



EDUCATION NEWSBRIEF

Parent's Associations and Finance

Recent training events have highlighted issues regarding the management of monies raised by Parents' Associations. Various practices appear to be in place and problems have arisen where procedures are not clear or have become confused over time.

While a parent association is entitled to open an account in its own name, all monies raised in the name of the school are the responsibility of the Board of Management and form part of the annual accounts for certification/audit purposes.

Certain safeguards should be put in place, e.g. it is advisable that two people would be responsible for the signing of cheques, usually the Treasurer and the Chairperson of the Parent's Association (PA).

Full accounts must be maintained and presented to at each AGM and a copy

of the accounts also given to the Board of Management of the school.

But before any money is raised, it is advisable that some discussion should take place as to what might be most beneficial to the school. Perhaps a couple of members of the PA would meet with a couple of members of the Board of Management and a list could be drawn up from which the PA could choose.

It is inadvisable to raise money unless a specific need is identified.

Prior approval for any fund raising must be sought from the Board of Management and then the funds raised must be used for the intended purpose.

If you raise money for a piano then you must spend the money on the piano!

If, for whatever reason, the money

isn't spent on the intended purpose, then the Board must tell the PA and ask the PA to recommend another purpose.



A PA may also raise funds to cover its own costs, e.g. administration, guest speakers, etc. However, large sums of money should not be allowed to build up in the account as this can lead to misunderstandings over time. Individual parents who were perhaps very involved in particular projects may be upset if their own children do not benefit from such efforts.

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Section 29

The recent High Court case between the Department of Education and Science and St Mologa's National School in Balbriggan, Dublin, is very significant to all National Schools when considering issues surrounding enrolment polices and potential Section 29 Appeals. The Judge overturned a direction from the Department requiring it to enrol two

more pupils when it had previously turned down 41 others due to lack of space. Ms Justice Irvine ruled that the Department had failed to consider relevant matters while taking into account irrelevant factors. The full particulars and judgement on the case can be read on www.courts.ie.



This case highlights the importance for schools to have a clear rationale in determining the number of available places in the school. In the April edition of the IPPN *Leadership* magazine David Ruddy observed, "Schools can now move forward knowing that if they have a valid

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enrolment policy, that they will have nothing to fear from a Section 29 Appeal.”

Recent legal advices received by this Board would suggest that the fullness or otherwise of a school does not simply turn on a calculation of the number of standard size classrooms multiplied by 28 (September 2009). Other factors could be taken into consideration like a limited play area or the number of special needs children in a particular classroom.

We would suggest that boards of management take everything into consideration when looking at available places and take careful minutes of their decision.

A recent Section 29 Appeal (which was heard prior to the judgement issuing in respect of St Mologa's) highlighted the need for clarity within

admissions policies. It would be the norm for Church of Ireland schools to take Church of Ireland parishioners as a first priority. But what does 'Church of Ireland parishioner' mean? To avoid ambiguity, how an applicant fits into a particular category should be stated, i.e. family name on parish register, baptismal record, letter from Incumbent. Recent legal advices would suggest that Admissions policies would be stronger if Patrons determined their framework. This Board, in conjunction with legal experts, is currently working on a template which will be circulated in the first instance to Patrons.

***The bottom line is:
Your policy must be lawful
AND
You must follow it rigidly.***

The Section 29 Appeal was lost on the basis that exceptional circumstances had been taken into consideration when the family had made an application in respect of a first child a couple of years previously. The Appeals Board determined that those exceptional circumstances had not changed. The school argued there was not the same pressure on places at the time of the first enrolment, but the fullness or otherwise of the school did not appear to be a factor in the decision of the Appeals Board. Interestingly, a second Appeal (the school have a total of nine against them) was subsequently upheld on the basis that the school had adhered to its admission policy and also it was full. This went to hearing after the St Mologa's case. The school are considering going to judicial review on the first Appeal.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE TO TEACHERS

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provides confidential counselling to teachers and their immediate family members.

The Employee Assistance Service offers teachers a facility that is confidential, easily accessed and provides properly qualified and supervised practitioners.

A comment from an individual who has accessed the EAS states that "The initial telephone contact was excellent and referral to a counsellor prompt. I believe the EAS gave me a "gift"...I have actively recommended it to colleagues".

During 2008, a review of the evaluations received regarding the EAS reveal that 100% of individuals would use the service again, 100% would recommend the service to

others and 100% believe that the EAS is a positive benefit provided by the Department of Education & Science.

What is an Employee Assistance Service?

The purpose of the EAS is to provide teachers and their immediate family members with easy access to confidential short term counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. The service was introduced in 2006 as a benefit to teachers and is funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Who is the service available to?

