



Biennial Report of the Board of Management of Franciscan College Gormanston, Gormanston, Co Meath for the school years

2023 – 2025

The purpose of this biennial report of the Board of Management of Franciscan College Gormanston is to provide a summary of information on the operation of the school in line with the requirements of the Education Act 1998. The report focuses on the performance and progress of the school, the all-round achievement of our students, the commitment of the whole staff and the ongoing support of parents, guardians and the wider school community.

INTRODUCTION:

Gormanston is currently a thriving co-educational day school that prides itself on maintaining a close-knit, supportive community atmosphere. Our smaller size allows us to know each student individually, fostering personalised learning experiences and strong relationships between students, teachers, and families. We work hard to create an environment where students are happy, grow in self-confidence and work to their potential.

Our continuing objective is to build the confidence of young men and women to become good communicators, and to be polite towards themselves and each other.

We are a respectful school community. Students learn to appreciate diversity and treat others with dignity and with respect. Staff model respectful behaviour and positive communication. Our daily intention is to ask our students to bring the best version of themselves to school each day.

We have high standards where our students are encouraged to be the best that they can be. We aim to build curious minds, create opportunities for independent learning, focus on well-being, encourage hard work, and involve students in the life of their school. The voices of our students matter.

Most importantly, it is relationships and people that matter most. We see ourselves as a local school serving the needs of our local community.

We remain and continue to be very proud of our school and our students.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated and committed staff and a wonderful student body and acknowledge the contribution of each member of our school community in maintaining the high standards we strive to achieve.

Franciscan College Gormanston is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for boys and girls under the trusteeship of the Franciscan Order, with the intention that, over time, the patronage of our school will transfer to CEIST. We had an enrolment of 372 students in the school year 2023/2024 and 357 students in the school year 2024 / 2025. It is regrettable that enrolment numbers are falling and remain challenging. The age and condition of our school building, the narrowing of our curriculum offer (inevitable with a reduction in student numbers) and the unfavourable and negative narrative that exists in the local community regarding displaced international citizens and refugees all contribute to our current circumstances.

Smaller numbers impact allocation of staff, curriculum choice and apportionment of resources. In addition, as already pointed out, there are limitations placed on the curriculum and subject choice. Fewer practical options are available for our students. While we can offer Technical Graphics, Music and Art we are unable to provide subjects like Construction Studies, Home Economics and Engineering. We can't increase the range of subject choice without growth in student population.

Student population will only increase (it would seem) with the provision of a new school.

New School Build:

We are thrilled to announce that Gormanston is part of the ambitious "Project Boyne" initiative, which represents a significant investment in educational infrastructure for our region. This groundbreaking project will see us transition from our current setting to a state-of-the-art facility designed for 1,000 students. The commitment to, and building of, a brand-new school demonstrates confidence in the Gormanston "brand" and positions our school for transformational growth over the coming years as we invest in our fantastic young men and women and firmly position ourselves to be the school of choice in our local area.

This 21st century, modern school building will feature contemporary learning spaces, specialist subject areas, and recreational facilities including:

State-of-the-Art Classrooms: Each classroom has been designed to optimize learning with the latest technology, ergonomic furniture, and ample natural light.

Cutting-Edge Science Labs: Our new science labs are equipped with the latest equipment and technology, ensuring that students have the resources they need to explore and discover the wonders of science.

Specialist classrooms: Music, Multimedia, Design and Communication Graphics, Art, Home Economics, Construction Studies, Engineering, Technology.

Special Educational Needs Suite (Double Class unit): 4 special classes.

Spacious Gymnasium and Sports Facilities: Our gymnasium will be large enough to accommodate a variety of sports and physical education activities.

Modern Library: Our library will be a welcoming space for reading and research, complete with an extensive collection of books and digital resources.

Beautiful Outdoor Spaces: Our school will feature landscaped gardens, outdoor seating areas, and recreational spaces where students can enjoy fresh air and relaxation.

We are all looking forward to an exciting future in partnership with all our constituents as we continue to provide and develop an inclusive, relevant, and excellent education experience for our current and future student cohort.

Mission Statement:

Franciscan College Gormanston is a voluntary Catholic school for both boys and girls under the Trusteeship of the Order of Friars Minor. The Mission Statement of the school reads:

Franciscan College Gormanston is an educational establishment wherein Catholic values are promoted in accordance with the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

Its aim is to create an environment that is safe, a centre of learning committed to the personal development of each individual student, and where the dignity of all is promoted and cherished.

It will strive to create accountable and principled students in the Ireland of today and in the wider world, in accordance with our Franciscan tradition for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland.

