

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Sligo Sudbury School



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## FOUNDER'S STATEMENT

This has been a challenging year, but adversity has created opportunity for learning, and helped strengthen our burgeoning community.

We began the 2019-2020 academic year with thirty students - double the number we had in September 2018. This achievement is testimony to the need for alternative forms of education, and to the dedication and capability of our staff.

We increased our staff numbers to nine, recruiting two new members to the team. Despite the withdrawal of government funding through the Tús programme, these are all paid positions. We have been joined by interns from IT Sligo and students on their transition year from Mercy College, Sligo and Summerhill College, Sligo, maintaining a student staff ratio of 6:1. The withdrawal of the Tús programme had a considerable impact both financially and morally. Our status as a non-aligned school prevents us from securing grants both from the Department of Education, and from community based supports.

We extended an invitation to the Education Minister to come and visit us; we hoped to interest them in our methods, and seek avenues for funding. Unfortunately they were scheduled to visit in March; the COVID pandemic causing their cancellation.

We physically closed on March 13th, in line with government recommendations to all schools. Zoom school was initiated, and ran successfully to the end of the academic year with a skeleton staff. We operated a four hour schedule five days per week, maintaining social interaction for the students, supporting their emotional and mental health, and offering a sense of routine for those who needed it. The student body helped form the content of the sessions, and the breakout room function enabled smaller groups of children to hang out and play together as they would at school.



# FOUNDER'S STATEMENT

Since our return to in-person school in March 2020 we have continued to strengthen our ethos. The fundamental principles of respect, consideration, freedom and responsibility have been investigated in workshops titled - 'consent', 'freedom and responsibility', aimed at building awareness about where one person's freedoms end and another person's begins, and 'Narrative 4 empathy programme' aimed at developing empathy, listening skills, and a deeper understanding of difference. Our justice system has continued to evolve and develop with lots of interesting and thought provoking conversations around the impact of adversarial vs restorative based systems. The weekly school meeting has been well attended, as students find their voice.

We have added our voice to that of nine other functioning, or prospective, democratic schools across Ireland. The Demed Conference over the weekend of the 9th/10th November 2019 saw the beginnings of a national umbrella organization that will offer support to member schools.

This mutual support extends throughout all of us involved in democratic education. We are fortunate to attract families who not only share our beliefs, but wish to learn more about the theories and principles upon which the school is based. We've instigated parents coffee afternoons, and a dvd and book lending library service to help facilitate thought and discussion. We hope to build on these strengths in the forthcoming year: increase our student numbers, promote awareness of the Sudbury model, move towards self-sustaining financial stability, and continue to support each other in learning and growing.

GAYLR NAGLE

Co-Founder and Chairman



# COMPANY DETAILS

**Name:** North West Democratic School

**Address:** Faughts, Dunally, Co. Sligo. F91 DR13

**Phone:** 071 9138810

**Email:** [info@sligosudburyschool.com](mailto:info@sligosudburyschool.com)

**Web:** [www.sligosudburyschool.com](http://www.sligosudburyschool.com)

**Company Type:** Company Limited by Guarantee

**Company Number:** 614393

**Charitable Reg Number:** 20200314

**CHY Number:** CHY 22181

**Names of Trustees:**

Gayle Nagle

Maura Duignan

Cath Stanley

Peter Symonds

Nigel Coen

Alannah Dawson

Jenny Deane (outgoing)

Eve Mc Searraigh (incoming)

**Solicitors:** O'Hare O' Dwyer Solicitors,  
Greenfield Road,  
Sutton, Dublin 13

**Accountant:** Andrea KIska

**Bankers:** Allied Irish Bank, Stephen St. Sligo



# MISSION

Sligo Sudbury School's mission is to provide children with learning spaces that value their choices and empower them to direct their educational journey towards self actualisation.

We believe that there are many approaches to learning and that each child can be supported in their chosen path. We are committed to providing an alternative model of education where children have **choice** about their learning, **freedom** to go about their business, and **time** to explore and create without pressure or constraint. We aim to safeguard an environment where autonomous, self-directed, intrinsically motivated learning can flourish.

Our vision is a world where a democratic education is available to all, empowering every child to choose their path, and to reach their full potential.