The service is available to teachers whose positions are funded by the Department of Education and Science, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and

mother/ father where appropriate and can be accessed by a dedicated freephone number or email address.

What services are available?

Telephone Counselling – single sessions or up to six counselling sessions.

Face to Face counselling – up to six counselling sessions.

How do I know the service is confidential?

Vhi Corporate Solutions, an external provider, deliver the EAS and their staff follow strict ethical guidelines and codes of practice and are bound by the rules of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). This means that any contact with you remains confidential and that no information about you is available to anyone without your written consent.

The EAS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

For additional information on the EAS just click on to the Vhi Website.
http://www.vhi.ie/dep_edu_science/index.jsp

Contact:

Telephone: 1800 411 057

email: eas@vhics.ie

**FREEZE
FRAME!**

Marking a decade with the Primary School Curriculum

Ten years ago the world was poised to welcome in the new millennium. At the same time, the revised Primary School Curriculum arrived in schools and with it great hope and excitement about a 'new' educational experience for children as they entered the 21st century. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of principals, teachers, parents and the wider school community, what started out as an inanimate grey boxed set of curriculum documents has been transformed into enjoyable learning experiences for children throughout the country.

And so, ten years on and despite the challenging and rapidly changing educational environment, it's time to pause for a moment and take stock of schools' successes and achievements, big and small, in bringing the Primary School Curriculum to life. To mark the 10th anniversary, the NCCA is inviting all schools to get involved and to share some photos of the curriculum in action. Read on to find out how.

Capturing the curriculum in action in your school

Step 1: Choose up to three digital

photos of what best portrays your school's experience of the curriculum. There are a number of sample photos at www.getsnapping.ncca.ie that might help you here.

Step 2: Create a suitable caption for each photo. Perhaps the children can help with this.

Step 3: Submit your captioned photos at www.getsnapping.ncca.ie. Here you will also find a parental consent form. The closing date for submitting your photos is Friday 12th June.

From September to December education centres will display the captioned photos submitted by local schools. A selection of these photos will also be displayed on the NCCA website at www.ncca.ie.

School stories

If you would like to also share your school's story of innovation or creativity in a particular aspect of the curriculum, the NCCA would love to hear from you. For further information on sharing your story, please e-mail schoolstories@ncca.ie.

Finally ...

A representative selection of the captioned photos and school stories will be launched at a one-day seminar in the autumn. This seminar will highlight the impact of the Primary School Curriculum on school communities since its launch ten years ago, and consider what can be learned from the successes and challenges, particularly in the context of our changing educational landscape. The education partners together with representatives from the primary schools which contribute captioned photos and/or school stories will be invited to participate in the seminar.

Visit www.getsnapping.ncca.ie and share your school's curriculum in action moments with the NCCA!



From little seeds....

Williamstown NS, Co Galway



Recent Circulars

Please refer to the actual circular as the following may be necessarily abbreviated.

Circular 0095/2008

Travel Pass Scheme for teachers and special needs assistants.

Circular 115/2008

Substitute cover for registered teachers employed in primary schools - Amendments to existing arrangements.

Circular 0002/2009

Regulations Governing the Appointment and Retention of Teachers in Primary Schools for the School Year 2009/2010

Please note that there are currently teachers on the Panel of the following dioceses:

Dublin, Kilmore, Raphoe, Cashel and Clogher.

Circular 0005/2009

Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education - 2009/2010

Circular 0006/2009

Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development in Special Educational Needs (Autistic Spectrum Disorders) for Teachers

Circular 0007/2009

Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) for teachers working with Pupils with ASD in Special Schools, Special Classes or as Resource Teachers in mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools - 2009/2010.

Circular 0009/2009

Review of all Special Needs Assistant posts in primary, special and post primary schools by the National Council for Special Education

Circular 0022/2009

Implementation of Moratorium

With effect from 27 March 2009 schools may no longer make any appointment to a post of responsibility including those that may have fallen vacant on or before 27 March 2009. Accordingly schools must immediately cease any arrangements to fill such posts. The replacement of holders of posts of responsibility who are on leave of absence and whose posts of responsibility would normally have been replaced in an acting capacity must not be filled as they are comprehended by this moratorium.

Circular 0024/2009

Arrangements for the 2009/2010 School Year in relation to Learning Support/Resource Teacher (LS/RT) posts, Resource Teacher (RT) posts and associated part time hours.

The arrangements for 2009/2010 will be based on Circular 0034/2007 which is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie. References in Circular 0034/2007 to the school staffing schedule and panel arrangements should now be **taken to refer to the equivalent arrangements for 2009/2010.**

Schools are now requested to complete

Form LS/RT 1 - to be completed for each full time post and

Form LS/RT 2- to be completed in respect of any part time hours remaining after each full time post has been assigned 25 approved teaching hours per week and return before **Friday 22nd May 2009** to:

Primary Allocations - LSRT Posts,
Department of Education and Science,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath.

