



BLACKROCK  
COLLEGE C.S.Sp.  
ESTABLISHED 1860.



# BUILDING ON TRADITION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 - 2021



# BLACKROCK COLLEGE C.S.Sp.

## THE SPIRITAN WAY

- Openness to the Spirit
- Commitment to Service
- Global Vision
- Sense of Community
- Personal Development
- Concern for the Poor
- High Educational Standards



COR UNUM ET ANIMA UNA

# BUILDING ON TRADITION

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A Blackrock education is about growth, an awareness of self and an understanding of relationships. Each member of the school community is encouraged to be the best that he/she can be, to be inspired by our tradition for excellence and to make his/her own contribution across the spiritual, academic, cultural, pastoral and sporting domains.

Education is about much more than the transfer of knowledge. Our boys are encouraged to be aware and curious, to be humble and honest, to think morally and open mindedly, to care about one another and be willing to stand up and be counted.

Therein lies a vision of excellence which encourages the boys to lead their lives by gospel values and to make a difference. Our prayer for them is that they grow in confidence, in personality and in character, that they become fulfilled and strive to be better than their former selves. Finally, that they be mindful that Excellence is not an act but a habit and that we are what we repeatedly do.

Long may the habits of Blackrock produce young men of compassion, drive, wisdom and faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan MacGinty". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Alan MacGinty  
Principal

# A CALL TO REFLECT

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In Spring 2015 our Trustees, the Spiritan Education Trust (SET), carried out an 'Ethos and Faith Development Appraisal' at Blackrock as part of a review of their 5 Secondary Schools.

They examined whether the 'Founding Intention' was alive in the College today and to what extent it was embraced, or even wanted, by our community of religious, staff, students – past and present – and parents. Their report confirmed our commitment to the 'SPIRITAN WAY', our shared determination that our core values will continue to underpin all aspects of life and community at Blackrock. The appraisal was a very positive and affirming experience for both the SET and for all connected with Blackrock.

## BLACKROCK IS A FLOURISHING SCHOOL.

A new Strategic Plan does not signal a change of direction. Rather it is a restatement of our values and the principles by which we live. It confirms our founding intention, our strengths and our wish to build on them. It identifies new challenges and proposes a response. It envisions Blackrock at the start of the 3rd decade of this Millennium and beyond.

Blackrock is a Spiritan, Boys, Fee-paying, Day and Boarding, Mixed-Ability School, offering a broad curriculum with a focus on the Almighty, Academics, the Arts and the Athletic.

## THIS WILL CONTINUE.

"Humility is not  
thinking less  
of yourself,  
but thinking of  
yourself less."

C.S. Lewis



# A CALL TO EXCELLENCE

Blackrock is a thriving community committed to producing men of faith and courage, responsible adults imbued with a Christian conscience, at peace with themselves, their Creator and fellow beings. We wish them to be adaptable, persistent, resilient and compassionate, to be open to the Holy Spirit and willing to put their talents at the service of others, particularly those in most need.



Over our 156-year history, Blackrock has faced many changes in culture and society, yet it has held true to its mission not least because of the continuum provided by the presence of a Spiritan Community of Priests, Brothers and other religious. They have been at the heart of our school, the bedrock on which the Blackrock spirit is founded. Alas, this may be coming to an end. We should not underestimate the impact this will have particularly in the context of an increasingly secular society which questions the right of faith-based schools, be they fee-paying or not, to our time-honoured position in the public square.

## A SPIRITAN SCHOOL ISSUES A CALL TO EXCELLENCE.

High standards are set, challenges are met. It fosters a willingness to try something new when adjustment is demanded. Such a disposition makes strategic planning necessary and sustainable as it accepts the status quo does not have all the answers.

*“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”*

Catherine of Sienna

# A CALL TO SERVE

## A SPIRITAN SCHOOL HAS A GLOBAL VISION.

This was fundamental to our foundation and formation. We are missionary in outlook and rooted in the values of Des Places and Libermann. We must ensure that Development Education continues to be embedded in the Blackrock curriculum and that we strengthen our links with the Spiritan mission worldwide.



