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A tribute to

Tony Cahill RIP

PRINCIPAL OF MONALEEN NS

Monaleen NS and community were devastated on 6th April 2022, as news broke of the passing of their beloved, and much admired, Principal, Tony Cahill, after a valiant battle with illness.

Tony's legacy in Monaleen NS began in 1978 upon his appointment there, as classroom teacher. As a teacher, Tony was much revered and there was always an easy, pleasant and happy atmosphere in his classroom. High expectations and high standards were synonymous with Tony's teaching approaches, and he will long be remembered for these.

As a colleague to many for almost 44 years, Tony excelled as a warm, welcoming, supportive, kind and dependable presence. His natural wit and wry sense of humour entertained many in the staffroom down through the years. Tony embodied absolutely everything that was good about Monaleen NS - his kindness, gentleness, generosity, warmth and charismatic personality endeared him to everyone who had the pleasure of meeting him. He was an extraordinary conversationalist. Firm favourites among his vast repertoire of subjects to talk about were education, hurling, farming, horse-racing, politics and, naturally, his much-adored family. Never one to shy away from a bit of craic or banter, Tony certainly lived up to one

of his very favourite Irish seanfhocail, 'aithníonn ciaróg ciaróg eile!'

In late 2011, the entire school community rejoiced when Tony became principal of Monaleen NS, and it truly was a fitting appointment for a man of his integrity and calibre. It was as principal and leader of the 860 pupil-school that Tony really came into his own. He was trusting, empathetic, nurturing, astute, innovative and progressive. Staff genuinely loved going to work each day in a school where they were valued, appreciated, listened to and held in the highest of regard. Pupils loved the fact that Tony put their happiness and wellbeing above all else, and they thrived in an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and admiration. Leadership and management skills such as these cannot be bought or taught but they certainly came naturally, and in abundance, to Tony.

During his time in office, Tony presided over a huge investment into and modernisation of the ICT infrastructure in the school, ensuring children had access to iPads, laptops, Chromebooks and state of the art interactive whiteboards. As Monaleen NS grew at a vast rate, it still retained that 'almost country', community feeling, in that everyone still looked out for and helped and supported each other. This was a tremendously important facet of Tony's vision for the school.

In addition, Tony dedicated a large portion of his time to securing the best possible educational facilities for the Monaleen school community. He spearheaded a relentless campaign for a new school building and, poignantly, yet fittingly, on January 21st 2022, Tony's last day in situ, planning permission was finally approved for a state of the art 34-classroom school. The Monaleen community owes Tony an enormous debt of gratitude for getting this project off the ground.

From the pupils' perspective, Tony was especially renowned for his colourful and trendy ties, his professional, yet stylish, attire, his penchant for celebrating big occasions in the children's lives with his trusty box of lollipops and his affirming, entertaining presence at school assemblies. He had an innate sense of morality and fairness, which ensured he was an excellent role model for staff, students and parents, alike.

Tony was a humble man, never seeking out praise or accolades, yet there is no doubt that he was an exceptional teacher, an outstanding principal and a beloved and cherished friend to so, so many. Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís! Rest easy, Boss!

Carmel Stokes,
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