

INSIDE:

- **DE&S Circulars**
Page 4
- **How do you
measure up?**
Page 5
- **Handling
parental
complaints**
Pages 6-7

Pupils and teachers in Jonathan Swift NS, Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow, celebrate coming second place in the Late Late Show "Design An Owl House" competition. All pupils participated in the process to give an owl a suitable habitat to live in. Seen here made out of cardboard, it will be now made from wood and hopefully owlets will make it their home soon! The school will be presented with €3000 and a visit from Don Conroy as a prize.

Web Safety

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D. has launched a new education programme on internet safety aimed at parents and teachers as well as children. This new initiative focuses on promoting safer and more effective use of social networking websites by children in Ireland and includes:

- Nationwide Internet Safety seminars for parents
- Nationwide in-service training for SPHE teachers
- Classroom resources for use in teaching the SPHE curriculum to first, second, and third years in post-primary schools
- Nationwide Social Networking workshops for primary and post-primary teachers

One NCTE initiative, www.webwise.ie, the Irish internet safety site is at the forefront of internet safety in Europe. Minister Hanafin said "*it highlights the personal safety needs of our young people when online and helps them to become safe and responsible internet users for life*".

Speaking at the launch of the Summer Works Scheme Minister Hanafin said, "*this new initiative will support both parents*

Web Safety Cont'd...

internet technologies." This new programme has been developed by the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) in partnership with the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum Support Service and the National Parents Council - Primary (NPC).

Minister Hanafin said that the European Commission carried out a widespread public consultation last year regarding how best to address internet safety issues. One of their key recommendations is the need for parents and professionals to acquire a better understanding that children and young people live in a world of ever increasing sophistication of technological means. The findings recommended that measures be taken to close the widening gap between parents, teachers and children in relation to the use of these new technologies and to internet safety awareness and safe practice.

In association with the National Parents Council (NPC-Primary), the Minister announced the national roll-out of internet safety seminars for parents. These seminars will deal with issues such as cyberbullying, the disclosing of personal information and the more effective use of social networking sites.



Boards of Management

Training

Training for all Board members will commence in late April. Please contact your diocesan board of education for details of venues and dates. There will be a presentation on the role of a board and a presentation on the appointment procedure. The presentations will include group discussion and an opportunity for questions. The content has been agreed by all the partners including management, INTO, National Parents Council and the DE&S.

Membership

Those who are employed by a school, other than the Principal and elected teacher, are precluded from serving on the employing school's board.

A guide for parents

The purpose of this booklet, published by the National Parents Council – Primary, is to inform parents and parents' associations of the basic facts about the operation of the Boards of Management.

This publication looks at ways in which parents can make the most constructive contribution to effective school management. The booklet also tells parents how and where to find additional sources of information and support.

Two copies of this booklet were sent to each primary school mid-January for the attention of the Parents' Representatives on the Board of Management. If you would like to purchase a copy of the book please contact the NPC office, the cost of the booklet is €6 per copy (this includes post & packaging). You can also download a copy from www.npc.ie.



14% of children report never having breakfast on weekdays

16% of children go to school or bed hungry because there is no food in the house

37% of children in 3rd/4th class reported having been bullied

Bullying continues to be more frequent among 10-11 year olds than older children....

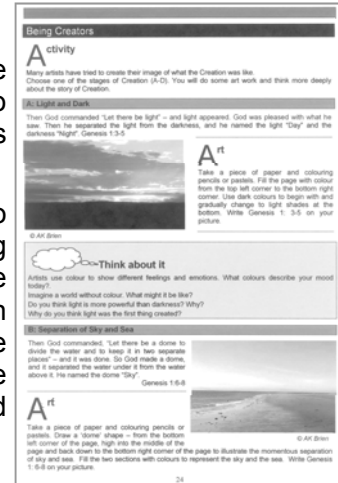
Full findings of the report are available on www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc

Follow Me

The final module for 6th or 5th/6th classes *Fit for Life* is close to completion. The pupil's text has been reviewed from the theological viewpoints of the churches involved in the project. Details and order forms will be issued to schools in June. There will be no introductory in-service as the in-service in 2007 introduced teachers to the style, content type and relevant approaches to teaching and learning in relation to the modules for 5th and 6th classes.

It is likely that there will be an introductory in-service day offered in the autumn for those teachers who have taken up posts in the schools but who had not encountered *Follow Me* during teacher training or in their previous schools.

Now that the project is virtually complete research is being undertaken to assist in decisions regarding the next step in the development in RE teaching at primary level. To this end a research group under the leadership of Luke Monahan has been contracted to review the project. This group will be in touch with schools asking for the completion of questionnaires and for some teachers to be available for focus groups. Please respond positively to these requests so that the programme can continue to reflect in content and approach what the schools and parents feel is helpful.