## A SPIRITAN SCHOOL HAS CONCERN FOR THE POOR AT HOME.

A Spiritan School has a commitment to service and a strong sense of community. We foster at Blackrock a safe environment that encourages each boy to extend himself in reaching out to others. As part of this, in consultation with our Trustees and the College Union, we seek to establish an 'Access' programme which offers a place at Blackrock to boys who would not otherwise attend the College due to social and financial barriers.

"If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."

Martin Luther King

# A CALL TO COMMUNITY

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We are blessed to have a caring, dedicated and empathetic teaching staff who are an example, inspiration and support to the boys and one another on a day by day basis. This should not be taken for granted.

Blackrock, also, has a dedicated body of Administrative, Catering, Grounds, Household and Maintenance Staff who contribute enormously with pride and loyalty to our educational project.

We continue to seek ever more effective ways to ensure that the 'Spiritual Way' is nurtured and that all who work here are informed about our spirit and are given the best possible opportunity to share their giftedness.

## CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER IS PARAMOUNT.

To ensure this into the future, we must give careful consideration to how each member of the school community is recognised and celebrated.

Technology has enlivened and will continue to enliven teaching and learning, inform the educational process. However, there is no substitute for that vital interpersonal connection, that spark between teacher and learner, that word of encouragement from peers and mentors, the example of role models.

"Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

Nelson Mandela

# A CALL TO FAITH

## STUDENT WELL-BEING IS A FOCUS OF THIS PLAN.

We wish to build on our programme of leadership, help our boys to make informed choices, to be reflective, to discern, to be knowledgeable yes, but more than that, to be truly wise, informed by a Christian conscience. Jesus, always, is our model, our mentor and our inspiration. We try to respond to His spirit of care.

## THIS IS AT THE HEART OF OUR MISSION.



“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”

St. Augustine

We are blessed to have a 56-acre campus, with excellent grounds and facilities for the delivery of our extensive programme. The campus is an education in itself as we share it with an extraordinary range of plant, animal and birdlife.

We should ensure that our campus is an example of best environmental practice, inspiring appreciation and awe, seeing in its ecology the grandeur of God.



# A CALL TO APPRECIATE

**Be Caring, Be There, Be Truthful** has been our core message, the living daily interpretation of our motto 'Fides et Robur'.

To this, we add '**Be Grateful**'.



We wish for our boys to appreciate their own self-worth and that of others, to be grateful for the gift of life and the world they live in, to be conscious that so much is done for them.

'Be Grateful' should be evident in our endeavour to make a difference in the lives of others. A Blackrock education is about Christian formation. It is a call to serve, to set aside individualism and embrace others. It is a call to do more than is expected, to give more of ourselves than is requested.

**THIS IS OUR INTENT, OUR PURPOSE.**

May this plan ensure the continuation of this tradition.

**Be Caring,  
Be There,  
Be Truthful,  
Be Grateful.**

# KEY INITIATIVES

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 - 2021

### ETHOS & COMMUNITY

- > Renew Vision & Values
- > Foster Faith Development
- > Strengthen Partnerships
- > Establish a College Access Programme

### STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- > Provide Staff Handbook
- > Provide access to Chaplaincy and well-being support
- > Facilitate Professional Development

### TEACHING & LEARNING

- > Adapt Teaching & Learning Environment
- > Enrich the Curriculum
- > Review methods of assessment
- > Promote Learner Centred Education

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP & WELL-BEING

- > Encourage Active Citizenship
- > Promote Curiosity and Awareness
- > Build Resilience and Empathy

## TECHNOLOGY

- > Develop a Technology strategy
- > Enhance the Technology Infrastructure
- > Update Technology Policies

## ENVIRONMENT, FACILITIES & FINANCE

- > Establish Priorities for Investment with focus on:
  - Spiritan Ethos
  - Campus Development
  - Traffic Management
  - Biodiversity

# A CALL TO ACTION

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## NO COMMUNITY CAN AFFORD TO BE STATIC.

