



# Education newsbrief

Autumn 2014

## Welcome Back!

As schools return after the summer holidays, the Board of Education would like to wish each school community the very best for the 2014/2015 school year.

2014 has been a busy year in the world of education and the Board would like to take this opportunity to highlight a number of policy developments which are being proposed.

The Education Admissions Bill is likely to be enacted before the end of 2014. When enacted, this Bill will change the manner in which schools manage admissions. The submission by the Board of Education in relation to this Bill is available on [www.ireland.anglican.org/submissions/boe](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/submissions/boe)

Towards the end of his period in office as Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairí Quinn TD, announced his intention to introduce a Parents Charter. The intention behind this initiative is to enhance the relationships between parents and schools and to place the rights of parents on a statutory footing. Further information is awaited in relation to the content of the proposed Parents Charter.

The Department of Education and Skills is currently piloting the Primary Online Database (POD) which will eventually replace an Clár Rolla. Included in the information fields on POD will be the religious denomination and ethnicity of the child. The Board has expressed its unease in relation to the State using primary schools to gather information regarding the religious denomination and ethnicity of pupils.

This information will transfer with pupils to second level. Religious denomination and ethnicity are regarded as sensitive personal data under data protection legislation and schools are obliged to obtain parental consent before furnishing this information to the Department of Education and Skills. The disclosure of this information to the Department is voluntary and parents are entitled to refuse to grant their consent to the transfer of this information to the Department.

Religious Education has traditionally been a matter for the Patron of the school. In relation to Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian schools, the Follow Me RE curriculum was developed by the Church of Ireland Board of Education and agreed with the other Protestant Churches. Permission for delivery of the RE curriculum in schools was given by the patrons. One of the recommendations of the Report of the National Forum on Pluralism and Diversity in Education (primary), was that the State should ensure that Article 42.3.2 of the Constitution that "...children receive a certain minimum

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**Church of Ireland  
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education, moral, intellectual and social” be given a more meaningful expression. In this regard, the NCCA is exploring the delivery of an Education about Religious Beliefs (ERB) programme in all primary schools. The Board of Education is engaged in discussions with the NCCA on this matter and in particular is seeking information in relation to how the proposed ERB programme will be implemented and how it would marry with the Patron’s RE curriculum. It is expected that a report on the development of ERB programme and its delivery will be made available towards December 2014.

The Teaching Council is preparing for “Fáilte”- the Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence which will be held in the RDS, Dublin on Saturday the 4th October. The theme of this year’s Fáilte is “Talking about teaching: Tearing down the walls.” As part of the preparations, the Teaching Council is issuing an invitation to teachers and the public, in Ireland and abroad, to record and upload via its website a short (20 sec) video about why teaching is important. Further information can be found at [www.teachingcouncil.com/latestnews](http://www.teachingcouncil.com/latestnews).

## School Funding

There has been recent criticism of schools requesting voluntary contributions. However funding continues to be a very real issue for schools. The capitation amount per student from the State has been reduced on a phased basis from €190 in 2010 to €168 in 2015, an overall reduction of 16%! The minor works grant was also abolished for a number of years and although reintroduced for the 2013/14 school year, no guarantee has been given that it will continue to be paid in future years. In general terms, recent figures from a study by the European Commission on education spending by States across the EU show that spending on education in Ireland, as a share of total public expenditure, reduced from 13.3% in 2007 to 9% in 2010. The reduction in state funding continues to present a very real challenge to schools in meeting their day to day costs.

## Energy Saving

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills has developed a programme designed to help schools improve energy management practices, reduce school operating costs and protect the environment. Schools are invited to visit the Energy in Education website [www.energyineducation.ie](http://www.energyineducation.ie) which offers a range of factsheets, videos and on-line energy management tools in addition to case studies. A factsheet issued by the SEAI providing Top-Ten Energy Saving Tips for Schools has been circulated with this newsbrief.

The Board of Education is among the stakeholders working in partnership with the Energy in Education Programme to offer Energy Management courses. The Board will be in contact with schools shortly to provide details in relation to registration for these courses.

**energy in education**

[www.energyineducation.ie](http://www.energyineducation.ie)

## Garda Vetting

The Board of Education circulated a revised Garda Vetting Application Form to schools by email on 8th July 2014. Any “old format” forms signed after 11 July 2014 will not be accepted by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. Any school that has not received the revised Garda Vetting Application Form should contact the Board of Education immediately.