Board of Management: (2023 – 2026)

In August 2022, Mr Noel Dempsey accepted the nomination of the Trustees to become the new Chairperson of the Board of Management. The formal constitution of a new Board of Management took place in October 2023.

As recently as October 2025 the Board of Management confirmed their important work maintaining the formal constitution of this Board for the time period 2023 / 2026. This Board of Management concludes on 15th October 2026. Thereafter, a new Board, with a new constitution and mandate will be formed for the time period 2026 - 2029.

All members have indicated a willingness to serve on the Board. I asked all members to write to me formally confirming their willingness to serve which they have. This is in line with the Articles of Management for Catholic schools. The nominees are:

Trustees: Mr Noel Dempsey, Chairperson, Fr Padraic Breheny OFM

Teaching Staff: Ms Mary Dunne, Ms Heather Buchanan

Parents: Ms Natalie Fourie, Ms Jayne Delaney

We await feedback from the Trustees on the appointment of a further two suitable Trustees nominees.

The Board of Management meet on a monthly basis. The child protection oversight report and, from this school year, the Bi cinealta review is presented as an agenda item at each meeting. Emergency and special meetings occurred also. The BOM act in accordance with the Articles of Management for Voluntary Secondary Schools, the direction of the Trustees, CEIST and the guidance provided by the JMB. The Finance Subcommittee met before each BOM meeting.

Strategic and Operational Planning 2022– 2025:

The Board developed and have implemented a three-year strategic action plan for Franciscan College Gormanston. This was in response to the priority recommendation outlined in the WSE / MLL inspection outcome of January 2020.

Following WSE/MLL recommendations (January 2020), our strategic plan centres on ten key ambitions:

1. Cultivating higher expectations across the school community
2. Enhancing teaching and learning quality and consistency
3. Broadening curriculum provision and student choice
4. Strengthening primary school partnerships and recruitment
5. Systematic policy review involving all stakeholders
6. Amplifying student and parent voice
7. Reviewing pastoral structures
8. Improving collaborative staff meeting practices
9. Consistent standards delivery (attendance, punctuality, behaviour)
10. Formalising our Mission Statement as a decision-making framework

Over this time period we have been successful in addressing many of the above, although for reasons outlined earlier in the report, implementation of additional initiatives will only be possible in a new school setting.

The ambitions / objectives as laid out in the school strategic action plan 2022 – 2025 remain. We continue as a school to work towards these objectives although the school's current physical context i.e. planning for a new school and the "limbo" situation we find ourselves in with regard to future school patronage means we are limited in what is achievable with regard to some specific objectives.

School Year 2023 / 2024:

- ❑ ICT policy including data protection and acceptable use.
- ❑ Digital Learning Plan.
- ❑ Whole School SEN policy review including coordination of special classes.
- ❑ Substance Use Policy.
- ❑ Code of Behaviour – Review. Further review planned for school year 2026 / 2027.
- ❑ Anti Bullying Staff policy.
- ❑ Harassment and Sexual Harassment Staff policy.

School Year 2024 / 2025:

- ❑ New Bicinealta procedures – Students – Review.
- ❑ Health and Safety Statement (enter partnership with ARK HQ).
- ❑ Whole School Guidance 2024 – 2026.
- ❑ School Improvement Plan (including focus on well-being) aligned with whole school strategic action plan 2022 – 2025.
- ❑ Special Needs Assistant Policy 2023/2025.
- ❑ RSE Policy 2024 / 2026.

School Year 2025 / 2026:

- ❑ Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment February 2026 including adoption of new and revised child protection procedures.
- ❑ Bicinealta Policy Review March 2026 including school Mobile Phone Policy completed October 2025.

- ❓ Whole School Guidance Plan 2026.
- ❓ H&S Statement including specific H&S priorities.
- ❓ Biennial review and roles and responsibilities completed September 2025.
- ❓ Critical Incident Management Procedures Review 2025 / 2026. Completed October 2025.

The BOM have adopted their Regulatory and Legislative framework for 2025 / 2026 and have prioritised the policy areas requiring specific focus.

