

CHURCH OF IRELAND
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Education newsbrief



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The Walking Bus

As a long-term participant in the Green Schools project, Rathmichael Parish National School carries out a Safe Routes to School Scheme supported by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and An Taisce. Young environmentalists at Rathmichael Parish National School are doing their bit for the earth by participating in a "Walking Bus" project. The



project sees students from the school choosing to walk to school with their friends instead of taking a lift from mum or dad.

The school also operates a "W.O.W." scheme, which stands for Walk on Wednesdays. Students who live some distance from the school are encouraged to be dropped off at a certain point every Wednesday and then to walk the rest of the way.

With the climate as it is in Ireland quite often we have to spend time indoors when it is wet at break time. On account of this we need to get outside and use the facilities as often as we can. Luckily we are blessed with good outdoor facilities. Not all schools are as lucky.

We are in a day and age where there are so many after school activities that parents spend their time transporting their children by car from venue to venue. The walking buses are a way to alleviate this problem and help the environment at the same time. It is important that the rules of the road are adhered to but also that this becomes something which the children look forward to. It is a time to meet up with their friends - the real start of the school day for them.

There are plenty of other reasons why the walking buses are a good idea and one of them is because the children have started their school in such a positive way, by breathing in fresh air and having some exercise before they start school. This has a knock on effect when the children come to school, as they tend to settle down more quickly and concentrate harder in class.

Our walking buses have been so successful we are now having a third bus route audited and hope to start it up in the not too distant future. This is in response to requests from parents and children who live in the area. Another positive outcome for health and the environment.

*I am grateful to Caroline Senior,
Principal of Rathmichael for the above.*



Health and Safety Management System for Schools

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 requires schools to develop and exercise an effective occupational health and safety management system.

The Health and Safety Authority is currently working with the DE&S, The State Claims Agency and SDPI on designing a Health and Safety Management System for second-level schools.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007.

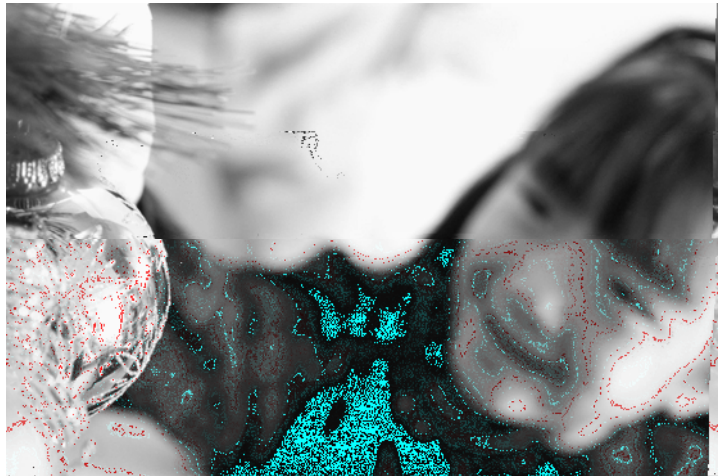
The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 provides the basis for new regulations that came into place on 1 November. They apply to all workplaces, placing obligations on all employees, employers and visitors in the workplace. The layout of the regulations is intended to be user friendly and straight forward.

A new phrase - "sensitive risk groups" is now also part of H&S legislation. The sensitive risk group includes children, young persons, and pregnant employees. as defined in the *Organisation of Working Time Act 1997*.

The regulations applying to all places of work include:

- Work Equipment
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Manual Handling of Loads
- Display Screen Equipment
- Electricity
- Work at Height
- Children and Young Persons
- Pregnant and Breastfeeding Employees
- Safety Signs and First-Aid

Comprehensive guidance is currently being finalised. See www.hsa.ie.



ICT Grants for DEIS Schools

The Government has allocated over €3.3 million from the Dormant Accounts Fund today to provide Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment in 815 schools participating in the Department of Education and Science's School Support Programme under DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). This funding will provide greater access to ICT and will promote ICT skills development among school children.

