

## **Board of Education Report**

**Secunder: Mrs Hazel Corrigan**

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Your Grace, on seconding the report of the General Synod Board of Education, I would like to begin by thanking the outgoing boards of management of primary schools and to welcome formally the incoming boards who started their four-year term of office in November last.

### **Boards of Management**

I was delighted to hear the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, endorse the work of faith-based schools at a recent conference and she particularly acknowledged the work of boards of management by saying that “while your work often goes unheralded it does not go unappreciated”; and no doubt, for once, Synod will agree with the Minister for Education on that point.

Over the last number of months, Dr Ken Fennelly along with Susan Ellis and Eileen Flynn have been delivering training for new primary boards of management. Ken tells me that by the end of May nearly 1,600 members of boards will have attended training from each diocese which have primary schools in the Republic. So far, training topics have included: the board of management working together as a corporate entity; and Child Protection; and some dioceses also covered school staff appointments procedures. It is hoped that in the Autumn, further training events will be available on subjects such as legal issues facing schools; health and safety issues; and Data Protection for schools.

The numbers of attendees at training events represents a huge commitment by our voluntary boards to both the school, the parish and the community; and it is important that we here at this General Synod mark our appreciation of all that they do; and indeed the same can be said for members of second-level boards of management and boards of governors; and I'd like to take this opportunity to note our thanks for all the work they do for our young people at second level.

### **Small Schools Cluster Project**

You will notice in the report before you that there is mention of a small school cluster initiative. Four of our schools in Derry and Raphoe Diocese have been participating in this scheme for the last number of years and have found it extremely beneficial. Minister Foley also announced last week that this scheme is to be extended for another two years and this news will be greatly

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welcomed by all of those involved in the cluster and I would like, on their behalf, to publicly thank Minister Foley for extending the funding for this project.

### **Religious Education**

In terms of the work of the board itself, the major project being undertaken at the moment, as you note from the Report, is the redevelopment of *Follow Me*, which is the Religious Education curriculum for primary schools under Church of Ireland patronage. This project involves updating of the content to present it in a more modern and engaging way for children in schools. I can report that work is progressing apace, with a new website being developed and a range of new resources. So we will look forward to hearing more about that at next year's Synod.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express thanks to all the clergy (and particularly rectors) who visit and interact with schools and classes on an ongoing basis which we all should recognize as a valuable opportunity to advance the mission of the Church in the community.

### **Secondary Education Committee (SEC)**

Many of you may know about the SEC. As a member of the Board, I know we are always working to encourage parents and anyone who knows a parent with a child possibly attending a Church of Ireland or Protestant school to consider applying for an SEC grant. The application process is now fully online and user-friendly. We highly recommend applying and urge anyone working in schools to encourage parents to visit [secgrant.ie](http://secgrant.ie)

### **School Patrons**

Finally, there is one further group who are heavily involved in the work of our primary schools (and indeed some at second level) and that is the bishops who are here behind me. In many ways, their work in education goes unseen. Any of you who are involved on a board of management, or who might be involved in the appointment of a teacher in a school, will know the central role that the school patron plays in all of that system level governance. So I think it is important to thank the patrons for all they do for us in the field of education, and I'm glad to advise that Minister Norma Foley agrees with me because she has sent each one of you a present of a copy of the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools!*

Archbishop/bishop; I formally second the report of the Board of Education.