On Line Claim System

Notes on review meeting based on a report by William Stuart (Taney)

Schools connected by wireless connections (as opposed to satellite or land line connections) have the most reliable service. As contracts for connectivity become renewable from this year, more and more schools, where possible, are to be connected via wireless. Two schools in the Republic are not connected at all and problems still remain to connect these two schools! The final phase of the roll out (phase 5) of OLCS was completed on 3rd March 2008 when Leitrim and the remaining parts of Kerry and Mayo became operational.

Usage

Data entered by schools on the OLCS portal system remains on the portal system except for claims for payment and unpaid leave of absence notifications which move overnight from the portal to the computer interface and from there to Payroll Section.

Traffic on the system is heaviest on Fridays and coming up to mid term breaks and school holidays. (On a Friday in February 2008, 6,653 claims were processed; on the following day (Saturday) a further 2,709 claims were processed and the system coped very well with all this traffic).

Enhancements for the future

- A counter system will be inbuilt into the system which will calculate end dates for statutory leave such as maternity leave: end dates will always be accurate
- Details on Teaching Council Registration Numbers will be incorporated
- Closing dates for Payroll will be incorporated
- Approvers will have easier access viewer rights for normal leaves entered by data entry personnel
- Good Practice Guidelines will be placed on the OLCS landing page
- System will be able to calculate "in lieu" days if schools have entered closures

Security

The importance of keeping data entry role and data approver role separate was emphasised (will be included in Best Practice Guidelines).

Issues requiring further teasing out

- Insufficient drop down menus available to cover all scenarios, (particular upset expressed that teaching principal office days are identified as absence days)

Notes on an OLCS review meeting cont'd...

- The requirement for signatures of teachers in the long term future is under review
- The necessity to avoid disputes over entries made for individual teachers/SNA's requires attention: Best Practice Guidelines may outline a protocol for advising teachers and SNA's of what has been entered for them at regular intervals. The possibility of connecting this with a validation signature is to be explored
- The system cannot recognise a person as both an SNA and as a teacher in the same school year, though there are occasions when schools use people in both roles in a tight market.

NCSE Circular 01/08

This sets out the procedure for requesting resources for children with special educational needs. Schools should refer to NCSE 01/05 and Sp Ed 01/05 before completing applications. These circulars may be accessed on the National Council for Special Education www.ncse.ie.

Applications may be made for resource teaching and SNA support, school transport and assistive technology.

Applications should be submitted immediately and preferably before 17 May.



Circular 0010/2008 – the Staffing Schedule for 08/09

The following points are significant but the circular should be read in full:

- There is a slight reduction in the developing school criteria for schools with a Principal plus 7 mainstream class teachers or greater
- There are no circumstances under which a Board of Management may fill a permanent vacancy arising in September 2008 where there are teachers remaining on the relevant panel for redeployment other than through the panel. In particular, a Board of Management cannot fill a permanent vacancy by the appointment of a teacher to a temporary/fixed term contract in September 2008 while teachers remain on the relevant panel for redeployment (see 7.4)
- Under the Towards 2016 Agreement, the existing redeployment panel arrangements at primary level will be reviewed to increase their flexibility and operation. Discussions will be held with school Management Bodies and teacher representatives in this context and agreed arrangements will be incorporated with current procedures. (If you have issues to be raised at this review please advise this Board)

Reminder - Boards of Management are obliged to recruit and employ fully qualified primary teachers for any vacancy in the school, regardless of the duration of the vacancy. Boards of Management are reminded of their obligations in relation to **vetting procedures** for the employment of new teachers. Please note that "new teachers" are defined as those who are newly qualified or are re-entering the service after a period of three years or more. A Board of Management is obliged to request from the prospective employee the Vetting Letter from the Teaching Council outlining the outcome of the vetting process before a decision to appoint is taken or before the offer of a formal appointment is made.

No change - The staffing schedule is structured to ensure that all primary schools will operate to an average mainstream class size of 27 pupils.

The Panel - The names of teachers eligible for re-deployment will be available from secretaries to diocesan boards of education with effect from mid-March.

Circular 0007/2008 outlining arrangements for absence notifications is due to issue: Some details in this circular regarding the advance notice a teacher must give for notifying a board of management regarding statutory leave is in dispute (the circular indicates a longer requirement than the legislation).

How does your school measure up?

St. 'N' is a Church of Ireland school. The school's ethos is clearly articulated and is effectively communicated to the school community by means of the school website, the school brochure and through its enrolment policy. Specific aims and goals focus on the holistic and harmonious development of each child.