Other key areas of focus for the school year 2025 / 2026 will be:

- Introduction and implementation of a school wide academic tracking system. This will be linked with our V S Ware platform and will support individualised learning opportunities, and enhanced monitoring of student progress through the direct intervention of key staff. It will also help identify vulnerable students and provide a structure and visual template to assist students with their learning.
- Introduction and implementation of a new 1-hour class timetable.
- Implementation of early intervention strategies through the Student Care Team model.
- Monitoring systems for attendance and punctuality.
- Strengthening communication between Year Heads, the SEN / SET team, and guidance department, including the utilisation of behaviour for learning strategies.
- Student Voice: Increased student participation in policy-related discussions (e.g., uniform and mobile phone use). Increase visibility of student voice.
- Staff engagement with the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.
- Review of the current SPHE curriculum and wellbeing timetable provision.
- Continued promotion of active methodologies and formative assessment practices.
- Review of recent teaching and learning audits and feedback surveys.
- Sharing of best practice through peer observation and learning communities.

Enrolment and Academic Performance:

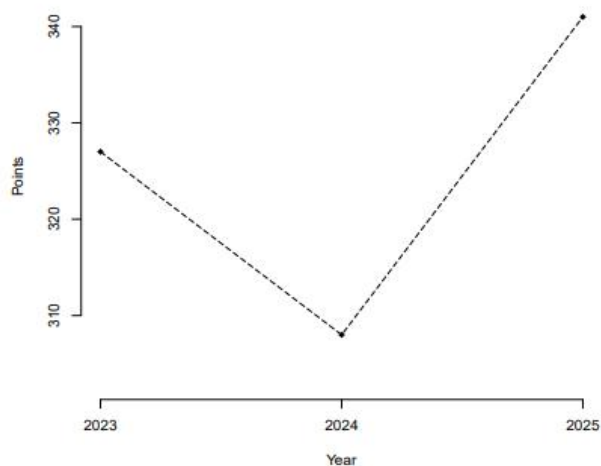
Enrolment challenges persist, impacting staffing allocation and curriculum breadth. Academic outcomes reflect our commitment to maximising individual potential, with students consistently achieving beyond expectations given resource constraints.

FC Summary Table

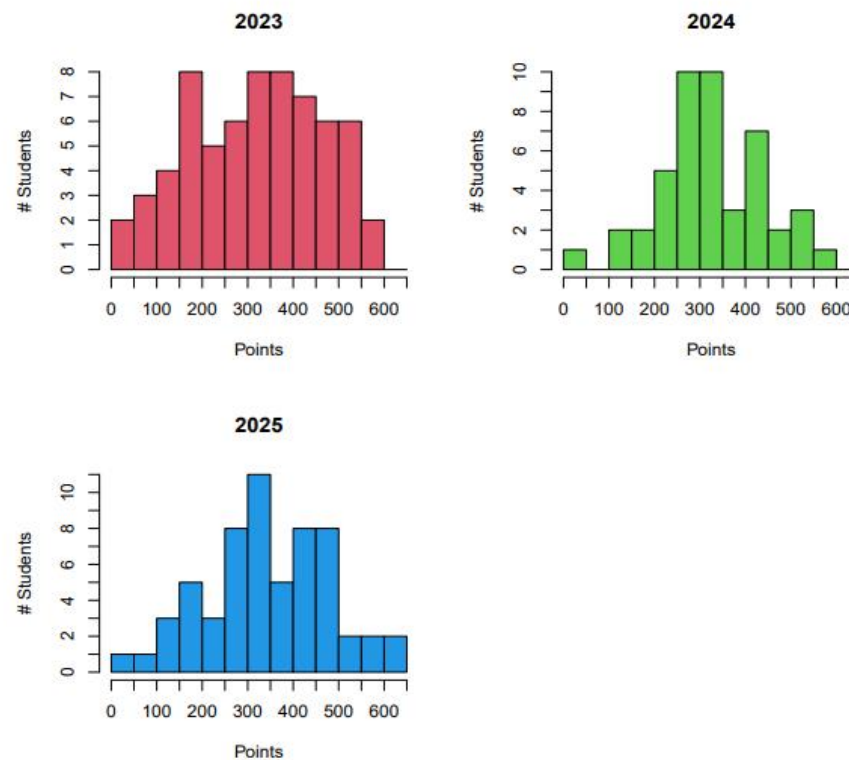
2023-2025

	2023	2024	2025
# Students	65	46	59
Median CAO points	327	308	341
Average CAO points	317	326	344
Max CAO points	577	555	601

Median CAO points 2023 to 2025



Distribution of CAO points 2023 – 2025



The table above demonstrates what the Leaving Certificate cohort of 2023 – 2025 achieved in terms of CAO outcomes. As a simple comparison 400+ CAO points represent 25% of the national cohort, on average. In 2023 32% of our LC class achieved 400+ CAO points, in 2024 the figure was 30% and in 2025 it had risen to 37%. So, it is clear our students perform very well, despite the constraints and challenges we experience.

