



Education newsbrief

Spring 2012

The Challenge to Small Schools in 2012 and beyond...

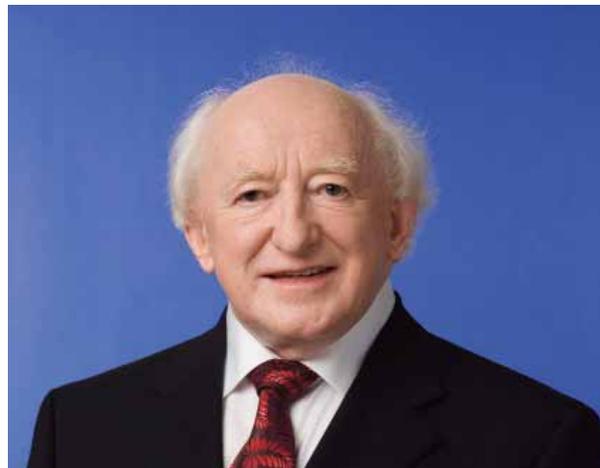
"We must seek to build together an active, inclusive citizenship, based on participation, equality, respect for all and the flowering of creativity in all its forms. A confident people is our hope, a people at ease with itself, a people that grasps the deep meaning of the proverb 'ní neart go cur le chéile' - our strength lies in our common weal - our social solidarity."

President Micheal D. Higgins,
Inauguration Speech, 11 November 2011.

Regrettably, it seems that 2012 will see the icy winds of economic rationalisation blow through smaller primary schools around the country. The "Value for Money" Small Schools Review is due to be published in February 2012. The preliminary indications are that it will define a "small school" as a school of less than fifty pupils and will focus particularly on one teacher schools. Obviously, this has major implications for Church of Ireland communities in non-urban areas around the country and is an immediate cause of concern.

The operations of schools in rural areas are being undermined through changes to school transport provisions. This is the second year we have seen an increase in the charge for this once free service and the changes to the school transport scheme have resulted in a number of schools facing difficulties in maintaining their school bus services. It has been expressed to the Minister that the withdrawal and /or dilution of the school transport service has the effect of draining the life blood from protestant schools. For rural schools, the loss of a bus service can mark a downward spiral in the life of the school.

In the Board of Education's submission on the VFM Small Schools Review to the Minister (see www.ireland.anglican.org/submissions/boe), it was highlighted that international studies of similar



President Micheal D. Higgins

policies involving the closing rural schools show that such policies were subsequently found not to be affective and were reversed. Academic studies to demonstrate the equality of performance in mixed age classes in terms of literacy and numeracy to children in larger schools were highlighted. These studies are evidence that children in smaller and/or rural schools are not academically disadvantaged as a result of receiving their primary education in a smaller school.

At a meeting in Leinster House before Christmas, the Minister for Education and Skills assured the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, the Bishop of Cork and the Secretary

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Church of Ireland Board of Education (RI)



of the Board of Education that he was not seeking to close Church of Ireland/Protestant Primary schools. The delegation expressed the concerns of teachers and parents that the unintended consequences of the general policies pursued by the Minister's Department will have a disproportionate impact on protestant primary schools. The Minister agreed to meet with the Bishops again after the publication of the VFM Small Schools Review. The Archbishop of Dublin and the Secretary of the Board have, in the last number of weeks, met with over twenty TD's and Senators in an effort to brief them and raise political awareness of the concerns of the Church of Ireland surrounding budgetary measures and recent DES policy decisions relating to education.

The Board of Education is facilitating a number of regional meetings with Patrons, Principals and Chairs of Boards of Management. The

purpose of these meetings is to collate information on a diocesan basis to be reported to the CIP SMA conference at which the Minister will be in attendance.

Schools and parents have an important role to play in lobbying their politicians at local level. It is recommended that all schools would meet with, develop and maintain close relationships with politicians in their constituencies.

Political pressure must be raised and maintained in order to safeguard the future of protestant schools. TD's and Senators should be asked to publicly agree that:

Commitment to the maintenance and support of Church of Ireland and Protestant Primary Schools is a vital and key part of building together that "inclusive community" referred to be President Higgins during his inaugural address.

'Si neart go cur le chéile'

2nd Annual CIP SMA Conference 2012

Will take place in the Kings
Hospital School, Palmerstown,
Dublin on the 3rd March 2012.

