

Christmas Address

Carmel Ellis – Managing Director

December 2017

A warm welcome to everyone here this evening

Some of you may be familiar with the work of Sir Ken Robinson, an international advisor on education in the arts. He espoused three principles, which he believes should underpin all our educational endeavours.

First, is that all children are naturally different and diverse, yet our education systems tend to “diagnose” diversity and attempt to treat or cure it. Second, is that all children are naturally curious, and that our role as educators is to light the spark which will allow them to follow their natural instincts to learn. Robinson argues that in our current system, children often learn in spite of, rather than because of, their educational experiences. And finally, Robinson argues that education should stimulate, provoke and engage children, while our schools foster a dominant culture of standardisation through testing, teaching methods and structures which obstruct learning, rather than fostering it. Robinson’s work captures the essence of a Montessori education in the Edmund Rice tradition. At IMCH, we strive to provide a climate of possibility, so that our children’s natural creativity, diversity and inherent desire to learn are encouraged in an environment where they can thrive. The ongoing challenge for us is to always be examining what we do and striving for improvement.

2016 saw IMCH undertake its first Assessment & Rating under the new NQF Guidelines. This is a comprehensive process of examination and reflection on key areas of life at IMCH, aimed at continuous improvement and development. The first part of the Assessment involved a process of self-reflection by the IMCH community. The Assessor, who conducted in-depth observations with representative groups and individuals, validated the reflections by our community during the visit. In October, we were presented with a copy of the report that outlined the outcomes of the process. Exceeding in all Seven Quality areas. This process of Assessment & Rating is vital to our centre, as one of the constant challenges facing an educational institution such as IMCH is to be able to keep hold of our vision: to know what it is we are striving for and how to achieve it.

One of the key questions facing IMCH and one which underpins all our endeavours is this: what are we educating our children for? And as parents, you are entitled to be asking questions: why do we send our children to IMCH? How do we know we made the right choice in sending our children to this centre as opposed to any other? I believe the answer to that question lies in our aspirations for your children, which are not limited to academic success, but include educating your children in the Edmund Rice/Montessori tradition to be empathetic, creative, curious, spiritual beings who care for themselves, for others and for their environment.

So, what does a child look like who has been educated at IMCH?

This child has empathy. This is the child who has learned that other children have feelings; that we need to take turns; that the world does not necessarily always revolve around us. This child gets along with other people.

This child is curious about the world and has a love of learning. This child knows that failing does not mean you are a failure, but that mistakes are opportunities for learning. As a result, this child is willing to take risks and is not limited by a fear of failure.

This child is persistent and does not give up easily when faced with a challenge. This child is happy to have a go, knowing that if you keep trying and don't give up, chances are, you will achieve at least some measure of success... ..and success may look like many different things.

This child is a spiritual being, with a strong sense of identity and belonging. This child affirms others and has a sense of hope, wonder and security. This child plays an integral role in the spiritual and social well-being of their family, friends and community.

Finally I believe our success is judged on the quality of the staff who work with your children every day. They are truly magnificent, both in their level of skill and in their care for your children. Their professionalism, dedication and loyalty to this centre is plain for all to see and I cannot speak too highly of them. Not only do we enjoy teaching your children, but we also enjoy each other's company and have fun together.

Our success is also judged by the parent body, which is so crucial to our operation. We are blessed with a body of parents that in some ways changes every year, but remains constant in its generosity and its willingness to be involved in the IMCH community of which your children are the focal point. I thank you individually and as a group for your continued support which is an integral component of our success.