As you know the Leaving Certificate serves both as the final assessment of secondary education and as the primary gateway to higher education through the Central Applications Office (CAO) points system.

The Leaving Certificate is high-stakes, it is demanding, and while the majority of our students dedicate enormous effort — academically, mentally, and emotionally to achieving their CAO goals, they are also impacting their well-being and mental health. How we support our senior students as they manage and navigate a very tough two years is very important as we must ensure we balance fairness, rigor and a positive mindset and resilience in equal measure.

Physical School Environment:

Our 60-year-old + building presents significant infrastructural challenges, requiring substantial maintenance investment. Whilst cost-management remains difficult, collaborative arrangements with Gormanston Park and DEY support continue. The planned new facility under Project Boyne will provide cutting-edge learning spaces, specialist classrooms, SEN suites, sports facilities, and contemporary infrastructure supporting 21st-century education.

The DEY and Trustees are fully aware of the limitations of the school building and are actively planning for the strategic future direction of Franciscan College Gormanston in tandem with all other relevant stakeholders tasked with bringing a new school build to completion. This is to ensure that our new school, in the 21st century, can manage the demands of population growth, in a building fit for purpose and compliant with legislation, and H&S standards. The current building cannot meet those standards.

The BOM have taken steps to ensure that the school operate an effective fire safety plan and evacuation procedures. These procedures were updated in 2025 and will require regular updating, although it is illogical to fully implement a comprehensive health and safety plan when the

age and condition of the building prevent full compliance with existing legislation. The Board of Management have identified a number of strategies to support, as far as possible, its compliance with their statutory requirements.

Fire detection, Evacuation, Document Checks	Ensure fire evacuation procedures are known and understood. Carry out two drills in school year 2025 / 2026 (scenario 1 - during class time) and (scenario 2 - outside of class time).
All Staff CPD **	Arrange for all staff CPD - H&S. August 20th, 2025. Maintenance staff / caretaking staff specific training - safe pass / manual handling / height & associated risk assessments / working with chemicals.
Equipment	Have sufficient keys available for staff for external gates.
Science Labs	Science dept.to examine recommendations from science subject dept inspection on science labs. Need to look at risk assessments too.
H&S Statement	Ratification by BOM September 2025 / establish a safety committee / elect a safety representative / carry out risk assessments on all classrooms - general use
Stairs and Steps	All stairs and steps. Terrazzo flooring. Need to replace edge of steps with adequate grip and "non slip" covering.
Front Entrance Security	Entrance hallway and improved security. Request for emergency funding was submitted to the DES on 28th April following receipt of official Garda report. Funding received. Work to be completed term 1 2025.
Classrooms and Corridors.	1. 2 x ICT rooms. Check carpets for trip hazards and replace. 2. Parquet flooring lifting in some classrooms. Reseal. 3. Mould on ceiling near Church and Teanglann corridor. Make good.
Electrical Certification and Boiler	Need to submit emergency works application for boiler for winter 2025 and winter 2026. Submitted October 2025.
Classrooms	Teach Francis x 3 classrooms / sensory spaces. Art room. First aid kits for all rooms.

Leadership and Management:

Leadership structures underwent biennial review (2025), with post-holder reassignments addressing Essential Priorities: Year Heads (×6), Wellbeing Coordination, Examinations, Student Voice, Attendance, SEN/AEN Coordination, ICT, and Safety. All post-holders completed annual reviews. Collaborative leadership models and enhanced communication frameworks continue developing.

The constant growth in the range of responsibilities foisted on schools to deal with wider social issues is a real concern for school leaders and staff in general. Mental health matters are now a routine feature of school life. Our school, similar to most, do not have nearly enough trained personnel to deal with the first responder and pastoral issues involved.

ESSENTIAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES
• Year Heads • Well Being • SSE / SIP (School Self Evaluation / School Improvement Planning) • School Attendance • Student Voice • SEN / AEN Coordination (Special Education Needs / Additional Education Needs) • Exam Coordination • ICT Coordination • Safety Coordination – including the role of school Safety Officer • As well as the importance of really focusing on ways to promote our school...

Special Educational Needs:

Students with additional needs are welcomed and looked after in our school. Our whole school approach to SEN is inclusive and accommodating. Our programme is based on the Continuum of support framework where school allocation is prioritised to address the needs of the students; it is our priority to offer the greatest support to students with the greatest need.

Our inclusive SEN provision includes three special classes (Teach Francis), comprehensive SET support, and six SNAs. Whole-school coordination ensures greatest support reaches students with greatest needs, utilising Continuum of Support frameworks and personalised learning plans. Mainstream integration opportunities are maximised where appropriate.