Keynote speaker:
Mr Ruairí Quinn, TD,
Minister for Education and Skills

Chair:
The Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke,
Bishop of Meath and Kildare

Participants:
The Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson,
Archbishop of Dublin
Fr Michael Drumm, Chair, Catholic
Schools Partnership
Dr Anne Lodge, Principal, CICE
Dr Ken Fennelly, C of I Education
Officer.

Further details from:
Dr Ken Fennelly, 01 4125 609 or
ken.fennelly@rcbdub.org

Transport Scheme D

At the end of the current school year, 2011/12, Remote Area Grant (Scheme D) payments for eligible children, who are attending schools under Protestant management, will be made directly by the School Transport Section of the Department of Education & Skills. This new arrangement will replace the existing process whereby payments were issued by the Church of Ireland Board of Education.

To facilitate this new agreement, and to ensure that payments are processed in a timely manner, a 'Payee Request Form' will be issued to all parents who are currently sanctioned to receive a Scheme D grant. These should be returned by the parents to the School Transport Section, Department of Education & Skills, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

We will also be sending parents a 'Statement of Attendance Form' which will need to be completed by the parents and the school principal at the end of the current school year and returned to School Transport Section. This form is also available for download from the school transport area of the Department of Education & Skills website www.education.ie

New applications for school transport will no longer be handled by the Board of Education. New families should initially contact their local Bus Éireann office to check if there is a bus service they may avail of. If there is no bus service available, parents should contact the School Transport Section on 057 - 9325466 or 057 - 932 5467.



New Boards of Management & Training 2012

Welcome to all new members of Boards of Management across the country! Following elections in October 2011, new Boards of Management have now come into effect from 01 December 2011.

While the Patron has ultimate responsibility for the school, the Board of Management manages the school on behalf of the Patron and is accountable to the Patron and the Minister. The Principal of the school is responsible for the day to day management and operations of the school and is accountable to the Board for that management. The Board is a corporate body which means its members operate as a unit rather than as individuals. The relationship between the Principal and the Chair of the Board of Management is an important conduit between the work of the Board at a “policy” and governance level and the work of the Principal on a day to day basis. Each party has a defined role, but both should support the work of the other for the good of the school as a community.

Training:

Schools are regulated areas. Legislation, Departmental Circulars and Management Agreements together with other forms of governance compliance, regulate the operation and management of all schools. Regulations for managing primary schools were compiled into five training modules and were delivered to new Boards of Management in 2007. In the intervening period school governance and management regulation have undergone a number of developments. The Primary School Management Bodies together with the Department of Education and Skills are currently reviewing and updating these training modules. On completion, trainers from each diocese will undergo training in the updated modules after which training of Boards of Management can be commenced. The responsibility for Board of Management training rests with the school Patron with the support of the Board of Education Office in coordinating and delivering the training. It is anticipated that training will be rolled out over the next few months across the country and Board members will be contacted in this respect.

National Forum on School Patronage and Pluralism in the primary sector

Minister Ruairi Quinn initiated the Forum on Patronage to explore whether there is adequate provision for social and cultural diversity in the primary sector. He asked a simple question of the participants of the Forum and the Advisory Group: How can we as a society cater for increased diversity and pluralism in our primary education system?

The Board of Education made a lengthy written submission to the Forum which was supported by an oral presentation to the Forum in April 2011 and a second oral submission in November 2011. The delegation from Board of Education comprised The Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Dr Anne Lodge, Principal of Church of Ireland College of Education and Dr. Ken Fennelly. In its submission, the Board highlighted that Protestant schools already cater for diversity and pluralism. The Board is very grateful for the support received from parents and schools around the country in compiling the survey of schools, the results of which were presented at the Forum on Patronage, in support of the Board's submission.

The Advisory Group will present its report to the Minister in the coming weeks. It is understood that a number of recommendations will be made in relation to the teaching of Religious Education, joint or shared schools, teacher education and divesting of patronage. (The Board of Education has no indication that there will be any recommendation to divest the patronage of any protestant school.) The publication of the Report is awaited with interest.



New Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú has been appointed the new Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills replacing Brigid McManus. A graduate of Gaelige from TCD, Mr. O Foghlú has a long and distinguished career in the public service and has been an Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Education and Skills for the past three and a half years, most recently with responsibility for capital funding of schools.

The Board of Education congratulates Mr. O' Foghlú on his appointment and wishes him every success in his new role in this challenging environment.

The Education (Amendment) Bill 2012

The Minister for Education and Skills published the Education (Amendment) Bill in January 2012. The Bill seeks to make a number of substantive changes to Education Act 1998. The Board of Education has a number of serious concerns in respect of certain provisions of the Bill.

