification. (The member of Staff leading this was appointed as an external verifier by the SQA.) Finally, from this selection, the School's participation in the Eco Schools Programme has seen the Junior School achieve the Silver Award and both Senior and Junior School are well on their way to Green Flag status. The first Eco Week was held in the School, marked by the visit of Patrick Harvie, the Green Party MSP.

Priorities for the Board of Trustees during the School Year 2010-2011 are:

1. To continue to develop our successful bursary scheme which is allowing us to admit and retain pupils from a wider economic background than in previous years and to increase the money we allocate to this fund as far as current fee constraints will allow;
2. To continue to further the involvement of Pupils and Staff in society and education, both locally and nationally;
3. To maintain progress on the acquisition, gaining of planning permission for, and development of the land from the Duchal Estate required for Senior School building;
4. To continue the refurbishment of the Duchal Road site as finances allow;
5. To continue our review of our governance and appoint a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
6. To maintain our links and improved relations with the community and local bodies, such as the Community Council and Civic Trust;
7. To enhance the Parents' Association and Former Pupils' Association, to build further our data base and other necessities for successful fund raising in the future, in order to assist us in bursary awards and building plans; and
8. While pursuing the above, to always keep in mind that the primary purpose of the School is to advance the educational experience of our pupils, whatever the economic environment.

On behalf of the Board

Dr D Ward
Director

25 January 2011