The grants are mainly for the purchase of ICT equipment such as Digital Cameras, Digital Video Cameras, Laptops, Tablet PCs, Data Projectors, Interactive Whiteboards, Educational Software and other computer equipment. Funding to individual schools ranges from €2,500 to €13,000 and individual grants are based on pupil numbers. The Department of Education and Science will be in contact directly with the schools getting this grant in the coming days.

New handbooks for Boards of Management

Distribution of the CPSMA handbook is underway. It contains 405 pages! As usual this includes the Constitution for Boards, agreed procedures for the handling of parental complaints and staff grievances, relevant circulars and extracts from legislation. Useful checklists on the appointment procedure for teachers are also printed. This is the essential guide for board members. As with any document some items will become quickly be replaced and indeed the item on Data Protection is already out of date. It is important to check that any item is still current. Each school will receive an invoice for eight copies from the Church of Ireland Board of Education. If you have not received your copies of handbook by 16 January 2008, please contact Jennifer or Vicki at this office.

Circular 0077/2007 Home Tuition Scheme Purpose of the scheme

Home tuition is intended to provide a compensatory educational service to:

- Children with a significant medical condition which is likely to cause major disruption to their attendance at school on a continuing basis. Therefore home tuition in this category is to be provided for pupils who:
 - (a) cannot attend school at all
 - (b) are absent for a significant proportion of the school year where the degree of absence is such, combined with the ability level of the pupil, that without supplemental instruction the pupil is unlikely to be able to perform academically at the level appropriate to his/her level of ability.
- Children awaiting an appropriate educational placement, as an interim measure.
- Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, requiring early educational intervention.

Home Tuition is for educational intervention only. The provision of therapeutic services such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychological services etc are a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Home Tuition funding may not be used for therapeutic supports.

The maximum allocation of home tuition hours for children with a medical ailment is 10 hours per week, with the allocation reflecting the level of attendance.

- Children awaiting an appropriate educational placement

The maximum allocation of home tuition hours for children awaiting an appropriate placement is 20 hours per week subject to the appropriate school calendar.

- Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, requiring early educational intervention:

The allocation for children with ASD up to 3 years of age is ten hours tuition per week to provide an individualised early educational intervention programme. This increases to 20 hours per week once the child is 3 years of age provided that he/she is not enrolled in an early intervention class. To reflect the school year for ASD pupil's allocation of hours in this category is extended to include the month of July.



Circular 0102/2007

EARLY RETIREMENT SCHEME FOR TEACHERS, RETIREMENT AT THE END OF THE 2007/2008 SCHOOL YEAR

The **closing dates** for receipt of applications in the Department are:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Strands 1 and 2 | - | Thursday, 17 January 2008 |
| Strand 3 | - | Thursday, 14 February 2008 |

1. OBJECTIVE

In order to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness within schools, a voluntary early retirement scheme is available to teachers. The scheme was introduced on a pilot basis pending the report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions. The Commission recommended that the pilot scheme be continued for five years and that a review be carried out at that time. Work on the review is now underway and is expected to be completed by mid-2008. Pending the completion of the review, it has been decided that the pilot scheme will be continued to include teachers retiring at the end of the **2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 school years.**



2. STRUCTURE OF THE SCHEME

The scheme consists of three strands.

- Strand 1: relates to teachers who are consistently experiencing difficulties in their teaching duties.
- Strand 2: relates to teachers whose retirement will provide their school with an opportunity to enhance the education service provided through facilitating change.
- Strand 3: relates to teachers who are in posts which are surplus to requirements.

3. CIRCULATION

The contents of this circular should be brought to the attention of all permanent teachers and teachers who are employed under contracts of indefinite duration. The circular should also be brought to the attention of teachers on career break or other approved leave of absence.

Extracts from an information letter from Primary Salaries regarding payment to part time resource teachers

To implement the terms of the Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act, 2001 as they apply to qualified eligible part-time teachers, it is necessary to extend the single payroll operated by the Department. This will be done on a phased basis and the initial extension will focus on part-time resource teachers. All part-time resource teachers will be paid directly through the payroll operated by the Department of Education and Science.