There was no consultation with the Education Partners in advance of the publishing of the Bill which is a disappointment and also contrary to the “spirit of partnership” which to date has existed in the provision of education in Ireland. The Bill in its current format will provide an enhanced role for the Minister in relation to employment matters, diluting further the power of Boards of Management to employ teachers of their own choice to vacancies in their schools. The Bill is seeking to replace “agreement” with “consultation” in a number of key areas and the Board of Education is vigorously opposed to such a change. The Bill is also seeking to place redeployment on a statutory footing.

The Management Bodies for Primary Schools, in a combined effort, tabled a number of amendments to the Bill in the Seanad and will also seek to table the required amendments in the Dáil.

Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI)

It is with great disappointment and regret that the National Co-ordinator and the joint P.M.G and C.M.G committees learned that the Minister for Education and Skills had 'scrapped' (quote) the M.L.P.S.I. as of 31st December 2011.

All schools in the Initiative will be aware of this by now and will know that, after much persuasion, the project may continue until the end of the school year only.

The Project started in 1998 and was designated an Initiative in 2001. Initially there were 1300 applicant schools and 270 were selected. There are now 545 schools involved. Participation in M.L.P.S.I affords all pupils the opportunity to learn a modern language regardless of background or ability (20% of all schools involved are designated disadvantaged)

M.L.P.S.I. provides training, resources and school- based support as well as funding for visiting teachers all within budget of under 2 million Euro.

We in Ireland are already years behind our commitment to the Barcelona Agreement and the Lisbon Strategy (calling for systems to be in place by 2010 to facilitate EARLY language learning of at least 2 foreign languages)

As recently as last October The Royal Irish Academy published the National Language Strategy which called for modern languages to be integrated into the mainstream curriculum.

In such difficult economic times how can this decision be justified when 14 years of expertise will be lost and a whole generation of children will be placed at an even greater disadvantage as they compete for jobs with fellow Europeans?

On 1st February, a submission was made to the Chair and members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs , Social Protection and Education.

They were presented with an overview of 14 years of dedicated work of M.L.P.S.I., of N.C.C.A language Policy, of Early Language Learning across Europe and of International Competence.

A second document was also presented containing a large selection of testimonials from M.L.P.S.I. partner agencies (Colleges of Education ,Universities and Language Institutes), from Principals and teachers in M.L.P.S.I. schools and from Media coverage.

The National Co-ordinator and C.M.G and P.M.G committees await a response.

I would encourage all C of I schools in the Initiative to make a submission to the Church of Ireland Board of Education so that further pressure can be brought to bear in an effort to reverse this unacceptable decision.

Hazel Cawford
(representing C.of I. Board of Education on C.M.G)
February 2012.



the**beautifulgate**
CMS Ireland Annual Project 2012 Nepal



Roger Cooke and Andy McCormick after a presentation at a Clergy Day in Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh Diocese.



The Church Mission Society of Ireland

Under Strand 6 of the Religious Education Programme, a reference is made to the Church Mission Society Ireland (CMS Ireland) as an organisation that helps people and churches to 'love our neighbour.' Every year, CMS Ireland produces a resource to help children and young people discover something about a different country and explore some of the ways in which the church there love God and love others.

This year's project focuses on Nepal and comes with a Leaders' Guide, photocopiable activity books and a DVD with short films and photographs.

To find out more, visit www.cmsireland.org or contact Andy McCormick (014970931 or annualproject@cmsireland.org)

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and Croke Park Agreement

Schools and Management Bodies are referred to Circular 71/2011 which sets out **revised employment terms and conditions for SNAs**. In particular **schools are referred** Appendix 1 of the Circular which was produced by the Labour Relations Commission relating to the utilisation of the "12 Days" by schools. It is envisaged that the revised terms of employment will significantly enhance the benefit to be derived by schools from the provision of these "12 Days." This Circular should be implemented in conjunction with the Contract of Employment as per Circular 15/05.

Schools are also referred to Circular 72/2011, disciplinary and grievance procedures for SNAs. The DES has directed that copies of this circular be provided to all members of the Board of Management and that its contents be brought to the attention of all SNAs in the employment of the school including those on leave of absence.

Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP)

Schools and Management Bodies are referred to a Consultation Document issued by the teaching council in respect of a new programme which it has designed as being appropriate for a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to obtain full registration with the teaching council. This consultation document can be accessed from the Teaching Council's website. The programme will comprise a school based strand and an out-of-school strand. The cooperation and engagement of schools employing NQT's will be required in relation to the school based strand.

