

General Synod Board of Education

Reports of RI and NI Boards of Education

The aims of the General Synod Board of Education are to:

- Define the policy of the Church in education, both religious and secular and, in promotion of this policy, to take such steps as may be deemed necessary to co-ordinate activities in all fields of education affecting the interests of the Church of Ireland;
- Maintain close contact with Government, the Department of Education and Skills, Diocesan Boards of Education, and other educational and school authorities with a view to ascertaining the most efficient and economical use of resources including funds, transport facilities and teachers;
- Study any legislation or proposed legislation likely to affect the educational interests of the Church of Ireland and take such action with respect thereto as it may deem necessary;
- Deliberate and confer on all educational matters affecting the interests of the Church;
- Make such enquiries as it shall deem to be requisite and communicate with government authorities and all such bodies and persons as it shall consider necessary.

A. Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

AIMS

- Shall have the power to represent the Board of Education of the General Synod in all educational matters applying solely to the Republic of Ireland;
- Will advise the General Synod of developments in educational policy in the Republic of Ireland and will represent the Church as an education partner with the Department of Education and Skills and other educational bodies;
- Support, through the *Follow Me* programme, religious education in primary schools under Protestant management;
- Provide support, training and advice to primary level patrons and boards of management;
- Undertake the processing of garda vetting applications for non-teaching employees and volunteers in Church of Ireland primary schools and employees and volunteers in parishes and other Church of Ireland organisations.

Report to General Synod RI (Synopsis version).

The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on schools has been immense. On the direction of Government all schools closed on the 13th March 2020 and all teaching moved online. While students and teachers adapted quickly to the changed circumstances the move to online teaching and ‘home schooling’ has brought anxiety and strain to households across the country. The Board engaged closely with the Department of Education on the drafting

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of a range of guidance and policy documents throughout 2020, including the education element of the ‘Roadmap’ on reopening schools. While schools reopened for in-class teaching in September 2020, the transmission rates of Covid19 increased to such a level that schools remained closed after the Christmas holidays and agreement on schools returning to in-class teaching was not reached until February 2021. It is envisaged that all primary schools will reopen fully to in-class teaching from the 15th March 2021 and second level schools will fully reopen after the Easter holidays. In July of 2020 the Minister announced a €375 million funding support package to assist schools manage the impact of Covid 19. Fee charging second level schools were initially deemed ineligible for the funding. However, following representations, the Minister agreed to permit such schools to apply for funding which would be considered on an individual school basis. The Board made detailed submissions to the Department of Education and the Joint Committee on Education and these can be viewed at: www.ireland.anglican.org/children-youth/education/boe-submissions-and-other-items-in-the-document-library.

The Board congratulates Rev Canon Dr Ian Ellis, former secretary of the Board of Education NI on his election as Bishop of Clogher and thanks the Rt Rev Patrick Rooke for his nine years of service to the Board. The Board also congratulates Ms Hazel Corrigan on her election as chairperson of the SEC. The Board conveyed its best wishes to Ms Norma Foley on her appointment as Minister for Education. The Board thanks those who represent the Board on various external educational bodies. The Board would like to express its gratitude to CIPSMA for its funding of three online board of management training modules which are available to schools to access at: www.ireland.anglican.org/children-youth/education/information-policies-roi/boards-of-management-secure-page.

The Board is grateful to CIC, DCU for an update on its work in 2020 and this report is included in the more detailed version of this Report. The Board notes that two primary schools closed in 2020 (Desertserges, Co. Cork and Rathdowney, Co. Laois) and that the patronage of two schools was divested to local Education and Training Boards to become Community National Schools (St Maelruains NS, Tallaght, Co. Dublin and Kilnarnagh NS, Co. Wexford). The Board wishes to signal to General Synod that it is currently engaging in a review of its aims and role and intends to bring forward a resolution on this matter to General Synod 2021.

A more detailed Report of the work on the activities of the Board in 2020 will be published in the online version of the ‘Book of Reports’ of the General Synod.

General Synod Board of Education (RI)

Report to General Synod 2021

Executive Summary:

1. Personalia
2. Impact of Pandemic on Schools
3. Submissions
4. Admissions to Schools (Primary)

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5. Secondary Education Committee (SEC)
6. Representation on Boards and External Bodies
7. Review of Role and Aims of (RI) Board
8. Church of Ireland Centre, DCU, Update 2020
9. School Closures
10. Board of Management Training (Primary)
11. Appendix 1 – Letter to Minister for Education, Ms Norma Foley, TD.

1. Personalia

In 2020 the Board noted changes in both its own membership and in the wider field of education management. After serving nine years on the Board, Bishop Patrick Rooke indicated to the House of Bishops his intention to resign from the Board. The Board wishes to record its thanks to Bishop Rooke for his contribution to the work of the Board over his nine years on the Board. The Board looks forward to receiving the name of his successor on the Board from the House of Bishops in due course. The Board was delighted to learn of the election of the former secretary of the Board of Education NI, Canon Dr Ian Ellis to the See of Clogher. The Board wishes the bishop-elect every good wish as he begins a new ministry in the Diocese of Clogher and to the church.

