

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL SYNOD  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF IRELAND**

**REPORT 2009**

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, Diocesan Boards of Education, and other educational and school authorities with a view to 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, may make such enquiries as it shall deem to be requisite and may communicate with government authorities and all such bodies and persons as it shall consider necessary.

**A. Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)**

**AIMS**

The Board of Education (Republic of Ireland):

- shall have 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 educational partner to the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) and other educational bodies;
- will support, through the *Follow Me* programme, religious education in primary schools under Protestant management;
- will co-ordinate and encourage the participation of post-primary Protestant schools in the Synod Examination in Religious Education;
- will provide training and advice to bishops and boards of management;
- will provide training and advisory service to bishops, dioceses and parishes in the implementation of Safeguarding Trust;
- will facilitate Garda vetting of workers and volunteers in Church of Ireland primary schools and parishes.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

**Staffing:** The Board thanks Rev Canon John McCullagh for his work as Secretary to the Board.

**Finance/budget cuts:** The recent government budget cuts are impacting severely on our schools.

**Board of Management training:** The National Training Programme is now being rolled out to Boards of Management.

**Community National Schools:** This new model raises Governance challenges. There is also concern regarding the size of new primary schools.

**Religious Education at Second Level:** There is a need for schools to support the RE Curriculum at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels.

**Staffing**

The Rev Canon John McCullagh served as Secretary to the Board of Education for the last ten years, and resigned at the end of 2008 to return to parish work. In his work for the Board he developed a very high profile for the Church of Ireland in educational circles by his participation in every possible educational forum. His advice to school principals, boards of management and patrons was always based on sound information and proved one of the most valuable resources to which all could turn. His own previous experience as principal of a secondary school, incumbent of a parish and as chairperson of a Board of Management provided him with a unique insight into the various aspects of the provision of education. His oversight of the Safeguarding Trust procedures was a very significant part of his work. The Board would place on record its thanks to Canon McCullagh for a task so magnificently undertaken and wish him God's blessing in his continuing ministry.

**Welcome**

*Minister for Education and Science*

The Board congratulates Mr Batt O'Keeffe TD on his appointment as Minister for Education and Science in May 2008. Mr O'Keeffe previously served as Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

*New General Secretary of CPSMA*

Following the retirement of Monsignor Dan O'Connor, Ms Eileen Flynn was appointed as General Secretary of the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association (CPSMA), effective from 2 September 2008. Prior to her appointment, Ms Flynn was National Coordinator of the School Development Planning Service (SDPS). We congratulate Ms Flynn on her appointment, and look forward to working with her in the future. Having worked closely with Monsignor O'Connor over recent years, the Board wishes him every success in his role as parish priest of Dun Laoghaire.

**Financial Support for Education/Budget Cuts**

Dismay and unprecedented concern arising from the unexpected announcement of significant cuts being made by the Government in the Budget 2009 were reported to the Board from all the partners involved in our schools.

Of particular concern, at post-primary level, has been the implied re-categorisation of the Protestant voluntary sector schools. In 1967, when free secondary education was introduced, those schools were designated as being within the free education scheme as 'block grant schools', as the funding appropriate for such schools was transferred as a block grant. This long-established status had received the public acknowledgement of successive Ministers for Education. It is a cause of great resentment on the part of many in our community that there has now been, without consultation or notice, an apparent realignment of the Protestant voluntary schools. The negative impact of this re-alignment is seen in a greater reduction in the teacher-pupil ratio than would, otherwise, have been implemented, as well as the withdrawal of the support services grant which continues to be available to the other schools within the free education scheme (of which, as is emphasised, our voluntary sector schools have been part since the inception of free education in Ireland).

A measure of the significant concerns of the Board and of the Church of Ireland (as well as the wider Protestant community) is the

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schools' water charges, with non-fee paying schools paying a flat rate. The focus of the DE&S would appear to be in respect of the creation of new pupil places with a start up grant in relation to new schools.

### **Safeguarding Trust**

The long awaited new edition of *Safeguarding Trust (RI)* was published in April 2008. Canon McCullagh and Ms Renée English, the Child Protection Officer RI (CPO) held a series of information sessions throughout the dioceses to introduce panels to the new edition and give them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with its layout. The loose leaf format replaces the two book model and will allow for future provision of revisions and supplements. There has been a positive response to the new edition being more accessible and user friendly. An updated version of the summary card for youth workers was also produced. An information stand was provided at the General Synod in May 2008, which provided a useful opportunity for interchange with Synod members and facilitated distribution of the binders and cards.

Training in Safeguarding Trust was carried out both by the diocesan trainers and by the CPO during the year. A meeting for diocesan trainers was held in Dublin in August. It was attended by eleven people involved in training and parish evaluations with a good representation from around the country. More extensive training is recommended for panel members in view of their responsibilities and revised training material has been made available accordingly. Progress continues to be made in recruiting diocesan trainers and in carrying out parish evaluations.