# VALUES

Our school is founded on freedom, trust, respect and responsibility. We trust in children's innate capacity to learn through their very own voyage of discovery and we respect their choices and rights as whole individuals. Through exercising their rights to choose and to go about their day in a peaceful way, children have an opportunity to learn how to afford others the same rights and how to negotiate the delicate interplay between individual's freedoms and their responsibilities to the community.

We **TRUST** that children's innate curiosity leads them to learn what they need to know.

We believe that everyone is entitled to **FREEDOM**. At Sligo Sudbury children are free from curricula and timetabled lessons and they have the freedom to explore self-chosen pursuits.

Children learn about **RESPECT** by being treated with respect and living an ethos that is respectful of self and other.

With freedom and rights comes **RESPONSIBILITY**. Through the School Meeting, collective decisions are made and each individual can participate in and take ownership of the school community and works toward attending to the needs of the self whilst conscientiously taking care of the needs of the whole.



# YEAR IN REVIEW

We doubled our student enrolments, growing from fifteen students in 2018 to thirty in 2019 to 40+ in August 2020. Of these, 10 families relocated to Sligo specifically to access this form of education for their children, demonstrating its vital importance in their lives. At the suggestion of the students, and with their help, we repurposed rooms, outbuildings, and the grounds to accommodate the increased numbers.

We attended the first Democratic Education Ireland conference, together with 9 other like-minded organisations.

We stabilized our budget, while maintaining our commitment to social inclusion through reserving 25% of our places for families on lower income streams.

We successfully navigated the challenges presented by the covid pandemic, moving our educational services online and laying off some staff temporarily (March - June 2020), and maintaining a sense of community through online meetups, book club, and check ins with students and parents. We rehired all of our staff members in preparation for our return to in-person activities in the new school year.

Fundraising activities were re-imagined with greater emphasis on social media, online fundraising platforms, and harnessing our loyal community of supporters. We are proud and honoured to have achieved all of this in our second year of activities.



## 2019 – 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### BUILDING ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

#### 100% ENROLMENTS

Our enrolment numbers increased by 100% on the previous year.



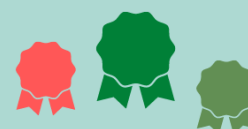
#### DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS 10



We participated in the 1st Conference of Democratic Education Ireland with 10 other democratic schools.

#### 25% SOCIAL INCLUSION

We ensured social inclusion by providing 25% of enrolments at a reduced membership rate.



#### EMPLOYMENT 9



We employed 9 part-time staff members, maintaining a staff:student ratio of 1:6

#### 75% ONLINE ACTIVITIES

We adapted successfully to meet the challenges of social distancing in our educational and fundraising activities.



### THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION



# YEAR IN REVIEW

We have continued to make improvements to the school site, extending play spaces and wilderness areas through removal of fences. We have improved heat and conditions indoors with wood burning stoves. These improvements ensure the comfort and safety of our students, and also provide opportunities for learning about responsible land use, energy consumption, and practical maintenance.

We enjoyed further publicity for our school and the democratic education movement with a featured article and photos in Image magazine, Dec 2019 and an interview on national radio with Dermot & Dave, Today FM, Sept 2019. High quality publicity enables us to reach a wider audience and open a public discussion about education.

We participated in the both the Engineering Fair and the Primary Science Section of the Science Fair at IT Sligo, learning how to solder and create electric circuits with MadLab, and analysing our use of plastics and its environmental impact. Other community engagement locally included a visit from the Garda Schools Programme, participation in the Model's PUNC programme for schools, and hosting TY students from local secondary schools.



## 2019 – 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### BUILDING ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

**10% GROWTH**

We reclaimed a derelict part of the site, increasing our play space outdoors by 10%



### COLLABORATION

**5**



Cultivating relationships with local businesses, schools, and cultural institutes embeds us in our community.

**2**

### PUBLICITY

We have maintained an ongoing presence in the local and national media as well as through social media channels.