FOLLOW ME

From the outset of the Follow Me programme it has always been said that the production of each book is not the end of the process but that teachers need to continue to be supported and resourced as they teach RE. We hope that recent developments will be of use to all teachers using the programme.

Music

All schools should have received a recent mailing of a set of hymns and songs to be used in conjunction with the Follow Me series. The songs are taken from two different CD sets which can be purchased.

Hymns and Songs for Assembly is available from The Resource Centre, Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines, Dublin 6, telephone no. 01 4972821, at €153.85 for the set of CDs. *Come and Praise* is available from the BBC Bookshop www.bbcactive.com/schoolshop. There are two CDs available in this series at £17.24 each. Song books are available with each of the CDs but you may have access to many of the words of the songs in other books. If not, the words edition of *Hymns and Songs for Assembly* is available at €4.60 from the Resource Centre, and the Complete Come and Praise is available at £4.99.

Training

In the recent mailing you will have also received a form relating to in-service training. We have been made aware

of the fact that some teachers have not yet attended in-service training days. This may be because they were recently trained or have moved class. If you have not done so already, please fill in the form and return it to Jennifer Byrne so that we can plan for training in the near future.



Website

The Follow Me website is being redesigned and will be re-launched later this year providing access to many resources and IT links. It is hoped that the site will develop further and become an integral part of teaching with Follow Me.

New editions

As Here we Go and On Our Way have been available for the past eight years it has been decided to publish a 2nd edition of the Teacher's Manual. Both pupils' textbooks will remain as at present. The new Teachers' Manuals will present the lessons with a fresh, clear design and will include new Bible stories, fiction, prayers and worksheets. It is hoped that these two books will be available for September 2010. The editor would be delighted to hear from any Infant teachers who would like to be involved in this process (e.g. meeting with the editor as a group / reading and commenting on lessons / sharing ideas or resources / making suggestions for content). If you would contact the editor by email at jrwilkinson@eircom.net this would be very helpful.

TIPS FROM THE IPPN EXTRACT FROM *COMMANDMENTS FOR PRINCIPALS*

Take a complete break from school by organising a holiday which physically prevents you from being available and remember that although you are the Principal you are not indispensable.

Turn off you mobile and take a decent holiday!

What are you waiting for? Get booking!!



Extracts from the annual report to the General Synod Board of Education

March 2009

This last year has been one of change, challenge and new beginnings.

The Follow Me programme reached a point of completion with the publication of the final book in the series, Fit for Life, in September 2008. However, following a review by an external agency, the Primary RE Committee, the directors of the project, made two decisions. First of all to provide a revision of the infant programme and more significantly, to advise the Board to begin planning for a replacement programme. Such a fresh development will be a challenge but we have risen to such a challenge before so we know there is the ability, in conjunction with our partner churches, to undertake a totally new programme.

The Board's central role has been to support boards of management and to represent the Church in discussions with the Department of Education and Science and other partners. This role has been greatly impacted by the funding crisis. Schools have been affected by the reduction in capital funding. Schools seeking extensions, refurbishment or replacement have largely been put on hold. The protestant comprehensives are awaiting sanction for very significant building projects, most of which have not progressed beyond the planning stage. Likewise a number of primary schools are awaiting approval for building projects.

All schools have suffered from the announced alternations to the pupil teacher ratio and the removal of certain grants. While these cuts apply across the board, it is the economically disadvantaged family who suffer most due to the loss of book grants and the reduced supports for educational needs.

The Minister and his Department have sought to say that these measures have merely stepped us back to the position that existed four years ago. However, the situation

in schools has been changing radically in that schools now automatically accept children who in the past would have attended special schools and also accept children for who English is not their mother tongue. Coupled with a review and what will most certainly amount to cuts in the area of special needs assistants and also the limits on special education evaluation by NEPS, the pressure grows on our principals and on the volunteers who make up our Boards of Management.

At second level, there has been much concern about the removal, mid-year, of certain support grants from the Protestant fee charging sector.

A difficulty in responding to these unfair and unwarranted cuts has been the number of schools in that sector who no longer provide a realistic option for growing numbers of Protestant parents. This is also an area where there is a need for dialogue and perhaps even a review similar to that undertaken in the mid-sixties by a body set up with the authority of the General Synod.

The opening of the new school for St George's Balbriggan was a day of celebration for its board, staff and school community. There is a challenge for the Church in justifying the running of a school where the sponsoring community is in a minority. This issue extends to second-level as well and the Board may wish to begin a dialogue about the maintenance and fostering of a Christian and indeed Anglican ethos while respecting and responding to the needs of those with differing beliefs.