The Board noted the election of Ms Hazel Corrigan, Honorary Secretary of the General Synod and member of the Board as Chairperson of the SEC (in succession to the Rev Canon Katherine Poulton). The Board wishes Ms Corrigan every success as chairperson of this important support body to second level students and parents attending Church of Ireland and Protestant second level schools. Further information on the SEC is detailed in this Report (below).

In the field of education management, the Board noted that Ms Breda Corr, former general secretary of the National Association of Boards of Management of Special Schools took up a new post with the National Council for Special Education. Ms Corr was a valued colleague and contributed to numerous conferences organised by the Board and CIPSMA. The Board wishes Ms Corr well in her new appointment.

The Board noted also the retirement of Mr Paul Rowe as CEO of Educate Together and the appointment of Dr Emer Nolan as his successor. The Secretary conveyed to Dr Nolan the congratulations and best wishes of the Board on her appointment and wished Mr Rowe well on his retirement.

The Board noted that Mr Joe McHugh, TD. concluded his term of office as Minister for Education and Skills in May 2020. During his time as Minister, Mr McHugh made numerous visits to Church of Ireland primary and post-primary schools, and indeed opened the new building at St Patricks Cathedral Grammar School. Mr McHugh took a special interest in supporting the future of rural primary schools, a topic of particular importance to many Church of Ireland schools, dioceses and patrons. The Secretary conveyed the thanks of the Board for his service as Minister together with good wishes for the future. Ms Norma Foley was appointed as Minister for Education in May 2020 and Archbishop Jackson, as Chairman of the Board, wished Ms Foley every success in her new role.

The Board noted that following the 2020 general election the designation of the Department of Education and Skills was changed to the Department of Education. It was further noted

that a new department was created: the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

2. Impact of the Pandemic on Schools

Members of General Synod will be fully aware of the extraordinary general impact of the coronavirus pandemic (Covid 19). It is important to record however that the impact of Covid 19 on education at all levels has been immense. The first case of Covid 19 in Ireland was announced on 1st March 2020. Government moved quickly to introduce a range of measures aimed at restricting the opportunity for the virus to transmit among the population. On the 12th March 2020, in an unprecedented move (but in accordance with the provisions of the Public Health Act 1947 and acting on the advice of the National Public Health Advisory Team – Nphet) An Taoiseach, Mr Leo Varadkar, TD., announced that all pre-schools, primary, post-primary schools, further and higher education colleges were to close from Friday the 13th March. This announcement marked the beginning of an awareness among not only those involved in education but of the entire population of the seriousness of Covid 19. With extraordinary alacrity, schools moved the delivery and continuation of teaching and learning to online platforms with learners of all ages, quickly becoming engaged in online learning.

In making the announcement of school closures due to the pandemic An Taoiseach commented:

“Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine – we all live in one another’s shadow. If there was ever a time for us to appreciate how closely we are connected, how much what we do matters to others, how much we rely on each other, this is it. This is a time where we all need to work together for the best possible outcome for our students. The support of everyone across the sector is vital, as we all strive to ensure that this threat is dealt with as effectively as possible.”

The school closure announced on the 12th March 2020 was initially meant to last two weeks. However, the rise in Covid 19 cases throughout the following months meant that school closure was maintained until the end of the school year. At second level, the Leaving Certificate examinations in June were cancelled with predicted or ‘calculated’ grades being awarded to students who were also given the option of sitting the Leaving Certificate later in the year.

From the announcement of the school closures and the onset of the pandemic the Department of Education and Skills took a strong positional role in steering the education system. The Secretary, on behalf of the Board and the Church of Ireland primary schools, was part of the close consultation group of Education Partners that met, initially twice weekly and subsequently weekly, with senior officials of the Department of Education to co-ordinate policy approaches. However, decision making on all aspects of how the pandemic was managed in schools remained with the Department of Education and Government.

Schools reopened in September 2020 but with a variety of protocols and strategies to minimise virus transmission such as the wearing of masks, regular hand washing, use of hand sanitisers, enhanced cleaning and social distancing. Despite these preventive measures some students and school staff contracted the Covid 19. Following the closure for the Christmas holidays, it was decided, after intense negotiations with the unions for

teachers and ancillary staff not to reopen schools after the Christmas holidays. Following further discussions between all education stakeholders, it was agreed that schools would reopen on a phased basis (starting with Special schools) from February 2021 with all primary schools reopening on the 15th March 2021. Therefore, schools were open in person for only four months during the year from March 2020 to March 2021 with education continuing online during the normal term times.