### ACTIVITIES

## BESPOKE



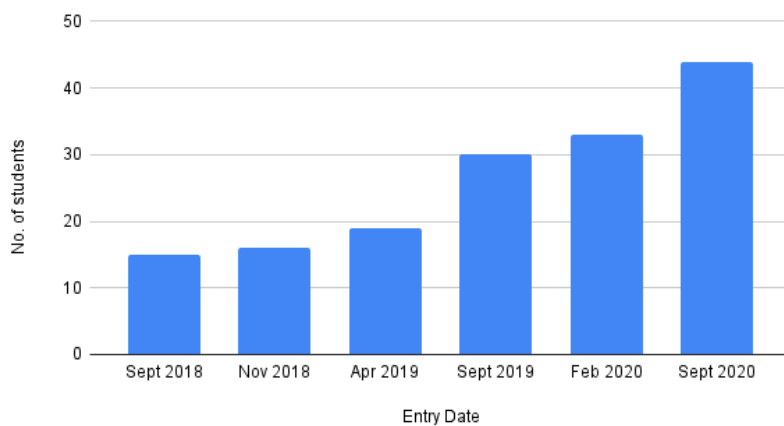
We successfully provided stimulating learning opportunities for our students to engage with according to their self-directed path.

### THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

# IMPACT

The continued steady growth in our enrolment numbers speaks for itself.

No. of students vs. Entry Date



Our ethos and school processes provide a safe space for children to explore the world around them in ways that are meaningful to them. We provide a sovereign space where children have time and space to find their voice, and the freedom to be agents in their own lives. The increasing number of enrolments demonstrates the need in our society for alternatives to mainstream education. The outcome of this educational alternative is enhanced wellbeing, children who are happy, respectful, trusting of their own abilities, resourceful, and confident in their ability to adapt to change.

The impact of this educational experience can have far reaching positive effects on children's lives and long term experiences, both professionally and personally.

We aim to provide a model of education fit for the future, where democratic choice and equal access are available to all.



# CHOICE

"Sligo Sudbury offers a polar opposite approach to what the boys had experienced in mainstream school. After speaking with them both individually, the aspects that they value most about school is the freedom it offers them to go about their day how they choose, the respect they receive and that they can have friends of different ages to themselves.

As parents we can see subtle differences every week which have amounted to huge positive changes for them over time. We have noticed a great change in their confidence to talk to adults, speak their mind and respect all others. They are so much more open to trying new things and have a more limitless attitude to the things they can do."

**Brona Carty and Padhraic Mulligan**  
parents of B, age 10 and E, age 8



# COMMUNITY

"Our experience at Sligo Sudbury School (our daughter is 6 and began in September 2019) has exceeded our expectations. J is thriving at the school, is extremely happy and content in the many facets of that environment, looks forward to going and leaves reluctantly, is developing complex relationships with a diverse selection of fellow students whom she seems to really enjoy, and is clearly learning at a great rate. Her confidence and social understanding grows daily. Not only is she offering us examples of her learning as diverse as astronomy, bread making, and Kung fu, but she also is talking about abstract ideas like fairness, respect, equality, community, and other such themes that root a Sudbury education. The democratic model of schooling and the underlying principle of self-directed learning has been a great experience for our daughter and we look forward to a long continuation.

In particular, I would say that Sligo Sudbury School is a very fine example of this approach to education. Not only are we very happy at J's experience but we also have great confidence in the management team, the board, and the truly excellent staff. The environs are wonderful and offer so much adventure to the students and the overall ethos and feel of the school inspires confidence, generates calm, and can only lead to an excellent educational and social experience for all the community."

Jaimie Carswell & Gwen Scarbrough, parents of J, age 7



# PLACE

"After a few months in mainstream education, we realised our 5 year old boy could 'get over' his hesitance, fear and dislike of the system he was in but we would really have to question at what cost to his happiness and confidence. He is our second child, and his older brother was enjoying mainstream schooling, so it left us in a state of uncertainty. However, having read about alternative forms of education, we knew our children would thrive more in an environment that promotes individuality, freedom of expression and a democratic governing policy.

