

Board of Education Report

Secunder: The Revd Catherine Simpson

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Archbishop and Members of General Synod, it gives me great pleasure to second this report and consequently, to highlight the excellent work across the Education system in Northern Ireland.

In aiming to improve the educational experience for children and young people, the Church must focus on supporting children in both formal and informal settings, and so today I want to highlight some of the good practice: in Armagh Diocese, in St Anne's in Dungannon they have English language classes for parents of children with English as an additional language; in Down and Dromore Diocese, in Seapatrick Parish, Banbridge, church members are involved in the Equipping for Life project enriching children's education through one to one weekly sessions; in Connor Diocese, Derryvolgie Parish has been partnering with their local primary school creating a social space for chill out time, providing school counsellors and helping pupils with social skills, building their confidence and developing reassurance for parents; in Clogher Diocese the school garden project was launched, by the Garrison Group of Parishes, encouraging good mental health; and in Derry and Raphoe Diocese, Macosquin Parish Church members use their skills to help broaden the range of after-school clubs in the local primary school.

Many churches are involved in working alongside other agencies like Scripture Union, Prayer Spaces, Love for Life, Youth for Christ and Reach Mentoring. There is much to be encouraged by, as clergy and youth leaders continue to be involved in leading collective worship and connecting with stakeholders in a variety of ways.

Much has been reported about the funding crisis in the education system in Northern Ireland. There are churches up and down the country helping to plug the gap in whatever ways they can. More needs to be done, as the lack of investment in our education system will cause social problems in the future. Now is the time for our churches to invest in our local schools by creating new connections and strengthening existing ones, all the while radiating and demonstrating Christ's love.

The Board wish to thank all who serve as governors, for their time, dedication and commitment. In an era when some political representatives might like to remove church representatives from Boards of Governors, it is vital to demonstrate the contribution and invaluable impact churches have had on our education system since its inception, with church volunteers on Boards of

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Governors across Northern Ireland. Our school system would not be able to physically function without transferor representatives on Boards of Governors helping with school development plans, finance planning and human resources – all functions of good governance. As a Church, we acknowledge and are grateful for our Christian witness in schools and the Christian ethos that underpins our education system and are grateful for it. Thank you to all those, lay and clergy alike who serve as trustees and as members of Boards of Governors; we thank you for your hard work and your vital Christian witness.

In recent months teaching and non-teaching staff have shown how desperate they feel by resorting to strike action. We wish to acknowledge the poor morale among school staff and pastorally encourage all churches to reach out to support our schools in whatever way we can. The Board acknowledges that Religious Education (RE) and Relationship Sex Education (RSE) curricula would benefit from review. We are supporting the work being carried out on the RE curriculum by the four Churches through the Transferor Representatives' Council and the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service; the Board has appreciated the inclusion of TRC by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in discussions regarding RSE.

The Board welcomes the progression towards Jointly Managed Church Schools and looks forward to working on a project in the future.

Our thanks to the Revd Amanda Adams and Miss Frances Boyd for their work on the Education Authority Board and to Dr Peter Hamill in his role as Secretary to the Board of Education (Northern Ireland). The Board is grateful to all those who represent the Church of Ireland in matters of education.

Archbishop, it gives me great pleasure to second the education report.