In July the Minister announced a special support package for schools totalling €375 million. This funding provided for an additional 1,080 teaching posts, 120 additional guidance posts at second level, substitution coverage for school staff affected by covid19, supervision coverage and other staffing supports. In addition, the support package provided funding for building alteration costs and other logistical costs associated with ensuring schools were physically equipped to reopen safely. Crucially however, schools which charged tuition fees were deemed ineligible to receive any funding under this support package. This affected nineteen second level schools under Church of Ireland and Protestant patronage. High level representations were made on this issue by the chairman of the Board, Archbishop Jackson, who wrote to the Minister expressing disquiet at the decision (see appendix 1). Following such representations, the Minister agreed to allow such schools to apply for funding on the basis that the Department would determine funding to each school on an individual basis. While this arrangement was not satisfactory, and failed to recognise the equality based argument that in a time of pandemic a distinction in supports should not be made between schools on the basis of public health, it did release a portion of funding from the support package to such second level schools.

The Board wishes to take this opportunity to express its admiration and thanks to Boards of Management, school leaders, teachers and all school staff for the extraordinary work undertaken to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning during the phase of physical school closures and in organising the reopening of schools in September 2020.

3. Submissions

During the course of 2020 the Board made formal submissions to the Department of Education on a range of topics and observations on draft circulars. In particular, in May 2020 the Board made a submission on the implications and effects of reopening schools in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic. The submission raised a variety of issues which the Board sought the Department of Education to address in advance of reopening schools for September 2020. These issues included: finance and funding; cleaning and hygiene in schools; delivering teaching and learning in the classroom safely; impact on pupils with special and additional needs; impact on individuals categorised as high risk and very high risk regarding Covid 19 transmission; legal, insurance and regulatory considerations for Boards of Management. The content of this submission was considered by the Department of Education in drafting its guidance to schools on reopening and the wider ‘Roadmap’. The Board was invited by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to make a number of submissions to assist the Joint Committee with its deliberations. In June 2020, a submission was made to the Joint Committee outlining the challenges facing schools in their reopening. The Joint Committee requested a further submission in October 2020 on the topic of ‘ensuring that schools are open in a manner that is both safe and sustainable during the Covid 19

pandemic’. Both of these submissions informed the subsequent report issued by the Joint Oireachtas Committee in January 2021. The Joint Oireachtas Committee requested a further submission on the topic of ‘Anti-bullying and Wellbeing’ in February 2021. To assist the Joint Committee in its deliberations, the Primary Education Partners (comprised of all the primary level management bodies of which the Board is a member) provided the Joint Committee with a briefing paper indicating the range of research material on this complex topic.

The Board wishes to record its thanks to Board Members, Bishop Michael Burrows and the chairman for reviewing each submission, in each case within a tight timeframe and to the Secretary for drafting the submissions.

Submissions made by the Board are available to view at:

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/children-youth/education/boe-submissions-and-other-items-in-the-document-library>

4. Admissions to School (Primary)

As set out in the 2020 report to General Synod, a number of provisions of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 were commenced in 2020. As a result of the legislation, all primary schools reviewed and updated their admission policies which were approved by their patron in the spring of 2020. The revised admission policies took affect for admissions to primary schools for the 2020/2021 school year.

5. Secondary Education Committee (SEC)

The SEC continues to provide financial support to second level students who are of a Protestant denomination. Over sixty Protestant denominations are currently recognised for grant eligibility purposes. In 2019/20 over €6.3 million in grant support was paid to approximately 1,600 recipients. The SEC grant is fully funded by the Department of Education and the members of Committee are elected by the Church of Ireland, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker).

The SEC Annual Report is available to view at: <https://secgrant.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SEC-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf>

6. Representation on Boards

The Board is grateful to those who continue to represent it with external bodies. In 2020 the Board nominated Ms Claire Halligan, assistant lecturer at the school of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood, DCU, to the Board for Early Childhood and Primary, NCCA. The Board is grateful to Ms Halligan for agreeing to take on this role and continues to express its thanks to Board members Mrs Joyce Perdue, the Rev Professor Anne Lodge and the chairman for their continuing engagement with the NCCA on behalf of the Board. During the course of 2020 the members of the Board and secretariat were involved in various representations with a range of national bodies and agencies, including:

- The Teaching Council with regard to Teacher Supply and Cosán
- Discussions on and meetings with schools’ insurers,
- FSSU working group,
- Membership of School Procurement Advisory Committee
- Steering Committee on Board of Management training,

- SEAI with regard to energy awareness and reporting requirements on energy
- The Centre for School Leadership (CSL)

7. Review of Role and Aims of Board

The role and aims of the Board are set out in chapter 19 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland and were last revised for the RI Board in 1994 (having first been adopted in 1965). The Board has formed the view that it is necessary to review those aims and its role with a view to revising them to reflect the reality of the work and purpose of the Board in the present day. The Board wishes to signal to General Synod that it intends to bring forward proposals in this regard when finalised.