We brought him to a meeting at the Sligo Sudbury School and he immediately connected with the place. He knew he had found his place and his tribe, and we followed his lead. He started in Sligo Sudbury a few weeks later. Before he started, his older brother asked him 'do you think they have 'Star of the Week' there?' He answered with a laugh, 'no, everyone is Star of the Week.' He understood before us that talents and skills should not be graded and measured but explored, that every child should have the option to explore those passions that matter to them and that having an equal voice matters. He thrived when he joined Sligo Sudbury; as a now 6 year old, his passion is still mud, playing tag, building dens and sometimes wandering indoors (though not often!). His older brother (8) joined him at Sligo Sudbury the following September and although he struggled with the idea of leaving his former school friends, it was his decision to try it and to stay. He really loves his new surroundings and has never looked back; the single biggest change we see in him is his confidence to speak to adults, to voice his opinion, to rationalise his decision making, to question the world around him and to be innovative. We have struggled ourselves with the idea of leaving the curriculum behind, but we can honestly say our children are learning fast and are inquisitive. Most importantly for us, in the midst of a world turned upside down in this pandemic, Sudbury offers a sanctuary of child centred normality and our children are happy."

Ailish and Brendan Flaherty  
parents of E, age 6 and B, age 8



# FUNDING

We are heavily reliant on private sources of funding as we receive no support or assistance from state or government sources. 91.8% of our funding this year came from membership dues and application fees. 8% of our funds came from fundraising initiatives.

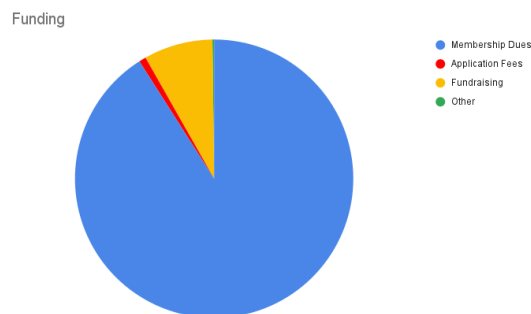
71% - human and material resources for education of our students.

8% - insurance

11% - premises expenses

10% - general operations and administration

Fundraising initiatives such as a sponsored cyclathon, and table quiz provide opportunities for the community to socialise and connect as well as raise essential funds. Initiatives such as this raised over €2,000. A fundraising campaign through online platform [GlobalGiving](#) was very successful, raising €6,000 in total. As we exceeded our initial goal of €5,000 we have secured a permanent place on the GlobalGiving platform. Regular updates on our projects and school development continue to be posted there to keep our donors informed on the impact of their donation and our work.



We are working with a dedicated team of parents and professionals to implement an effective fundraising plan over the next 3 years. This will include fundraising through private foundations, targeting high profile donors with an interest in social justice, youth advocacy, education and mental health; social campaigns; running camps during easter and summer breaks, and applying for grant funding.

As we have not been successful in obtaining financial support for our school through state or semi-state bodies, we will continue to self-fund through membership dues, and fundraising. We have approached the Minister for Education with an invitation to visit our school to discuss possible collaborations in the future, specifically funding research into self-directed education and democratic governance in schools. We believe this research would benefit staff and students across all forms of education.

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

The work that we have been able to do at Sligo Sudbury School would not be possible without the generous support and assistance of our benefactor and donors. We acknowledge in particular Beconsfield Properties, whose generous terms have provided us with essential stability in these early years.

Giving voice to each individual member is at the core of our work to improve children's lives through educational choice. We thank the more than 300 individual donors, corporations, institutions, and volunteers that supported Sligo Sudbury's work in 2019-2020. Supporters' gifts have ensured the stability of this nascent educational option for children in the North West of Ireland, enabling us to improve facilities and resources, and meet the needs of a greater number of students in order to grow a true lifelong co-operative learning culture for young people in Ireland.

In the next 5 years we aim to grow enrolments to 150 students and to expand our site and facilities to meet this growth and deliver our vision. We are creating an innovative, functional, creative and aesthetic space which will maximise the potential for the wide range of learning experiences of our school members, both in groups and as individuals, and which will enable the day-to-day application of our community's values of freedom, respect and responsibility.

We will establish an international centre of learning which will benefit young people and their families now and into the future. It will also be a pioneering institute for self-directed learning and its application, where parents, educators, researchers, policy makers and other interested parties can come to gain experience and knowledge of this model of education.



# ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

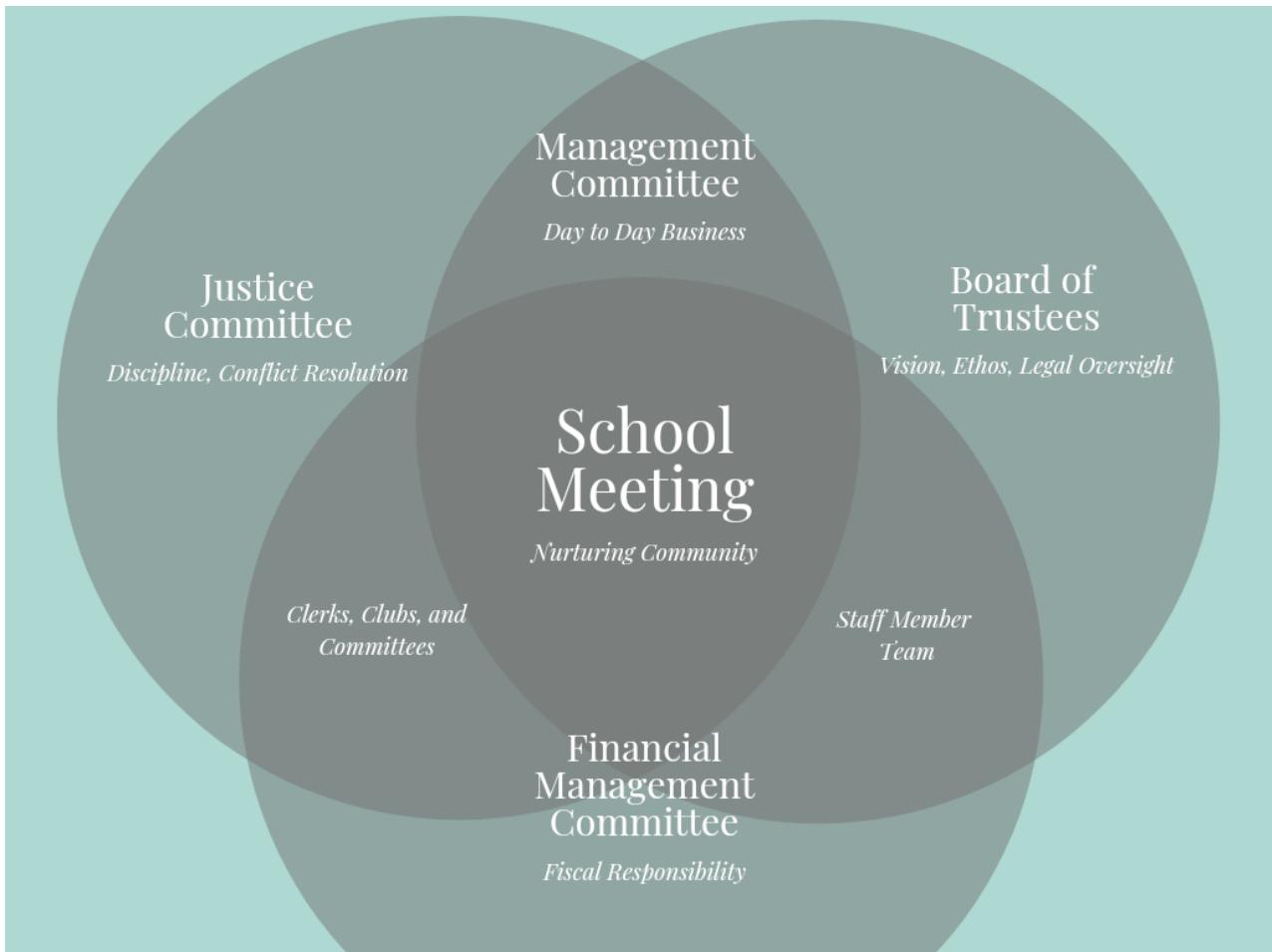
A democratic school refers to a school in which students are valued as capable decision makers and given a forum to exercise their voice and authority. At the Sligo Sudbury School, democratic process exists on a number of levels, as outlined below.