It is proposed that the current grant system in respect of part-time resource teachers will be discontinued during the first quarter of 2008. You will be contacted again in advance of this with the proposed start date for part-time resource teachers to be paid through the payroll and for any additional information required from you at that time, e.g. P45.

To implement this the DE&S are collecting data on part-time resource teachers. This includes personal details, qualifications, hours allocated etc and should be provided on the supplied form.

EAS helps 100 teachers each month

Figures just released show that the new Employee Assistance Service (EAS) which provides free and confidential counselling to teachers and their families has been a resounding success since its introduction last October. On average almost 100 teachers every month call the free phone service to seek help on work and personal related issues.

“Up to mid May we had assisted almost 700 teachers to deal with stress and anxiety caused by a large variety of issues, including emotional health, bereavement and relationship problems to name just a few.” said Sarah Walker of VHI Corporate Solutions, the company contracted to administer the scheme to over 50,000 teachers throughout Ireland.

The purpose of the EAS is to provide teachers and their immediate family members with easy access to confidential counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues.

What kind of services are provided?

Telephone Counselling – single sessions or short term structured counselling – Face to Face counselling – up to six counselling sessions. Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

Support to Management

The Employee Assistance Service can also assist Management who may call about how best to support their staff. Through the EAS, they can avail of support on their own professional and personal effectiveness especially in relation to managing or supporting staff, time, change and stress management issues.

Accessing the service

Couldn't be simpler. Your Employee Assistance Service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through: Freephone 1800 411 057 or Email : [eas@vhics.ie](mailto: eas@vhics.ie). For additional information on the EAS just click on to the Department of Education and Science Website, www.education.ie and follow the link provided.

Mission Statement and Characteristic Spirit



The following is an extract from a WSE (whole school evaluation) report from the DE&S (Department of Education & Science) that schools might usefully consider when reviewing their own statements.

The school's mission is to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. The characteristic spirit of the school is a reflection of the ethos of the Church of Ireland incorporating a balance of faith and culture. It

is manifest in the positive school climate where pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence are nurtured within an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation.

The Report went on to note:

Pupils' individual talents and interests are fostered. Pupil attendance levels are generally good and the school has an attendance policy with procedures for recording and pursuing attendance and punctuality matters. This policy should now be reviewed to include strategies for encouraging and promoting pupil attendance as outlined in The Education Welfare Act, 2000.

How would your board measure up?

The board has been involved in compiling and ratifying a number of organisational and administration policies. These include code of behaviour, enrolment and admissions and health, safety and nutrition policies. The board is not involved in the development of curricular policies. It is recommended that the board ratify, sign and date all curricular and organisational policies. The board is operating in compliance with its statutory obligations and with the Department's regulations regarding the length of the school year, length of the school day, allocation of teachers, class size and retention of pupils. It is recommended that the board review its policy on deployment of teaching staff in accordance with the Department regulations detailed in circular 07/03.

Substitute Teachers

Many a school has had to engage a sub teacher on short notice due to sudden illness of a staff member. Abbeystrewry National School has developed a pack for subs and temps working in that school. The pack is designed both to ensure the teacher has information ready to hand and that the BOM is in compliance with employment and other legislation.

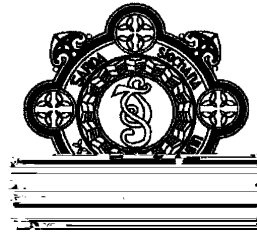
The pack includes a quick reference of routine information and an index of policies which are included in the pack. This means there is an easy access to key duties and responsibilities as well as the master policies which only those employed for a longer time will have time to reference. The key point is no one can say I didn't know or I wasn't told. Do remember that every school is different and a pack like this prepared for your own school will not only help transient teachers but may formalise unwritten good practice.

*Our thanks to Caroline Applebe, Principal of Abbeystrewry for this tip.
Caroline retires in January and we wish her well.*

Garda Vetting

It is likely that guidance will issue in relation to the interpretation of section 5. (xi) of appendix D on the appointment of Teachers.

In the meantime the following extract from the Teaching Council Newsletter *OIDE* October 2006 is relevant.