Board of management

The board of management provides strong and effective leadership to the school. The board is properly constituted and it meets on a monthly basis. Detailed minutes of meetings are maintained. Individual roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and assigned duties are effectively undertaken. Board members are supportive of the school's mission and vision. The work of the board is compliant with statutory requirements and departmental guidelines. Finances are carefully managed. A financial report is presented at each meeting. A review of the school's work and its accounts is communicated to the parents' association annually.

The board is actively involved in the whole-school planning process. Plans and policies are discussed, approved and ratified at meetings. Decision making procedures are open, clear and effective. A development plan is devised annually. This plan and its supporting action plans, outline a programme of work to address identified school priorities during the course of the school year. Parental involvement is actively sought to assist the board in focusing on the areas in need of development.

In-school management

The work of the principal is characterised by a high level of commitment and dedication to the school. She maintains commendable working relationships with the board, with staff, with parents and with the pupils. Her management of the day-to-day functioning of the school is very effective and she discharges her duties in a highly professional and caring manner.

The in-school management team is committed to the development of the school and assigned duties are carried out very efficiently. Opportunities are given to all staff members to participate in collaborative decision-making leading to school improvement.

Management of relationships and communication with the school community

The parents' association plays a very active role in school life. Regular newsletters keep the school community informed of upcoming events and of pupil achievements. School policies are communicated to parents by means of the school brochure and the school website.

Management of pupils

The board and staff of St. 'N' are commended for the creation of a warm, inclusive, caring atmosphere which permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils' behaviour during the evaluation period was exemplary. Initiatives such as *The Friendship Stop*, *Pupil of the Week*, an effective code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy all serve to ensure that pupils feel valued.

Teachers in the Limerick & Killaloe diocese met with the Patron and Secretary of the Diocesan Board of Education. Several principals briefed their colleagues on their experiences of WSE which included a limited subject inspection. Principals note a variation in the approach and focus on issues taken by individual inspectors. (This comment was replicated at a meeting in Kilmore.) Canon McCullagh attended and addressed various issues.

Bishop Mayes, attending his last meeting as Patron, spoke of the ways in which the role of teachers and principals had changed and paid tribute to the way the profession had adapted to changing circumstances. The assembled teachers presented him with a picture as a gesture of appreciation.

Handling parental complaints

The following is from the DE&S website and may be helpful for schools.

The complaints procedure involved for pursuing complaints at primary level:

Role of board of management

Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998 and the regulations of the Department of Education and Science, the board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. All complaints about schools should be directed in the first instance to the chairperson of the board of management.

Local complaints procedure ([INTO/Management complaints procedure](#))

Most schools operate a complaints procedure which is designed to facilitate the handling of complaints from parents concerning schools and teachers. Many schools choose to use one of the standard complaints procedures negotiated at national level between school management authorities and teacher interests [See DE&S Information Manual 12 (c)], but the board of management of the school is free to determine its own fair procedure for the handling of complaints. In general, these procedures are intended to facilitate resolution of a complaint as speedily as possible and at the simplest level.



The Department of Education and Science supports the principle that complaints regarding schools should be resolved at school level whenever possible and will only become involved in the investigation of specific complaints after every effort has been made to resolve the matter at local level.

Correspondence with the Department of Education and Science

If the Department becomes involved in investigating a complaint, the Primary Administration Section of the Department co-ordinates the matter. All correspondence should be addressed to Martine O'Riordan, Higher Executive Officer, Primary Administration 2, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Asking the Department to investigate your complaint

If you have failed to resolve your complaint at local level and wish the Department to investigate the matter, you should forward to this Section a **signed statement** containing:

- a clear account of your complaint (ideally listing each element of your complaint)
- an account of how you have attempted to bring the matter to the attention of the school and its board of management, and the reasons why you remain dissatisfied
- a statement that you agree to a copy of your complaint (and supporting documentation) being sent to the board of management of the school and to the person against whom the complaint has been made (for example any teacher involved). Without this permission, the Department will not process your complaint.

You must include the following **supporting documentation** with your statement of complaint:

- copies of any written complaint(s) that you have made to the school and/or its board of management

- copies of any correspondence between you and the school/board of management, including any decision of the board issued to you following consideration of your complaint by the board of the school
- copies of any other documentation which you wish the Department to consider.

The views of others involved in the complaint

In order to consider your complaint fully, the Department must also seek the views of the board of management of the school. On receipt of your complaint and the documentation listed above, the Section will forward a copy of your complaint and the supporting documentation to the board of management of the school. The Department will ask the board to examine your complaint and provide a written statement to this Department on the steps that have been taken to investigate and resolve the complaint in the school to date.