- The School Meeting is a forum in which community members take up challenges and problems, or make decisions regarding the daily life of the school. Students and staff members have an equal vote, enabling every person affected by the outcome to have a say in how rules are formed and decisions made. The School Meeting uses a majority voting system, with two separate votes, allowing time for the minority to voice opinions and concerns before a final decision is made.
- The Board of Trustees (BOT) is made up of members of the school and wider community. They are legally responsible for the oversight of the school's financial and employment practices. The BOT plays an important role in holding the vision and ethos of the School, staff review, fundraising, accounts, sustaining the business into the future and adhering to laws relating to Charitable Trusts. Internally, the BOT ensures that Sligo Sudbury School practices and policies are in line with the bylaws, mission, and core principles of the school and are up to date with Government guidelines and the general Laws of the Land. They consult external advisors as necessary. The BOT makes decisions by consensus.
- The Financial Management Committee (FMC) is responsible for managing the school's finances, to monitor all financial transactions of the school, manage the school's funds, make payments as directed by the School Meeting, arrange and provide support for the annual filing of Accounts, to prepare the School Budget and make recommendations to the School Meeting and BOT. It is made up of the Principal, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the BOT, and one staff member.
- The Justice Committee is responsible for taking care of disciplinary problems and infringements of the school's rules that require special consideration. It consists of at least two students and one staff member.
- The Management Committee of the Board are the Core Founders of the organisation and have been engaged in all matters relating to the establishment of Sligo Sudbury School since January 2017. They are authorised by the Board to deal with all day to day management matters of the Company. They consult the BOT and the School Meeting and share the workload and responsibilities with same.
- Staff Members also use democratic process in decision making during their weekly meetings.
- Clerkships and Committees are established when the School Meeting wishes to delegate specific responsibilities to one or more particular individuals.



# ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

The Board of Trustees, Management Committee, Financial Management Committee, Justice Committee, Staff Member Team, and the various Clerks, Clubs, and Committees all answer to the School Meeting, where each member has an equal say in decisions affecting the running of the school.



# STAFF

We are a staff team of nine, supported by student interns and volunteers.

The most important function of the role of staff member is to support student learning, act as mentors and guides, and provide the essential adult role models that young people need.

All staff dedicate their contact hours at school to student facilitation and project work, volunteering significant additional time outside of these contact hours to carry out the administrative and maintenance tasks necessary for the smooth running of the school.

Staff at Sligo Sudbury School are passionately committed to creating a respectful and rich learning environment for all children. Our team is strengthened by our democratic, collaborative approach to decision making, a focus on teamwork, and genuine passion for the work we do.

*"After seeing the struggles that children have within the school system in Ireland, suffering from anxiety and decreasing mental health, with very limited alternatives to education being available, I am delighted to be a part of the new Sligo Sudbury School. I am excited to be part of a team creating a respectful environment for children to thrive, self direct their learning and hopefully reach their full potential. Democratic education has always been something that I was intrigued by and after seeing the dedication, passion and commitment of the founders of Sligo Sudbury School, I am certain that SSS will have an important role to play in the future of education in Ireland."*

**Isabel Kuroczka, Staff Member since 2018**

# COMPLIANCE AND EQUALITY

## COMPLIANCE AND EQUALITY

North West Democratic School (T/A Sligo Sudbury School) is fully compliant with all relevant codes, is registered with the Charities Regulator, and is compliant with all relevant sections of the Charities Governance Code. The Financial Results for the period are set out in the Financial Report section.

## COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

We engaged with TUSLA to address discrepancies in government policy around the defined status of Independent School and will continue to collaborate with TUSLA in the future to work towards a recognition of Independent Schools as a valid and viable provision of education. We have directly addressed cultural conditioning around educational provision, the lack of choice available, the lack of acknowledgement of diversity in learning methods and how this impacts our young people, and the health and resilience of our society as a whole

We hold regular Open Days to promote our school concept and provide an opportunity for interested families to learn more. We host film screenings of documentaries on self-directed education, and have created a parent lending library to support parents' continuing education on the model.

We publish a monthly e-newsletter reporting on school activities. We have facilitated integration with the wider community through cooperation in teaching, learning, modeling or other educational purposes, including local professionals, Garda Community Liaison, IT Sligo, and The Model Art Gallery.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

Sligo Sudbury School welcomes every student who wants to be here and can thrive in our community, and welcomes families of every composition. We do not discriminate on any of the nine grounds outlined in the Equal Status Act (2000-2015) in the administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, reduced fee application process, and other school-administered policies.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

This statement covers the second full academic and financial year of Sligo Sudbury School and is therefore for the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020.