Faith Development / RE Provision:

RE classes are taught in both junior and senior years. RE is a JC exam subject. TY and LC classes receive one hour class period of RE a week.

Liturgical Services:

Remain curtailed. Regrettably, there are very few Franciscan friars who have an active involvement in the day-to-day operation of the school. We do plan for liturgical services annually, including remembrance services, Christmas carol service and graduation mass for senior students but we are not in a position to do anything additional.

CPD (Continuing professional development) for Staff:

Staff engagement included: JCT training, One Good School (Jigsaw) mental health programmes (Gold Award achieved), individual CPD supported through Croke Park hours, and BOM co-funding (50% up to €1,000) for relevant professional development enhancing school expertise. H&S CPD occurred 2025.

Pastoral Care:

Fortnightly Student Care Team meetings and Year Head meetings ensure comprehensive pastoral support. Our active Student Council have achieved three Green Flags (Litter and Waste, Water and Travel). Student voice now informs policy development (uniform, wellbeing, mobile phone use, Bi cinealta review), reflecting WSE/MLL recommendations regarding enhanced learner participation.

At middle leadership level Year Heads travel with their students from 1st year through to 6th year. The one exception is Transition Year as this is not a mandatory school programme.

Extra-Curricular (2023 – 2025)

Notable achievements: Our school's participation and involvement in GAA, soccer and rugby and the notable, continuing achievement of our Girls GAA team! Despite our school size we have a thriving Green Schools Committee, our student voice is strong and active, and our prefect structure is evolving and growing in confidence.

I am proud to say our extensive co-curricular provision includes sports, debating, book club, DEAR programme, walking club, debating, themed curriculum weeks, and significant charity fundraising. Since 2022 we have raised over £20,000 for several important charities namely, The Peter Mc Verry Trust, Pieta House, Jigsaw and the Irish Cancer Society. That is some achievement for a small school!

Transition Year:

A very successful year led and managed very effectively by school TY Coordinator. Also, school's LCA Coordinator. Huge range of activities for TY students to participate in.

TY programme delivered exceptional breadth: outdoor education, workplace visits, peer education, skills development, cultural experiences. Effective coordination ensured meaningful learning beyond traditional classroom settings. LCA provision continues to meet diverse learner needs.

Financial Report:

The financial management of the College is conducted under the JMB / AMCSS guidelines and is in strict compliance with DES requirements. The school accounts are externally audited for the Board of Management and follow best practice guidance. A Finance Sub Committee also meets monthly and reports directly to the Board of Management. The school accounts and annual budget are presented annually to the College Trustees. The Trustees request that the BOM examine each annual budget carefully and work to secure a 5% reduction in each year's budget calculation and expected subvention request. This has been achieved.

The Board of Management as part of every monthly meeting examine the school's finances which includes a detailed examination of the annual budget. The objective is to continue to exercise sound monetary management and value for money.

The Board are very mindful that the most significant costs associated with the school are the high utility costs (despite our successful application to join a procurement scheme backed by the DEY). Gas and electricity remain stubbornly high. Maintaining and servicing a very old boiler and plant connecting a very archaic pipe network is a massive drain on resources. Insurance costs are high and managing a sentimental, yet costly, older building is a challenge.

With all of the above the Board continue to act responsibly. A deficit reduction in the annual budget of at least 42% since 2019 demonstrates fiscal responsibility despite building maintenance costs.

Relationships with Gormanston Park are professional, cordial, and cooperative. The BOM continue to work very hard in conjunction with the SMT in reducing the expenditure incurred by the school. There are significant fiscal challenges associated with managing an aging and costly building. Budget challenges persist but strategic financial management continues.

Administration:

Administrative capacity currently operates with reduced staffing due to extended leave arrangements. Comprehensive review planning continues.

Parents Association:

The Parents Association deserve special mention for their loyalty and perserverence and their all round efforts to support the school, drive fund raising initiatives and positively build the reputation of the school.

I remain very grateful to the Parents Association for their tireless work and dedication to the school and our students.

The Parents Association are an important part of our school community.

Conclusion:

The vast majority of our students are deserving of special praise for their excellent behaviour, cooperation and their academic and extra curricular achievements. The Board will continue to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to improve the academic and holistic learning opportunities for its students.

The Board expresses sincere appreciation to staff, students, parents, and wider community for sustained commitment to achieving the standards we aspire to. As we anticipate our transformational future through Project Boyne, we remain focused on delivering outstanding education within our current context.

Dermot Lavin

Secretary to the Board of Management

12th November 2025