Examining the complaint

Following receipt of the documentation from you and from the board of management as detailed above, this Section will consider the matter and may seek the advice of the Department's Inspectorate of schools. An investigation at local level by a member of the Inspectorate may take place and a report on the outcomes of the investigation may be furnished to the Section. This process may take some time, depending on the nature of your complaint. The outcomes of the investigation and the determination of the Department on the matter will be communicated to all parties involved in due course.

The next step

If you wish to pursue your complaint in this manner, you should forward a statement of your complaint and supporting documentation to me as outlined above. Please ensure that your signed statement and your agreed copy of your complaint and supporting documentation may be forwarded to the board of management of the school.

Following a parent training day provided by the DE&S, a parent expressed concern that their name might be in the public arena following the provision of a report to the duty social worker in the HSE. This is despite the report being in good faith, in accordance with the DE&S guidelines, *Children First* and following the provision of a hypothetical scenario. This seems a particular issue when a report may concern the immediate family of a pupil.

The Church of Ireland child protection officer, Ms Renée English, a senior social worker with experience in this field, has commented that the provision of the name of the individual reporting is almost inevitable as the source of the report will clearly be from a school and the report will have been handled by the DLP. The individual teacher, in a small school, who received the concern is also likely to be identifiable.

Ms English advises that schools should be proactive to avoid such difficulties. Parents should be advised at enrolment and subsequently that the school will always contact them directly about issues which affect their children unless the relevant authorities advise or recommends otherwise. It is also important to regularly brief parents associations that reports to the HSE do not mean that abuse has happened but merely that a reasonable concern has arisen. It is also important to emphasise to the whole school community that the safety and welfare of children is considered paramount in the context of child protection issues. This is normalising what may happen while acknowledging that the issue is always uncomfortable.

Designated Liaison Persons have the protection of the Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act which provides legal protections when the guidelines are followed.



Regulations to prescribe the primary curriculum

The DE&S has commenced consultation on a draft statutory instrument under section 30 of the Education Act, 1998. This will be the first in a series to create a regulatory framework for the operation of schools. This rather dry announcement is in fact a hugely significant development as it will also provide schools with the right to modify the curriculum and periods of instruction in respect of certain students and to allow for modifying the weekly timeframe, after consultation, in regard to special projects, field trips and other visits outside school while ensuring the balance of time in each term and school year is allocated in accordance with the timeframe.

The Archbishop of Dublin, in his role as patron, has created a guide to the appointment of Principals, teachers and special needs assistants. Compliance with Appendices D and E is of course a statutory requirement but schools will find his commentary on the process very helpful. The guide may be accessed on www.dublin.anglican.org. The Bishop of Cork has provided documentation on data protection and the use of school premises as well as a guide to the appointment process. Other patrons may have similar material available for their schools.

A Principal's Day was held in Cavan attended by Principals from the diocese and neighbouring schools. Mrs Hilary McBain facilitated a session on the management demands of the small primary schools. This was both helpful and affirming. Canon McCullagh attended and facilitated a question and answer session in the afternoon.

Standardised testing

NCCA has prepared leaflets for parents to explain the process and value for the education of the individual child.

The boards of management of the three Protestant schools in Armagh attended a meeting on the key changes in the Constitution and Rules of Procedure. There was a full attendance from each board and the hospitality was provided in the St Peter's parish centre.

Principals in Dublin & Glendalough will have their study day in April to which chairpersons have also been invited.

The CIPSMA supplementary handbook is in the development stage and the editor is seeking to make it as useful as possible to schools in the sector. Suggestions for content to Rev Dr NEC Gamble.



Financial Template

A number of schools have wished to access the financial template provided by the DE&S which is a helpful computerised package.

www.education.ie >homepage>Parents & Community>Primary>Boards of Management > Financial template

Contact us

Rev Canon John McCullagh:
Direct dial 01 4125609
E.mail: john.mccullagh@rcbdub.org

Jennifer Byrne:
Direct dial 01 4125624
E.Mail: jennifer.byrne@rcbdub.org

Vicki Hastie:
Direct dial 01 4125618
E.Mail: vicki.hastie@rcbdub.org

Church of Ireland Board of Education
Church of Ireland House
Church Avenue
Rathmines
Dublin 6

Main telephone line: 01 4978422

Fax: 01 4978821

Education Newsbrief is published as a service to schools under Protestant Management, by the Church of Ireland Board of Education, to whom enquiries may be addressed. The contents of *Education Newsbrief* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Church of Ireland and should not be construed as doing so.