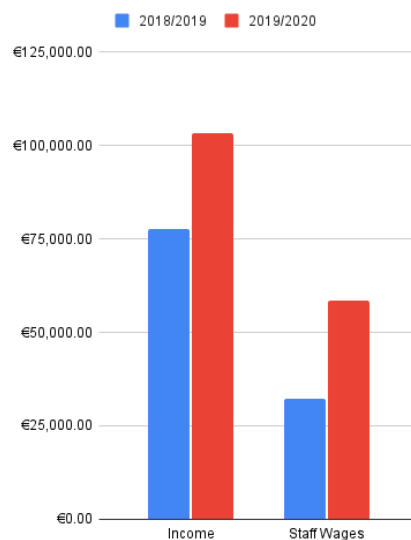
## INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIPS

The 2019/20 year saw a net increase in memberships to 30 (from 15 in 2018/19) which represented a solid growth on our first full year. While 2 students left the school, we enrolled 2 new students and had significant interest registered from additional families seeking to enrol their children in the 2020/21 academic year. We see this as an encouraging indication that wider community notice and interest in our offering is driving an increase in enrolments.

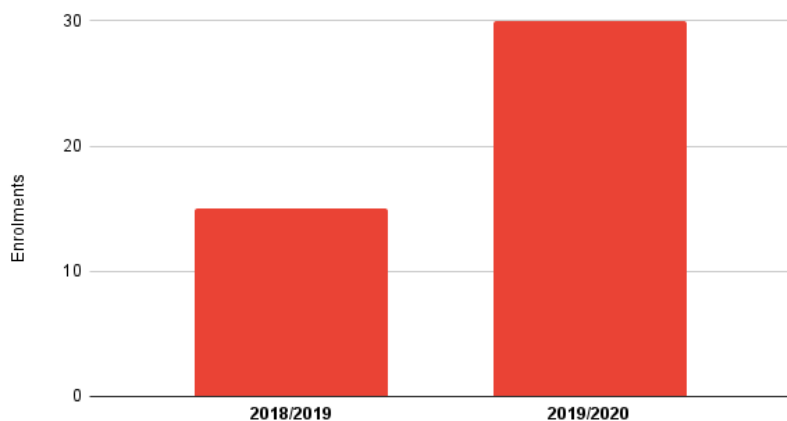
Notwithstanding the welcome increase in revenue, we still rely considerably on support from our benefactors and other donors, as well as the membership fees from our community and wider fundraising.

## REVENUE INCREASE BY YEAR

Total income in 2019/20 was €103,225 (up 32% from €77,722 in 2018/19), 92% of which was from membership dues. Fundraising amounted to €8,275 (8%) which was lower than hoped for, in the main due to the inability to hold financially rewarding summer camps as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.



## Enrolments by year



32%

revenue increase from 2019 to 2020

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## OVERHEADS

Insurance continued to be a considerable overhead at €6,952 with limited alternatives in the Irish insurance market to allow for competitive quotes. The school continued to invest in improvements in the facilities and amenities for our students as much as possible within budget, and this is reflected in a doubling of spend on premises expenses to €8,755. Other overheads such as electricity, printing and stationery, and events expenses etc. were slightly lower as a result of school closure during the pandemic, while others remained generally static. Total overheads excluding wages were €24,628 resulting in a net profit of €19,955.

## CHALLENGES AND LOOKING FORWARD

Fundraising remained a priority for the School in order to enable investment in facilities and resources for our community, and our ability to execute our fundraising plan for the year was significantly hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions. Thankfully we remained within a revised budget to break even, with the modest net profit above already accounted for in the following year's budget.

While disappointing to lose two of our students who had joined us from the start, we are confident that the extent of expressions of interest for enrolments from families in the northwest remains a strong indicator for sustainable and safe growth in our student numbers in the coming years.

We would like to express our deep thanks to our member families, our students and staff, volunteers and donors, and in particular our benefactors without whose support the 2019/20 year would have presented significant difficulties, and we look forward with excitement and optimism for the coming years.