8. Church of Ireland Centre, DCU Update 2020

The core work of the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU focuses on the Bachelor of Education programme. The Centre delivers the key components to the Centre's students. These components are:

- (a) the *Religious Education Certificate in Teaching the Follow Me Programme* co-ordinated for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year B.Eds. by Mrs Jacqui Wilkinson;
- (b) teaching the *Religions, Ethics, Morals and Values* modules to 1st, 2nd and 3rd years. These modules, taught by Mrs Wilkinson and Rev Prof Anne Lodge, complement the RE Certificate; (c) co-ordination of the five modules to 2nd, 3rd and 4th years particularly to prepare the students to work in small schools and to teach multi-level classes;
- (d) procuring specialist supports in Irish for 1st years;
- (e) Ms Geraldine O'Connor organises and oversees the majority of the Church of Ireland Centre students' placements in schools under Church of Ireland and other reformed Christian patronage.

The 120 Centre B.Ed. students across 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year are also part of the larger B.Ed. cohort in DCU. This primary teacher education programme has several pathways through it. The Centre Director Rev Prof Lodge takes responsibility annually for reviewing all applicants wishing to follow the Centre's pathway through the Bachelor of Education programme. To this end, the Centre produces information for post-primary schools and deals with many enquiries about the pathway.

In September 2020, a new cohort of 32 students commenced 1st year of the B.Ed. programme with the Centre. These students come from all around the Republic of Ireland. Due to the impact of Covid, University teaching moved mainly online from mid-March 2020. The Centre has continued to find online ways to ensure our student teachers engage with personnel from our network of schools, including inviting expert contributions to the small schools' specialism modules and the RE Cert. The Centre held an online graduation ceremony in Nov 2020 for our most recent graduates who are working in primary schools all around the Republic of Ireland, many in permanent or one-year posts.

Mrs Wilkinson and Rev Prof Lodge continue to input into the Bachelor of Religious Education (initial teacher education programme for post-primary religion teachers) and the MA in Chaplaincy. They give inputs about Church of Ireland schools and context, and offer specific support to Church of Ireland students on these programmes. The Church of Ireland Centre, DCU, also liaises with primary schools under Church of Ireland and other

reformed Christian patronage. The Centre sends a detailed Newsletter out to its school network three times a year and this continued during lockdown. From April to June 2020, schools were offered weekly lesson packs for RE which were based on the *Follow Me* programme. Mrs Wilkinson devised three lesson packs per week (junior classes/ middle classes/ senior classes) for remote teaching/ home based learning and sent them to over 100 teachers who requested them. In September 2020, all schools connected with the Church of Ireland Centre, DCU were sent a Beginning of School Year assembly for use in the classroom. This was followed by a Harvest assembly and Advent assembly, all for use in school classrooms. An Advent project saw schools submit images of classroom and school cribs for a shared slide show which was released to schools and on social media before the end of term. We invite members of Synod to visit the Church of Ireland Centre's website to read our online Newsletters and catch up with our latest news and the range of our activities: <https://www.dcu.ie/church-of-ireland-centre/index.shtml>

9. School Closures and Divestment of Patronage

The Board learned with regret that despite strong efforts locally, two primary schools closed in 2020/2021 due to enrolment falling below the point of continued viability: Rathdowney NS., Co. Laois and Desertserges NS, Co Cork.

Following detailed discussions with Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB), the Bishop of Ferns, divested Kilnamanagh NS, Co. Wexford to WWETB which opened as Kilnamanagh Community National School in September 2020.

Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board (DDLETB) has been involved in the management of St Maelruains NS, Tallaght, Co. Dublin for a number of years. Following engagement with the parent body and staff, the Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough decided to divest the patronage of the school to DDLETB which opened as Tallaght Community National School in September 2020.

It is hoped that divestment will allow the schools to continue and flourish by serving the wider community in each area.

10. Board of Management Training (Primary)

The Board facilitates and co-ordinates training for Boards of Management at primary level, in co-operation with patrons and dioceses. Prior to Covid 19, face to face training for Boards of Management was provided in each diocese but due to the pandemic, Board of Management training moved online. The Board wishes to record its grateful thanks to CIPSMA who provided funding for the production costs of the online training and also to various diocesan boards of education who gave donations towards the costs of providing online training.

Three modules of training are available to view online. Board of Management members should contact their school principal who has been provided with the relevant login details to the secure education area of the Ireland.anglican.org website.



Appendix 1
Letter from Archbishop Jackson to the Minister for Education Re: Covid19 Support
Package to Second Level Schools (fee-charging):

CHURCH OF IRELAND

**The General Synod Board of Education (Republic of
Ireland)**

Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6

Tel:(+3531) 4125609
Email: boe@rcbdub.org

Date: 26th August 2020

Ms Norma Foley, TD.,
Minister for Education,
Department of Education,
Marlborough St,
Dublin 1.