There should always be an energy to grow, to be better than our former selves. We are always open to new ways, to embrace new developments in Teaching and Learning while at the same time holding true to tried and trusted methods that have served our boys well. We will continue to resource, refurbish and upgrade the existing facilities as our teaching and learning becomes more collaborative, interactive and multifaceted.

Funding and Finance is key to this. The College must remain financially viable while at the same time we must be conscious of the demands and pressure fees place upon families, particularly those who have two or more boys at Blackrock. Other revenue streams will continue to be examined and philanthropic support sought.

## BLACKROCK HAS ALWAYS BEEN BUILT ON PARTNERSHIP.

The Parents' Association and the College Union make an invaluable contribution and provide tremendous support for our in-house community . We need to build on this and plan for the establishment of a Past-Parents' Association which will further strengthen the bonds within the Blackrock family and help us keep in contact with those who have been an integral part of our community for an important time in their lives.

“Start by doing what  
is necessary, then  
do what is possible  
and suddenly you  
are doing the  
impossible.”

St. Francis of Assisi

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 01

# PROMOTE EXCELLENCE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EXTENDED BLACKROCK COMMUNITY

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### 1.1 Renew the expression of Blackrock's Vision, Mission, Values and Ethos

- › The Blackrock Way - develop a programme which will re-imagine the Spiritan Ethos, with an emphasis on Faith Development, in the context of 21st Century challenges – for application across all Strategic Goals
- › Senior Cycle interpretation of Spiritan Values - develop a contemporary expression of Spiritan Values relevant to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students

### 1.2 Strengthen Links with and Support for key Stakeholders

- › Further develop the links between Willow Park Senior School and the College
- › Encourage the Parents' Association and College Union to develop their understanding of 'Be Caring', 'Be There', 'Be Truthful' and now also 'Be Grateful'
- › Establish Past-Parents Association

### 1.3 Enhance Marketing and Communication

- › Produce new College Prospectus
- › Promote Boarding at Blackrock
- › Build connection with Global Past-Pupil community

### 1.4 Establish a College Access Programme

- › Prepare the way for a programme that would provide the opportunity for boys from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds attend Blackrock.
- › Prepare in association with the Union a plan that would support the members of the Access Programme to the end of their undergraduate years.

"What lies behind us  
and what lies before  
us are tiny matters  
compared to what  
lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 02

# ATTRACT, DEVELOP AND RETAIN BEST POSSIBLE STAFF

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### 2.1 Improve the Welcome for New Staff

- › Extend the introduction process to include an understanding of the Spiritan Ethos
- › Provide Staff Handbook
- › Provide dedicated Email addresses

### 2.2 Strengthen Measures to Develop Staff

- › Schedule three meetings p.a. for each department (Academic, Administration, Catering, Household, Grounds and Maintenance).
- › Provide access to Chaplaincy services and Wellbeing support
- › Introduce the DES Droichead programme
- › Encourage and facilitate Continuous Professional Development

“Consult not your  
fears but your  
hopes and dreams.  
Think not about  
your frustration  
but about your  
unfulfilled potential.  
Concern yourself not  
with what you have  
tried and failed in,  
but with what is still  
possible for you  
to do.”

Pope John XXIII

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 03

# ENHANCE ACADEMIC AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMES FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING NEEDS

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### 3.1 Adapt the Teaching And Learning environment

- › Develop a print-rich environment in the classrooms
- › Design pilot classrooms for collaborative learning

### 3.2 Enrich the Curriculum

- › Review and strengthen the Transition Year Modules
- › Prepare the way for New Junior Cycle

### 3.3 Review Methods of Assessment

- › Develop and share across Subject Departments  
Best Practice in Assessment for Learning
- › Require Transition Year students to present an E-Portfolio
- › Examine the merits of combining the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Year Summer Exams with an E-portfolio Assessment

### 3.4 Promote Learner-centred Education

- › Promote Peer Learning both in the classroom and in the informal settings
- › Encourage student Reflection on Learning in the Classroom
- › Produce an Online List of all External Competitions – encourage student entry
- › Introduce 'Rock Talks (based on TED) to enable students to present a Research Topic to the school community

“Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Howard Thurman

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 04

# PROMOTE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND WELLBEING

## Curiosity, Awareness, Resilience, Empathy

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### 4.1 Encourage Active Citizenship

- › Develop and build on the different opportunities for student leadership across:
  - ~ Pastoral
  - ~ Sport
  - ~ Arts
  - ~ Academic and
  - ~ Social domains
- › Review process of selection/election of leaders, their training and visibility in the school community

### 4.2 Promote Curiosity And Awareness

- › Encourage the enquiring mind with a particular focus on:
  - ~ Blackrock Culture and History
  - ~ Development Education
  - ~ Green Schools
  - ~ Spiritan Ethos

### 4.3 Build Resilience and Empathy

- › Establish Mindfulness Programme
- › Develop a Whole School approach to:
  - ~ Bullying Awareness
  - ~ Addiction Awareness
  - ~ Mental Health
  - ~ Internet Safety
- › Introduce a Blackrock College Community Service Model

“People who  
succeed take  
responsibility for  
their own growth,  
their own  
performance.”

Sir David Brailsford

## EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT THE BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SUPPORT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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### **5.1 Develop new Technology plans for Education & Administration**

- › Develop a detailed technology strategy to ensure that members of the Blackrock College Education Community have the skills, beliefs and values to effectively navigate the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology Environment
- › Develop and implement an ICT infrastructure that is reliable, relevant and has the capacity to meet the educational and administration needs of the College

### **5.2 Review Technology Policies**

Prepare a comprehensive set of Technology Policies to facilitate the effective and safe use of ICT, including:

- › Acceptable Use
- › Mobile Phone
- › Night Study
- › Bring Your Own Device
- › Cyber Bullying (as part of the Anti-Bullying Policy)

“Have the courage  
to follow your heart  
and intuition. They  
somehow know what  
you truly want to  
become”

Steve Jobs

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 06

# ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF BLACKROCK'S ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCIAL POSITION

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### 6.1 Develop an Enhanced Sustainable Financial Model

- › Establish Key Advisers' Committee to look at options to increase non-fee-related sources of revenue and establish priorities for Development and Investment
- › Launch a focused Fundraising Campaign under the aegis of the Development Office for Capital Development Projects:
  - ~ Campus grounds and facilities
  - ~ Willow Park 1st Year upgrade
  - ~ Extension of C.A.D.L. to incorporate Development Education Centre
  - ~ Junior Science Laboratories
  - ~ College Arts Centre on the site of the Jubilee Hall
  - ~ The College Archives

### 6.2 Prioritise Funding for Investment in:

- › The development of the Spiritan Ethos / Chaplaincy
- › Implementation of campus-wide Traffic/Safety Protocols
- › The development of a Green Campus with an emphasis on Environmental Sustainability and Biodiversity
- › College Access Programme

"Not everything  
that can be counted  
counts and not  
everything that  
counts can be  
counted."

Albert Einstein



# IN CONCLUSION

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This plan is the consequence of an extensive consultative process over a two year period as we reflected on not just what we do at Blackrock and how we do it but, most importantly, why we do it.

This process, in itself, has been inclusive and worthwhile. It certainly has been affirming and encouraging, as we continue a journey which commenced 156 years ago, with a clear vision of what we stand for, and how we can continue to provide the best possible preparation for life to our young men.

Just as our tradition *“is a guide and not a jailer”* (W Somerset Maugham) so it is with this plan. It points us in the right direction, but we will need to adapt and adjust as circumstances change, while at the same time maintain a commitment to our Spiritan identity.

We are influenced by the times we live in and can find ourselves rushing headlong through the day-by-day events of school life. We need to press the pause button on occasion, consider our schedule and re-establish our priorities, our values, our trust in God. May this plan encourage this reflective process. There are many challenges but in the words of Michelle Obama *“When they go low, we go high”*.

Irrespective of the field of interest, Blackrock is about excellence, about being the best we can be.

**May Building on Tradition, Strategic Plan 2016-21 serve us well.**

“The greatest danger is not in setting our aims too high but in setting them too low and achieving the mark.”

Michelangelo

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