It is envisaged that the CEPP programme will be rolled out on a phased basis over the next four years. Schools and Management Bodies should review this document carefully and in particular, phase one (on page 17) as it is anticipated that this phase will be rolled out for the school year commencing September 2012.

Proposed new second level schools:

The Minister for Education and Skills recently announced his intention to build 26 new second level schools across the country and invited interested parties to apply for the Patronage of those schools.

The Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough, The Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson, has signalled his intention to apply for the Patronage of the proposed new school in Greystones, Co. Wicklow following evidence of parental demand for such an application. A number of other Patron bodies are also intending to apply.

Parents in the Greystones area interested in their child receiving second level education in a school under Church of Ireland patronage should please advise The Revd Baden Stanley (01 286 2968) as a matter of urgency.

In Autumn 2011 The Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough was approached by Co Dublin VEC to explore whether the Protestant community in North Dublin would be interested in being involved with their application for the proposed new second level school in Mulhuddart, North Dublin. Having consulted with representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Redeemed Christian Church of God, it was agreed that the Archbishop would agree to act as "junior partner" in the Community School model as the representative of this group of churches in support of the VEC's application. We look forward to seeing if parents in the Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown Dublin area will be interested in this collaborative venture by the VEC and the Protestant Churches to provide a new second level school in the area. Parents in the Mulhuddart area are requested to contact Dr Marie Griffin at Co Dublin VEC (01 452 9600) if they are interested in their child receiving their second level education on the basis of this model.

Applications will be submitted by all prospective Patrons by the 24th February 2012. The Minister for Education and Skills will make a determination as to the patronage of individual schools having regard to the expressed preferences of parents locally.



New Website!

The SSLI Ireland website has now launched, www.sсли.ie. This website has been created by parents to give support to other parents and to provide information in relation to the purpose of SSLI, the assessment process, the language class and other matters.

Specific Speech and Language Impairment (or disorder as it is sometimes known) is a disability which is usually diagnosed in early childhood. Children with SSLI have exceptional difficulty learning and generalising speech, language and communication skills. Their communication skills do not develop in the same way as other children's. Research suggests that SSLI occurs in about 5% of the childhood population. There is no known cause for SSLI. The speech and language difficulties in SSLI are specific and persistent and are not due to an overall learning difficulty, hearing loss, environmental deprivation or autistic spectrum disorder. SSLI is different to a speech and language delay. Speech and language delay is typically characterised by less severe difficulties which resolve over time or with therapy.

The vision for the future of this website is to publicise SSLI, educate ourselves and others more on this condition and work on trying to obtain more help and services for children with SSLI. We also intend to organise information evenings around the country with expert guest speakers.

There is a forum attached to the website so parents can chat to other parents or ask a speech & language therapist, occupational therapist or psychologist a question.

This website has been created by a minority of parents who are working off their own experiences and is still a work in progress so any feedback or help you can offer would be very much appreciated.

It is hoped that this website will assist parents in understanding more about SSLI and relieve anxiety that they may be feeling in respect of their children.

Circulars published since the September 2011 edition

GENERAL

Circular 0007/2012

Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2012/2013 School Year

February 2012

Circular 0003/2012

Budget 2012 – Public Service-Wide Review of Allowances and Premium Payments

January 2012

Circular 0070/2011

Payment of Qualification Allowances to Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools

December 2011

Circular 0066/2011

Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht)

December 2011

Circular 0065/2011

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

September 2011

Circular 0064/2011

Election of New Boards of Management of Primary Schools

September 2011

Circular 0062/2011

Travel Pass Scheme for 2012 (Tax Saver Commuter Tickets)

September 2011

Circular 0061/2011

Important Public Health Warning - Measles

September 2011

Circular 0056/2011

Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

September 2011

Circular 0053/2011

Limited alleviation of moratorium on filling of Posts of Responsibility

August 2011

Circular 0047/2011

Probationary Requirements for Registration Purposes for Primary Teachers

August 2011

Circular 0046/2011

JobBridge National Internship Scheme

October 2011

Circular 0036/2011

Cycle to Work Scheme

June 2011

SPECIAL EDUCATION

NCSE Circular 01/12

Submission of Applications for Resources for the 2012/13 School Year

February 2012

Circular 0071/2011

Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement - Special Needs Assistant

December 2011

Circular 0072/2011

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for Special Needs Assistants in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools

December 2011

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