Dear Minister Foley,

In these unprecedented times, I wish to thank you and your Department for all you are doing to support the reopening of schools, both primary and post-primary, in the coming weeks. As you know, these recent months have been a time of great stress and strain for school leaders in particular and school communities more generally. The opening of the 2020/21 school year brings a mixture of hope and anxiety.

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This anxiety was exacerbated when our second level schools (which charge tuition fees – as a result of an arrangement with the State dating back to the introduction of the free fees scheme by your predecessor, Donogh O'Malley, in 1968) learned that they were to be regarded as ineligible for any of the covid-19 resources and supports announced in connection with reopening schools this September.

It had been assumed –erroneously, as it turns out – that the Government would take a public health approach and set aside the standard school funding criteria. This was based on the premise that we are dealing with a World Health Organisation declared pandemic and that the coronavirus is no respecter of persons or of the type of school a young person attends. I understand, from my contact with both the ASTI and the JMB, that it was never indicated at all in discussions prior to the public announcement, that a differentiation was to be made between types of schools on access to covid-19 resources and supports. As you can imagine, this came as total shock to the leadership in the schools concerned.

I recognise that you made a decision, subsequently, to take cognizance of the fact that the onset of the coronavirus pandemic was not predicted by schools (or anybody else) and that they could not possibly have budgeted for such a 'once in a lifetime' occurrence. School Management and School Leaders are grateful for the opportunity to seek access to resources on a 'case by case' basis and to bid for a proportion of the announced funding and supports. However, it is regrettably the case that a differentiation continues to be made between school types on both the accessing and the allocation of public health funding to schools. It is our considered view that the safety of both staff and students is being put at risk by such a differentiation.

In that connection, the approach taken by your Department and Government on this issue seems significantly at variance with the more general approach in supporting private businesses, as outlined in the 'July Stimulus' package. Schools, even ones which charge for tuition, are non-profit entities whereas private businesses are for-profit enterprises. Many find it hard to fathom that a private business can receive public money to support them during the covid-19 pandemic but specific schools may not (simply because such schools charge for tuition).

At this juncture, with schools currently in the process of reopening, my focus is on the young people returning to school and the continuity of teaching and learning. Young people have contended with huge levels of stress, strain and disruption over the last five months – unprecedented, to put it mildly. I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that we should focus, as a matter of urgency, on securing the safety of every young person. All schools will seek to make the forthcoming school year as 'normal' and stress-free as possible, irrespective of the real or perceived economic status of the parents of their students. The overriding concern for school leaders and management is to seek to ensure that schools are a safe environment for students and for staff.

Parents have a rightful expectation that the State shall provide equality of provision to their children in the reopening of schools and in the fight to stop the spread of covid-19.

If the Government can provide funds to private businesses in the State, it should certainly be able to provide funding to all schools in the State irrespective of their fee-charging status. I repeat my statement above that the security and safety of students and staff remains paramount. In this regard, I ask you to set aside the 'usual' eligibility criteria for the

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allocation of funds to schools and to apply the ‘Roadmap for the safe reopening of schools’ to every school in the country.

May I reiterate my good wishes for you personally as you face into the major task of ensuring the reopening of all schools nationwide and to thank you again for the progress that has been made on addressing this issue to date.

I remain available to meet with you at your nearest convenience to discuss these and other matters.

Yours sincerely,

The Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson
Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough
Chairman, General Synod Board of Education (RI)
School Patron.

CC:

An Taoiseach	Mr Michael Martin, TD
An Tánaiste	Dr Leo Varadkar, TD
General Secretary, JMB	Mr John Curtis
General Secretary, ASTI	Mr Ciaran Christie
Secretary General DES	An t-Uasal Sean O’Fhoglú
President of the Irish School Headmasters Association	Ms Jill Storey
General Secretary National Parents Council - PP	Mr Patrick Empey
Chairman, Council of Governors of Protestant Second Level Schools	Mr Leslie Ruttle
Secretary, General Synod Board of Education (RI)	Dr Ken Fennelly
Secretary of the House of Bishops (COI)	Ms Karen Seaman
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Rt Rev Dr David Bruce
President of the Methodist Church in Ireland	Rev Tom McKnight

Board of Education (NI) Summary Report

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All our lives have been changed by Covid-19 and the impact on society, never more so in schools. The Board of Education (NI) wishes to commend the resilience of all pupils and their parents / guardian through these difficult times. The Board of Education (NI) thanks all principals, teachers, staff, and governors for their work in keeping learning going both in schools and at home over this extraordinary year.

Education Authority

In 1 April 2020 Miss Frances Boyd joined the Rev Amanda Adams as a second Church of Ireland representative on the Education Authority (EA) Board. The Reverend Adams has served on the EA Board since 1 April 2015. Her term of office is due to end on 31 March 2024. Not only has Miss Boyd brought a wealth of experience in education to her role on the EA Board but her presence would provide continuity when the EA Board is reconstituted in 2024.