## STAFF WAGES

The budget for staff wages was initially considerably higher than 2018/19 due to Tús funding no longer being available to us for staffing purposes. We also recruited an additional 2 staff members to reflect the growing student population and to meet the specific targeted needs of the community in terms of skill sets.

In total, and allowing for temporary lay-offs due to Covid-19, staff wages for 2019/20 totalled €58,640, up 82% from €32,165, a significant increase but within budget forecast and reflective of the need to invest in our staff now for the expected increase in student enrolments.



# CHALLENGES

## FINANCIAL

The withdrawal of Tus programme was a major drawback, impacting our bottom line considerably. Staffing costs is our greatest outgoing and cannot be compromised due to its essential nature. In addition, usual fundraising initiatives were negatively impacted due to covid pandemic restrictions on gatherings and events. We aim to meet these challenges through delivering a consistent, high quality learning environment which will drive enrolments and attract the attention of policymakers in Ireland.

## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Challenging the status quo presents inherent difficulties. Change is frequently met with resistance as it makes us question deeply held assumptions, and even implies criticism of how things are currently done. Education of policy makers, parents and the general public about self-directed learning is vital to the success of our vision. We invite people to question the nature and purpose of education, and consider how that needs to change in order to meet current needs of children, the economy, climate, and society. We aim to challenge the assumptions which imprison learning within the walls of a classroom by establishing a stable, realistic alternative to mainstream, and conducting research to gather a portfolio of evidence on the outcomes of self-directed learning and choice on the intellectual, creative, and emotional development of young people.



# COVID 19

## A UNIVERSAL CHALLENGE

As with so many other businesses and charities, Sligo Sudbury School was impacted considerably by Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns in early 2020. In recognising the impact on families, we put in place financial support measures which were approved by the Board of Trustees to accommodate any community members experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the restrictions, as much as our finances would allow. This resulted in a reduction of €6430.00 in membership fees received.

With the School unable to open during lockdown restrictions, the Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to temporarily lay off some of our staff to cut our costs in anticipation of continued restrictions, while maintaining an offering of virtual classes and activities daily online via Zoom to try to maintain community links.

Parents and students alike appreciated this extra effort on the part of our remaining staff members. Reproducing the self-directed learning environment with the spontaneity of chance encounters with learning was not an easy task but paid huge dividends in terms of community relationships, strengthening our bonds with each other at this difficult time.



# ASPIRATIONS

We are starting with 40+ students in September 2020 and plan to increase student numbers steadily over the next 5 years to reach between 120 - 150 students in 2025.

We plan to expand the school to accommodate this growth, by growing the site and buildings inline with student needs. We will increase the footprint of the school to generate more outside play area through clearing and repurposing land, and build to provide more adaptable space. An essential part of this plan is the purchase of the school site from our benefactor to safeguard the future of the school and continue to grow student numbers.

Our goal is to become a center of excellence and a model of democratic education in Ireland. We aim to offer training to student teachers and other schools in the implementation of self-directed learning practices in schools.

We will work together with other members to grow the Democratic Education Ireland to establish a voice for Democratic Education at policy level and lobby government to help fund this alternative form of education for those who wish to learn outside the traditional schooling system

We will continue to provide direct opportunities for families to learn about self-directed education through our outreach activities.

We will continue to provide an educational environment based on FREEDOM, TRUST, RESPECT, and RESPONSIBILITY for all children.





# EXPERIENCE.... WONDER

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# EXPERIENCE.... JOY

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# EXPERIENCE.... INDEPENDENCE

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TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS, WE  
HAVE TO HUMANIZE THEM AND  
MAKE EDUCATION PERSONAL TO  
EVERY STUDENT AND TEACHER IN  
THE SYSTEM. EDUCATION IS  
ALWAYS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.  
GREAT TEACHERS ARE NOT JUST  
INSTRUCTORS AND TEST  
ADMINISTRATORS: THEY ARE  
MENTORS, COACHES, MOTIVATORS,  
AND LIFELONG SOURCES OF  
INSPIRATION TO THEIR STUDENTS.

**KEN ROBINSON**

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Learning is about relationships  
with self and with others

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