This has been further thrown into view by the Community National School model where the VEC is the patron. There is currently an advisory committee on which this Board is represented which is wrestling with the creation of a common RE programme for a multi-faith community while some individuals would seek to remove the provision of RE altogether.

The provision of training for boards has underlined the need for a professional approach by boards of management of national schools. The DE&S has funded the development of detailed training modules and funding has also been provided by the DE&S towards the costs of holding training events.

The Board through Education Newsbrief, myself and Vicki Hastie continue to provide a support service to schools which responds to a wide range of queries. The publication and provision of the Supplementary Handbook for schools under Protestant Management, together with the various management handbooks remain essential guides for boards.

The Minister for Education has asked the Commission on Schools Accommodation to review the minimum size required for the inception of new primary schools. He expressed surprise that a school would be sanctioned where the enrolment was projected as a minimum of 17 pupils per year. In fact such an enrolment produces over the eight years of a schools cycle a very viable school. If this figure is raised it will give huge difficulties to minority groupings to plan new schools. It will also give the DE&S a significant incentive to seek fresh rationalisation of small

schools. This may be seen as over-worrying, but many of our schools already have annual enrolments which are much less than 17 and it is key that a derogation is built into any recommendation for settled minorities who can provide sites and continuing supports for such schools. Such a derogation was included in the original recommendations of the Commission on Schools Accommodation back in 1999.

Lastly, and very importantly, just before Christmas the Board learned that they would be losing Rev Canon John McCullagh as Secretary. The Board's loss is, of course, the Diocese's gain, as John is now well settled as Incumbent in Rathdrum parish (not that he really ever left the ministry!) All I can say is that it has been a great privilege to work with John over the last ten years. Where I reach for publications and the internet for support, John could pluck information straight out of his head. He was most definitely a mine of information and all of the information was sensible and wise. He was a huge asset to this Board and will be greatly missed. We wish John every blessing in ministerial life.

Jennifer Byrne

VETTING GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Anyone coming from another jurisdiction can be vetted provided they have an address in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland although the check is currently limited. It is envisaged that links will be made with other countries in the future in order to widen the check.

In some cases workers/volunteers from abroad, having no address in this jurisdiction, only complete a Declaration Form which requests the person to confirm that they have no convictions in other jurisdictions and that there is nothing in their background that precludes them from

working with children. **Such workers/volunteers should be asked to agree to a Garda Vet after a period of six months.** This ensures that such persons enter our system and they would then be re-vetted after five years.

Persons having an address in this jurisdiction for a period of less than two years, should be asked to sign a Declaration Form in addition to the Vetting form.

A template of a Declaration Form is available from this office.



IDEAS WELCOME...

The Church of Ireland Board of Education are currently developing their own website.

If you have any ideas of what you would like to see there, please let us know!

IN BRIEF...

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOLS

Due to budget restraints in 2009, participants on LDS have not been granted the usual substitution arrangements from DES. In the past all substitution was covered directly by DES.

LDS has been endeavouring to come to some solution that makes it possible for teaching principals to continue to participate on LDS programmes with substitute cover. They are therefore hoping to introduce, with immediate effect, an arrangement whereby teaching principals attending Misneach and Forbairt Programmes will receive one out of two days substitute cover from LDS and that the teaching principal will be required to take the second day as part of their normal release days. To outline an example of this, it will mean that in one year a Misneach participant will receive two days substitute cover from LDS and will take a further two days from their release day allocation as per Circular 14-01. Programme participants will be advised of these changes in the coming weeks. Some other small scale substitution may be offered to individuals on LDS programmes at the discretion of the National Coordinator.

Keeping children safe online

Children can easily access the internet through mobile phones, ipods and game consoles, as well as the family computer.

If we are to keep them safe online we need to understand how they use the internet and how to help them have a safer and more enjoyable experience.

Kyle Petrie runs Seminars on internet safety, and over the past two years he has spoken to Parents Associations, Teachers and Pupils, giving them an insight into the technologies being used and bringing them through the basics of instant messaging, social networking etc.

Kyle can be contacted at: kylep3@mac.com



TREASURERS OF BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

Various accounting packages are available for use by Treasurers. The DE&S has one available on www.education.ie, the IPPN have *Airgead Bunscoile* and the Presentation Order also has a very easy to use product available.

However, salaries are becoming a very complex area. Apart from payslips, you have P30s, P35s, P45s, P60s and income levies to worry about. *Collsoft* has been suggested as an easy to use and low cost option. You can download a 30 day trial from <http://www.collsoft.ie/payroll.htm>.

If you know of any other low cost and easy to use packages that would be suitable for schools, we would be delighted to hear from you.

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