Representation on the Education Authority Board continues to ensure that the three largest Protestant churches can maintain their direct influence in education in furtherance of their statutory rights and the missional role of the Church. In addition to providing a de facto voice for the over 1500 transferor governors who serve on the Governing Boards of their local schools, the church representatives provide a voice for Controlled Schools.

Transferors Representatives' Council

The TRC continues to represent the three largest protestant churches at all levels of education. The TRC is chaired by Miss Rosemary Rainey OBE (Methodist representative) and the four Church of Ireland representatives are Bishop Andrew Forster, Rev Amanda Adams, Rev Catherine Simpson and Dr Hamill. Dr Hamill represents the TRC at all levels of the Area Planning structures overseen by the Department of Education.

The TRC has been working with representatives from the Catholic Church to agree the conditions required for creating Jointly Managed Church Schools. The working group have agreed on an ethos document, a guide to creating such a school and minimum conditions for consideration of such a school. This documents are being put forward for approval at the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist Conference. The motion before synod asks for approval of the relevant documents.

Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC)

Dr Hamill is a representative of the TRC on the Board of CSSC. CSSC grows in stature in representing Controlled schools in Northern Ireland. In January 2021, Mr Barry Mullholland, CEO of CSSC moved on to become Chair of the Education Authority. The Board of Education NI wish him well in his new role and look forward to working with him in this capacity.

Funding

The Board of Education NI has continued its funding scheme aimed at empowering parishes to engage more with their local schools. To date the Board has provided funding support for a further four projects, totalling £4750.

Membership

The Board was devastated at the passing of Mrs Helen McClenaghan. Mrs McClenaghan was a dedicated member of the Board of Education NI and we will miss her wisdom and humour greatly. Mr Robin McLoughlin, head teacher, and Mrs Dianne Cheshire, teacher, joined as co-opted members of the Board.

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AIMS

The current aims of the Board of Education NI are, to:

- Develop, in conjunction with other churches, a clear and shared vision of education shaped by core values of the Christian faith;
- Advise the Synod of developments in educational policy in NI and represent the Church as an educational partner to the Department of Education and other educational bodies;
- Liaise with other churches within the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) in promoting the interests and safeguarding the rights of transferors;
- Facilitate the nomination of transferor governors to controlled primary and post-primary schools.
- Make submissions to relevant government departmental consultations.
- Engage with the Education Authority, the Controlled Schools Support Council and other sectoral bodies.
- Engage with Institutions of Higher Education regarding the future preparation of teachers for the Controlled sector;
- Seek, in conjunction with other churches, continued curriculum support of the RE core syllabus in schools;
- Contribute to training and support for children's ministry in parishes, in particular as a member of the Church of Ireland Children's Ministry Network.

Report

1. Covid-19

All our lives have been changed by Covid-19 and the impact on society, never more so in schools. The Board of Education (NI) wishes to commend the resilience of all pupils and their parents / guardian through these difficult times. The Board of Education (NI) thanks all principals, teachers, staff, and governors for their work in keeping learning going both in schools and at home over this extraordinary year.

In particular the Board of Education NI notes the impact of the cancellation of the AQE and GL exams used by selective schools in Northern Ireland. The Board has been greatly concerned at the on/off nature of these tests and the emotional impact on the children and

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parents involved. A further impact on schools and exams has been the cancellation of GCSE, A Levels, and vocational exams. The Board is concerned that a fair system is put in place and has made representation to CCEA regarding the way these exams were administered in 2020, the Board hopes this series of events will not be repeated and a clear, fair and robust system will be in place for 2021.

2. Education Authority (EA)

In 1 April 2020 Miss Frances Boyd joined the Rev Amanda Adams as a second Church of Ireland representative on the Education Authority (EA) Board. The Reverend Adams has served on the EA Board since 1 April 2015. Her term of office is due to end on 31 March 2024. Not only has Miss Boyd brought a wealth of experience in education to her role on the EA Board but her presence would provide continuity when the EA Board is reconstituted in 2024.

The Education Authority is the managing authority for 522 controlled schools in Northern Ireland and also has statutory responsibilities in respect of all schools and Youth Service Provision. The EA Board has oversight responsibility for a budget of over £2 billion per annum, the welfare and performance of over 44,000 staff who provide an education for over 340,000 pupils, including those with special needs. The Board members are accountable to the Department of Education and ultimately the Minister of Education for their performance. The Board of Education (NI) would wish to thank both Revd. Adams and Miss Boyd for their work on the EA Board.

Representation on the Education Authority Board continues to ensure that the three largest Protestant churches can maintain their direct influence in education in furtherance of their statutory rights and the missional role of the Church. In addition to providing a de facto voice for the over 1500 transferor governors who serve on the Governing Boards of their local schools, the church representatives provide a voice for Controlled Schools.