In recent weeks a number of vetting application forms have been received in respect of teachers. Schools are reminded that the vetting of all teachers is processed through the Teaching Council and that the Board of Education is responsible for co-ordinating vetting applications of non-teaching staff and volunteers only.





# Welcome New Minister for Education and Skills

The Board of Education extends a warm welcome to Ms. Jan O'Sullivan on her appointment as Minister for Education and Skills.

Minister O'Sullivan, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin holds a higher diploma in education and taught for a period of time as a second level teacher. Minister O'Sullivan has been involved in politics at both local and national level since the early 1980's. Prior to her appointment as Minister for Education and Skills, she served as Mayor of Limerick and also as a member of the Irish Senate. Elected to Dáil Eireann in 1998, she has also served as Minister of State for both Trade and Development and Housing and Planning. We wish Minister O'Sullivan every success in her new appointment.

## NCSE PROPOSED NEW ALLOCATION MODEL

In June 2014, the NCSE published its report on a proposed new model for allocating teachers for students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. This report is available on the NCSE website.

The report recommends the development of a new allocation model for schools based on two components:

1. A component which would take account of the school educational profile, this would be based on:
  - (a) The number of students with complex special educational needs attending the school
  - (b) The percentage of the students performing below a certain threshold of standardised test results
  - (c) The social context of the school which would include gender, school location and educational disadvantage.
2. Each mainstream school would receive a baseline allocation which would assist schools in having whole school policies and practices in place to prevent and minimise the emergence of low achievement and learning difficulties.

Schools will have received correspondence from the Department of Education and Skills together with a questionnaire to be completed and returned by 26 September 2014. As the information supplied by schools may be used to determine the school's resource teaching allocation if the new model is introduced, schools are advised to give careful consideration when completing this questionnaire. The data being returned by schools is non-personal and anonymised in compliance with data protection legislation. Any notes, records, lists etc. used by schools in completing the questionnaire should be retained in anonymised form.



The Board of Education will be making a submission in respect of the proposed new model for allocation.

# Circulars published since the Spring 2014 edition

*Circular 0069/2014:* HSE Primary School Vaccination Programme 2014/2015

*Circular 0065/2014:* Sick Leave Scheme for Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme

*Circular 0060/2014:* Sick Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistant

*Circular 0059/2014:* Sick Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers

*Circular 0053/2014:* Implementation of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013–2016 (Haddington Road Agreement)

*Circular 0052/2014:* Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (Haddington Road Agreement) Teachers. Review of Usage of Croke Park Hours – Amendment to Circular 0008/2011

*Circular 0051/2014:* Secured Borrowings by schools and Vocational Education Committees/Education and Training Boards

*Circular 0048/2014:* Home Tuition Scheme 2014/2015 – Special Education Component

*Circular 0045/2014:* Information in relation to Actions under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Standardised Testing, Reporting and Other Matters

*Circular 0044/2014:* Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2014/15 school year

*FAQs Circular 0044/2014:* Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements

*Circular 0041/2014:* Job Sharing Scheme for Special Needs Assistants

*Circular 0040/2014:* Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 – 2016 (Haddington Road Agreement)

*Circular 0039/2014:* Revised Marking Scheme for Appointment to Deputy

Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher in Recognised Primary Schools

*Circular 0037/2014:* Notice to Employers regarding an Extension to the "Grace Period" for Superannuation Benefits for Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme

*Circular 0036/2014:* Notice to Employers regarding an Extension to the "Grace Period" for Superannuation Benefits for Special Needs Assistants who are members of a Public Service Pension Scheme

*Circular 0035/2014:* Notice to Employers regarding an Extension to the "Grace Period" for Superannuation Benefits for Teachers who are members of a Public Service Pension Scheme

*Circular 0030/2014:* The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme to support teachers in meeting the care needs of some children with special educational needs, arising from a disability

*Circular 0027/2014:* Cost Limits for Primary School Buildings

*Circular 0019/2014:* Cycle to Work Scheme

*Circular 0018/2014:* Teacher Fee Refund Scheme For 2013

*Circular 0017/2014:* Fair Processing Notice to explain how some of the personal data of pupils in primary and special schools will be recorded on the proposed Primary Online Database (POD)

*Circular 0016/2014:* Standardisation of the School Year in respect of Primary & Post-Primary Schools for the years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17

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