

Maryknoll Convent School Foundation

AGM on 22 October 2011

Chairman's Report 2010/11

1. Note of Appreciation

The Foundation has sustained the Maryknoll spirit and tradition so firmly established over the decades. This is thanks not only to the Sisters' guidance in the early days of inception, particularly Sister Jeanne who has led the Council since 2005. We also owe much to the teachers and the Maryknollers, by now retired, who helped to set the young Foundation on track. Finally, we sincerely thank the members retiring this year for their wise counsel and positive contribution.

To the many alumnae and friends co-opted to advise and assist in task groups and committees, we extend our warmest appreciation and look forward to working further together.

2. Role and Responsibility

In the early years of the millennium, the Sisters rallied principals, teachers and graduates from different generations for a "steering group" to set up a body to take over from the Maryknoll Sisters as "sponsoring body" of our school. Their aim, as well as hope, was that the Maryknoll tradition should be maintained and our school continue to operate in the spirit of the Maryknoll Sisters' time-honoured vision and mission.

This resulted in the incorporation of the Foundation in 2005, with a 15-member "governing" Council comprising mainly alumnae, former Principals and a few Sisters (by now all retired). The object *inter alia* is in a Catholic school setting:

to provide all-round and affordable quality education for girls; to train students to have high moral standards, to be socially and environmentally aware and to be useful, contributory and responsible members of the community; to promote Christian values.

Against this background, many many Maryknollers have dedicated themselves to serve our *alma mater* through the Foundation, **on the Council and in committees or task groups.** These have been set up over the years for different purposes: Foundation membership, mentorship (for senior secondary students),

English language support (for primary students), promotion of positive perception of our school, draft constitution for Incorporated Management Committee (IMC, a Government requirement), digitisation of student records, policy guidelines for use of Maryknoll icons/trademarks. Notes on the activities of some of the groups and committees are *appended*.

For continuity of the fine tradition of Maryknoll, we need a continuing supply of caring alumnae available and willing to serve our school through the Foundation.

3. Membership

This brings into sharp focus the importance of the Foundation drawing in and retaining Maryknollers across the generations for succession. Our membership now stands as follows:

44 Executive Members (elected and appointed)

329 Ordinary Members (327 for Life)

1 Associate Member

We need more Maryknollers to serve our *alma mater*, to uphold the Maryknoll vision and mission on the one hand and to forge new trends to be abreast of the times on the other. Only then can we hope to keep up the Maryknoll spirit; only then can we have new initiatives; only then can we meet the challenge of change.

4. School Highlights

To give extra support to students, teachers and parents, the Foundation Council has initiated a **pilot scheme for school-based Educational/ Clinical Psychological (EP/CP) service** with funds from the Maryknoll Convent School Educational Trust.

In its 3rd year, this scheme aims to supplement Government provision. It helps to identify students with special education needs, whether gifted or having some other condition, assess them for timely support and where appropriate arrange for early intervention.

Government service is available and we do apply for it. However, there is invariably a long waiting list, thus not conducive to early detection or ready

support. Our school-based service provides counselling and assistance when necessary.

Broadly speaking, when parents or teachers consider or suspect some student to have a special education need or learning difficulty/disability, EP/CP diagnose the condition, assess the extent of the problem (if any) and devise specific specialist support. This may be curriculum adjustment, special arrangements for examination or remedial therapy by CP in certain cases.

For general information and understanding, the psychologists give talks to parents and teachers as well as students at different levels. Topics include parenting, learning skills and time management.

Government has legislated for **incorporation of school management**, to comprise representatives of all the stakeholders: school sponsoring body, teachers, parents, alumni and an independent member. This will change the relationship between the future IMC as school management body and the Foundation as school sponsoring body.

The Diocese has appealed against this legislative requirement. As a Catholic school, we have taken a common stand with the Diocese and not yet put our draft constitution, though ready, to Government.

Meanwhile, pending the outcome of the appeal, the Principals are making preliminary preparations, for asset identification. If the IMC is set up, there will be new procedures for nomination and election of representatives to the IMC as well as for conduct of meetings.

Maryknoll has always been mindful of **conservation of natural/cultural heritage and sustainability of resources**. To enhance greater awareness, foster active participation and promote ours as an ecologically friendly school, the Council has suggested that the Principals set up an advisory group of professionals, comprising alumnae and experts, to advise them on a wide range of issues relating to conservation and sustainable development. The inaugural meeting will be called in November.

5. Foreseeable Tasks Ahead

* Enlisting members for support and succession

- * Strengthening the mentorship programme for our girls' benefit
- * Continuing promotion of positive perception of our school
- * Reviewing the Foundation's Memorandum of Association for the advent of the IMC
- * Formulating guidelines for use of Maryknoll icons/trademarks
- * Maintaining volunteer English language support for primary students

There is much - and more - to be done, many issues to be addressed. Maryknollers are well placed to help guide the operation of our school as a reputable school for whole-person development and quality education in the English medium.

6. Points for Pondering

Now and then some parents, some of them our alumnae, raise questions about our school. They wonder: is Maryknoll just thriving on tradition, is Maryknoll resting on past laurels?

Of course, we have maintained the Maryknoll tradition, upheld the Maryknoll spirit and followed the Sisters' philosophy and mission for **all-round quality education affordable to all**, regardless of economic status or social standing. Meanwhile, **we have also evolved**, evolving with local education reform and with reference to good practices elsewhere.

In short, we keep the best of the Maryknoll tradition and move forward with the times and current trends. We regularly update ourselves; we are not complacent.

In this context, from time to time we re-examine the role and positioning of our school, to keep abreast of changes in the school sector and to meet new challenges.

To this end, views and feedback are warmly welcome from Maryknollers, both those with children in our school and those with girls or boys elsewhere. Please direct messages for us to *foundation@mcs.hk*.

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