In the past year the work of the Education Authority has been dominated by the need to manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the provision of education for children and young people. During periods of “lockdown”, the Education Authority assisted vulnerable families and the socially disadvantaged in a number of ways. The EA Board also worked to ensure that provision was put in place to help children to catch up on lost learning when schools were open and also encouraged initiatives to support the welfare of children and staff. There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic will have long term implications for children and their education.

In the short-term it considerably slowed the progress that was being made with Shared Education as Covid-19 restrictions prevented pupils from different schools meeting together. Despite this, established school partnerships still found ways of maintaining contact which reflects well on the imbedding of a sharing ethos. In addition, the EA Board has overseen a major review of Special Needs provision that has resulted in significant improvements. The complexities surrounding Special Needs and recent changes to legislation mean that there is still much to be done in order that increasing demand can be met. The EA Board further reviewed its own structures and effectiveness as members

sought to improve their oversight and governance. It is a significant strength of the Board that it is cross community and has maintained an impressive unity despite its diversity.

The direct involvement of the Church of Ireland in the work of the Education Authority is a practical expression of the church's concern for the moral, social, intellectual, physical and mental development of the next generation. Children are the focus of the Board's work and encouraging the potential of each individual child is its reason for being. The Board of Education NI's participation in the work of the Education Authority remains an important conduit for the church to reflect Christ and, with God's help, to be humble instruments of His blessing.

3. Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC)

TRC has held meetings with a range of key stakeholders in the education sector including the Minister for Education, Permanent Secretary for Department of Education, the Education Authority, Stranmillis College, Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC), and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Catholic Trustees Support Service, and Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. The TRC has also engaged with local political parties to ensure they keep education at the forefront of their policies.

The TRC has gained a place at all levels of Area Planning including: the Department of Education Area Planning Strategic Group (APSG); the Area Planning Working Group (APWG); and the Area Planning Local Groups (APLG). Dr Hamill is the TRC representative on APSG, APWG and the South East APLG which includes the Church of Ireland schools.

The TRC ran three seminars supported by Love for Life and Evangelical Alliance across NI to look at how to deal with tricky moral issues that may occur in schools.

The TRC has been working with representatives from the Catholic Church to agree the conditions required for creating Jointly Manged Church Schools. The working group have agreed on an ethos document, a guide to creating such a school and minimum conditions for consideration of such a school. This documents are being put forward for approval at the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist Conference. The motion before synod asks for approval of the relevant documents.

The TRC is chaired by Miss Rosemary Rainey OBE (Methodist representative) and the four Church of Ireland representatives are Bishop Andrew Forster, Rev Amanda Adams, Rev Catherine Simpson and Dr Hamill.

4. Controlled School Support Council

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) is the advocacy body for Northern Ireland's controlled schools. Established in September 2016, it is gone from strength to strength and more than 95% of controlled Schools are members.

Dr Hamill is the Church of Ireland TRC representative on the CSSC Board. CSSC has gone from strength to strength raising the profile of the Controlled Sector. CSSC has lobbied on

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behalf of the sector on a range of issues including funding, standards, state of buildings and vexatious complaints. The Board of Education (NI) is delighted the impact CSSC has made in such a short period of time. The CSSC is also involved in Area Planning which is a major and comprehensive review of educational provision across Northern Ireland. CSSC supports schools facing changes and comments directly on the individual development proposals published by the Education Authority.

In January 2021, Mr Barry Mullholland, CEO of CSSC moved on to become Chair of the Education Authority. The Board of Education NI wish him well in his new role and look forward to working with him in this capacity.

5. Board of Education NI Funding Scheme

The Board of Education NI has continued its funding scheme aimed at empowering parishes to engage more with their local schools. To date the Board has provided funding support for a further four projects, totalling £4750:

- St Augustine's, Londonderry - History Space for local schools – funding is for setting up the space and work with two local special schools
- St Mark's, Portadown - Well-being project for P7 group including practical skills such as gardening and cooking - funding is for resources for the project.
- St Peter's and St James', Antrim Road, Belfast - Transforming lives programme – training mentors to give one to one support in local schools on emotional health – funding is for work with TLG and costs of training mentors.
 - Faughanvale, Eglinton - Facilitate assemblies in an outdoor context or in individual classes during this period when there can be no assemblies together as a school - funding for equipment and printed materials.

Further funding has been approved for the following project but not yet paid out:

- St Paul's, Lisburn - Volunteer tutors working in local schools supporting children on a one to one basis – funding is for books to support the tutors

6. Children's Ministry

The Board of Education (NI) has been part of discussions to merge the Sunday School Society for Ireland and the Children's Ministry Network into a new Children's and Family Board. The Board of Education (NI) welcomes this development and looks forward to the new ministry strand as a core part of the work of the Church of Ireland.

7. Membership

The Board was devastated at the passing of Mrs Helen McClenaghan. Mrs McClenaghan was a true ambassador for children and young people over many years in the education system. She was a dedicated member of the Board of Education NI and we will miss her wisdom and humour greatly.