The CPO attended ongoing professional education and together with Ms Margaret Yarr (CPO NI) made a presentation at an international conference in Woking, Surrey in July 2008, entitled *Creating a Safer Church* where they spoke on the subject of the development and future of the child protection policy in the Church of Ireland.

It is hoped to set up a network for people engaged in child protection throughout the Anglican Communion which will improve knowledge and promote the sharing of good practice.

The CPO is available to provide advice and support to parishes and is building up a database of child protection and welfare queries and panel referrals as required by best practice standards. She continues to forge links with both statutory and voluntary child protection agencies.

### **Follow Me The Primary Religious Education Programme**

The final book in the current series, *Fit for Life*, was published in 2008. A review of the programme was then undertaken by Marino Institute which highlighted areas that required revision and which might be supported by additional material or in-service training. In light of the review a decision was made to revise the infants' books, produce additional music resources and to update the website. The RE Curriculum Committee has advised the Board that planning for a new RE programme should now commence.

### **Board of Management Training**

The work of those who serve on boards of management can often seem thankless, but it is vital and greatly appreciated by patrons and this Board. A national training programme for boards of management, funded by the DE&S, has been rolled out this year. In terms of our sector, some 88% of schools have availed of training in respect of the first two modules which covered the overall role of the board and the appointments procedures. Three further modules are ready for delivery before the end of 2009. These modules will cover Child Protection, the role of the Treasurer and Legal Issues.

To aid boards of management, the Board published six editions of *Education Newsbrief* in 2008 which were circulated to all schools under Protestant management.

### **Community National Schools**

A conference was held in June 2008, in relation to the Governance challenge arising from the new model of patronage. Ms Hilary McBain, principal of Kill o’ the Grange National School, made a presentation on behalf of the Church of Ireland Board of Education which had been drafted in conjunction with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Ireland.

In her presentation Ms McBain highlighted the move by the DE&S to the creation of very large school units with up to a four class entry and where the minimum would seem to be a 16 classroom school. Such a move appears to be a policy which threatens the distinctiveness of our Church of Ireland ethos and culture.

Ms McBain went on to say: *“Is this a genuine investigation of options for future patronage of our schools for our children in a changing society or are the beautiful children that enter the doors of our school each day, who are often overlooked in the decision making process, going to be herded into large schools of at least 16 classrooms because of various constraints?”*

*If the current minister is only interested in building schools with a minimum of 16 classrooms, where are Church of Ireland schools going to be in one generation?”*

### **Codes of Behaviour**

*Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* was issued to all schools who are now required to have in place a Code of Behaviour which accords with these guidelines and which has been approved by the Patron. This is a legal requirement. The creation or revision of any policy is a whole school activity and all parties in the school community should have an input into the revision and local agreement process.

### **General Allocation Model/Special Needs Assistants**

Valuable information gathered by patrons in relation to supports for pupils with special education needs was evaluated in order to respond to the DE&S on issues relating to the General Allocation Model.

A Steering Committee was set up in order to conduct a *Value for Money and Policy Review* of the special needs assistant scheme. One hundred schools were approached, between 1 October 2008 and 20 February 2009, to participate in a full review. A third

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party will be assessing the full review which, it is hoped, will be concluded by June 2009. The Board requested that the DE&S not lose sight of the needs of the child with regard to this review.

### **Garda Vetting**

A set of guidelines has been developed for the assessment of persons applying to be entered on the Register of Teachers, who have court convictions and/or cases pending before the courts. It was felt by the Board that the initial guidelines were extremely broad and clarifications were sought. At a meeting, held in December 2008, it also came to light that there was no mechanism in place to vet teachers already in the system prior to the introduction of the current vetting procedures in September 2006. A working group has now been set up by the Teaching Council to consider how this issue might be approached. It is important that some mechanism is put in place in the near future so that we do not end up with a two-tier system in relation to those employed in our schools.

The number of requests for Garda Vetting from both parishes and schools has increased dramatically since the procedures came into operation in 2006. In light of this the Garda Central Vetting Unit agreed to the appointment of an additional authorised signatory for the Church of Ireland. Ms Vicki Hastie has now joined Ms Jennifer Byrne as authorised signatory and has been trained for the role.

### **Transport Scheme D (Primary Schools)**

The number of qualifying families now stands at 315 and grants totalling €188,060.90 for the school year 2007/2008 were received from the DE&S and paid out to sanctioned families prior to 31 December 2008. Workloads and staff changes in the Transport Section of the DE&S continue to cause delays in payments, but we are liaising with the Transport Section in an effort to resolve these problems.

The DE&S continue to be stringent in adherence to the rules of the Scheme. It is important the applications are made in good time in order that families do not lose out on grants. The rules are also being tightened where families are not enrolled at their nearest school in cases where that school was unable to take them due to pressure on places. The DE&S will not sanction a grant in these circumstances unless a Section 29 Appeal has been brought against the nearest school and the DE&S has upheld the school's decision, thus forcing a family to attend the next nearest school. Families living in 'closed school' areas (areas in which there was formerly a school under Protestant patronage which then closed into another school under Protestant patronage) will not be eligible for a grant unless they are attending the relevant school of amalgamation, even if this is not their nearest school. Particular care should be taken by schools where a 'closed school' arrangement is in place to inform families that they may fall into this category.