*It is the responsibility of the relevant school authorities (Board of Management) to ensure that any proposed new appointee who may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults is vetted. However this should only be done in respect of the person to whom it proposes making a job offer. In the case of new teachers** schools must ensure that they request the prospective employee to present for inspection the vetting letter from the teaching Council before a formal offer of appointment is made.*

** New teachers are defined as those who are newly qualified or are re-entering the service after a period of three years or more.

The vetting letter should be copied and retained on file. As it is sensitive information it is subject to Data Protection guidelines.

A plea from the Authorised Signatory...

Could those sending completed forms to Church House for processing please note the following.

It would appear that as schools and parishes are getting used to the process and are possibly keeping copies of the forms on their files for completion, the covering form which identifies the school or parish is not being included when forms are being sent to Church House. In some cases the school or parish can eventually be identified through several phone calls, but in many cases it requires a letter to the individual requesting that they contact the Authorised Signatory (AS) in order to ascertain this information. This is time consuming and ultimately results in delays, especially if there are any errors on the form. Please also ensure that envelopes are marked 'private and confidential', and for the attention of the AS.

At the time of writing, the AS is handling over 100 forms per week. Many are still being returned to the originator because of errors or omissions on the form. Please ensure that forms are checked before forwarding to the AS.

Copies of completed forms are returned for the attention of the principal or chairperson and envelopes are marked private and confidential. They should not be opened by anyone else such as school or parish secretaries.

One area causing problems is in respect of addresses from year of birth to present day. It is not correct to have two addresses for the same period of time. You can only have one postal address at a time. Temporary addresses need not be included on the form as they only cause confusion. If someone is unsure, then the question to be asked is "if you were filling out an application form for a driving licence, or giving your address to the Gardaí at that time, what address would you have given?"

Schools have, from 1 October 2007, been exempted from registering with the Data Protection Office. It is expected that schools will maintain medical data in relation to their pupils and that this information will be treated with the greatest care and maintained securely with access given only to those who require it to perform their functions correctly. Please note that we are seeking further clarification on this issue as schools may also hold vetting details with possible references to criminal convictions. Schools will also be briefed in the future in relation to the length of time records should be held. This has become a more significant issue with the requirement for mandatory standardised testing.



Another Welcome...

Most principals and chairpersons are familiar with the voices if not the faces of John McCullagh (01-4125609) and Jennifer Byrne (01-4125624) in the Board of Education. Jennifer and John also have responsibilities beyond primary education and so are delighted to welcome Ms Vicki Hastie (01-4125618) who will be providing some additional assistance to the work of the Board. Vicki will be looking after Transport Scheme D Grants amongst other things!

and speaking of Transport Grants...

There has been a delay in the payment of cheques by the DE&S and therefore it is likely that cheques will issue directly to families over the Christmas holiday period. Schools will be notified regarding families who have been sent a payment. The delay is regretted but is outside the control of the Board of Education.

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Snippets ✂✂✂✂✂✂✂✂

Together in One World – 99 stories for the primary school assembly by Jeanne L Jackson Pub. REMP 2007. It is arranged thematically and the stories are wholly or broadly of a Christian character. To aid their use there is an introduction and a think about section or a prayer after each story. Sources come from a range of cultures and include many modern sources. Most useful for the busy teacher or cleric.



The Minister for Finance, has departed from recent practice, in that he has included the departmental estimates with his budget announcements on 5 December. This means that reaction from the partners in education will be competing with commentary on other financial issues. It is important for school communities to press for the prompt delivery of the Government's programme for education.

A very significant list of proposed schools to open in September 2008 has been published. Any school which feels it will be unfairly affected by a proposed school is entitled to make formal representations to the New Schools Advisory Committee.

The statutory Minimum Wage is €8.65 per hour with effect from 1 July 2007 see www.entemp.ie.

The National Disability Agency has issued useful accessibility guidelines for schools. This might be useful when reviewing your maintenance programme. www.nda.ie.

The DE&S has provided a **financial accounting package** which is available on the DE&S website >what's new >circular 0098/2007. This may assist new treasurers.