Mr Robin McLoughlin, head teacher, and Mrs Dianne Cheshire, teacher, joined as co-opted members of the Board.

The House of Bishops nominated Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Bishop of Derry, to represent them on the Board of Education NI.

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The Board wishes to thank Dr Peter Hamill for his ongoing service and commitment to the Board.

THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Ms H. Corrigan
Rev Canon GV Wharton

Mr K Gibson
Rev Malcolm Kingston

Elected members

Armagh	Rev Malcolm Kingston
Clogher	Mr T Flannagan Vacant
Derry and Raphoe	Ms S Hogg Rev Canon H Gilmore
Down	Ms A Reid Rev C Simpson
Connor	Vacant Rev I Magowan
Kilmore	Dr KF Dunn Very Rev N Crossey
Tuam	Mrs C Poyntz Rev Canon DTS Clements
Dublin	Professor P Johnston Rev Dr W Olhausen
Meath	Ms S Rusk Rev Canon JDM Clarke
Cashel Ferns and Ossory	Mrs F Higgins Rev Canon PA Harvey
Cork	Mrs M Jacob Ven AM Wilkinson
Limerick and Killaloe	Mr W Baker Rev J Godfrey Mrs M Brickenden

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Co-opted members (including representatives of teachers)

1. Mrs R Forde
2. Rev Canon BJG O'Rourke
3. Very Rev N Sloane (Sunday School Society)
4. Rev Prof A Lodge (Third Level)
5. Mr M Hall (ISA)
6. Mr S Thompson (ISA)
7. Mr A Forrest (ISA)
8. Mr Kieran Sparling (ASTI)
9. Mrs S Hall (ASTI)
10. Mr S Henry (CIYD)
11. Mr B Williams (TUI)
12. Mrs J Perdue (PSCICE)
13. Ms R Fraser (PSCICE)
14. Ms S Richards (PSCICE)
15. Mr A Oughton
16. Mr S. Grahsam (CIYD)

Observers:

Ms K Jardine
(Presbyterian Church)
Ms D Wood
(Methodist Church)

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Members:

Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev Dr R Clarke (retired 31st January 2020). Most Rev
McDowell (As of 20th April 2020)
Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev A Forster

(Following a review of membership, the House of Bishops in September 2020 nominated two members to be part of the Board as per above. The Bishops below were members until August 2020)

Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev David McClay (As of 25th January 2020)
Bishop of Connor, Vacant
Bishop of Clogher, Rt Rev Dr IW Ellis (from 25th April 2021) (Rt Rev FJ McDowell until 20th April 2020)
Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev Dr SF Glenfield

Rt Rev G Davison (Clerical Hon Sec) (Consecrated Bishop of Connor in September 2020)
Mr Ken Gibson (Lay Hon. Sec).

Elected members:

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ARMAGH	Rev Malcolm Kingston Mr T Flannagan
CLOGHER	Vacant Mrs S Hogg
CONNOR	Rev I Magowan Dr K F Dunn
DERRY	Vacant Ms A Reid
DOWN	Rev C Simpson Vacant

Co-opted members:

Rev A Adams
Mrs R Forde
Mrs H McClenaghan (Deceased April 2020)
Mr M Johnston
Rev M Ferry
Miss F Boyd
Prof R Pritchard
Dr I Hickey
Mr Robin McLoughlin (appointed June 2020)
Mrs Diane Cheshire (appointed November 2020)

CIYD representative:

Mr S Henry
Honorary Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)
Vacant
Honorary Treasurer, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)
Mr M Johnston
Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)
Dr PJ Hamill, Church of Ireland House, 61-67 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2QH

GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Two members of the House of Bishops, currently:

Archbishop of Armagh
Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough
Rev M Kingston (elected clerical hon sec NI 2020)
Hon Sec: Mr K Gibson
Mr T Flannagan
Mr M Hall
Rev BJG O'Rourke

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Mr A Oughton

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

Ex officio members:

The Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough (Chair)

Honorary Secretaries – Rev Canon GV Wharton, Ms H Corrigan

Elected by House of Bishops:

Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, Rt Rev PW Rooke (until 2020)

Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, Rt Rev MAJ Burrows

Diocesan Representatives: Rev Canon H. Gilmore, vacancy.

Post primary representatives: Mr M Hall, Mr K. Sparling (from 2020) (second-level teacher)

Third level representatives: Professor P Johnston, Rev Professor A Lodge

Primary representatives: Rev Canon BJG O'Rourke, Mrs J Perdue

CIYD: Mr S Grasham (co-option)

Sunday School Society: Very Rev N Sloane

Co-options GS BOE:

Mr A Forrest

Mr A Oughton

Observers:

Ms K. Jardine

(Presbyterian Church)

Ms D Wood

(Methodist Church)

Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

Dr K Fennelly, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6

In Attendance:

Ms E Ryan