Since last year a number of auxiliary grants have been paid out to families experiencing transport difficulties. Such grants are paid out only if supported by a letter from the family's rector and where there are particular financial difficulties.

#### **National Trustee Forum**

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) has promoted the establishment of the National Trustee Forum to deal with issues relating to the exercise of the unique form of joint trusteeship which operates in Community Schools and is also relevant to the role of patron in the Comprehensive Schools. The first conference was held in May 2008 and attended by some 91 delegates. Canon McCullagh has represented this Board on the Forum Steering Committee.

#### **Religious Education at Second Level**

The Board is aware that the stringent financial circumstances in which schools find themselves have implications for the range of subjects that they can offer for the public examinations. This applies not least where the place of Religious Education in the curriculum is concerned, and its status as a subject for Junior and Leaving Certificates. The Board would contend that it is, in part, by their commitment to Religious Education that schools demonstrate their church-related ethos, and urges managements to do their utmost to protect and nurture RE in their schools so that the distinctiveness of the education that they offer may be evident and their valuable place in the Irish education system preserved.

#### **Conferences**

Canon McCullagh attended the INTO conference which focused on broken promises or delayed commitments with regard to class size and also the ASTI conference which focussed on evaluation of enrolment policies and the impact of whole school evaluation amongst other issues. Ms Byrne attended the Annual Conference of the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education, where the topics for consideration were child protection issues in special schools, good legal practice for boards of management and workplace bullying awareness and prevention.

#### **Grants**

The Board provided a grant to support the publication of *Search* a Church of Ireland journal. The journal is published three times a year and is committed to regularly including articles on education. The Board also grant-aided the Past Students Association of the Church of Ireland College of Education to assist in the running of its annual conference.

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**Synod Examination in Religious Education**

The prize winners for 2007/2008 were as follows:

**YEAR 1**

Morgan Jellett Fund Prize	Cian Galvin	The King's Hospital
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Anastasia Baburin	Alexandra College
	Sally Kenna	Alexandra College
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Anna Nichols	Alexandra College

**YEAR 2**

James Fitzgerald Gregg Prize	Kirsten Levermore	Alexandra College
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Nanci O'Reilly	Alexandra College
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Pippa Tuthill	The Kings Hospital
	Alex Redmond	Newpark School

**YEAR 3**

Morgan Jellett Memorial Prize	Morenike Koya/Roisín Manning	Wilson's Hospital
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Killian Hales/Jason Flower	Wilson's Hospital
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Robert Breadon	Monaghan Collegiate

**Junior Division Prizes:**

Max van Haastrecht	Ashton School
Tara Farrell	Wilson's Hospital
Alistair Magee	Cavan Royal
Joanne Wylie	Monaghan Collegiate
Sarah Scales	The Kings Hospital
Marco Forte	Newpark School
Alice Somers Donnelly	The High School
Harriet Walsh	Alexandra College
John Fallows	Royal and Prior

**TRANSITION YEAR**

Ferns Fund Prize	Louise Roulston	Royal and Prior
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Hannah McCauley	Royal and Prior
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Chloe Stewart	Royal and Prior

**YEARS 5 AND 6**

Ferns Exhibition Prize	Ruth Graham	Royal and Prior
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Wanda Hogan	Ashton School
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Katie MacDonald	Ashton School
	Lynda Watt	Royal and Prior



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Senior Division Prizes:

Luke Naessens  
Margaret Hefferman  
Louise Martin

Ashton School  
Ashton School  
Royal and Prior

Hackett Special Prize:

Once again there has been a disappointing response in terms of entries to this examination and therefore the Hackett Special Prize has not been awarded.

The constant support and generosity of the APCK in funding the prizes is greatly appreciated. In an effort to encourage increased participation the APCK has decided to increase prizes both to the individual and to award grants to participating schools for taking part at each level. These increases will be awarded in respect of the 2008/2009 examination.

Mrs Linda Clarke has once again moderated the scripts and we are indebted to her for agreeing to undertake this task.

## **B. Board of Education (Northern Ireland)**

### **AIMS**

The current aims of the Board of Education (Northern Ireland) 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 General Synod of developments in educational policy in Northern Ireland and to 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) to promote the interests and safeguard the rights of transferors in the future;
- make submissions to relevant government consultations in particular regarding legislative changes to establish the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA);
- 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 Religious Education (RE) core syllabus in schools;
- provide a training and advisory service to bishops, dioceses and parishes in the implementation of Safeguarding Trust. Prepare for the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation and the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme;
- contribute to training and support for children's ministry in parishes in particular as a partner in the *Building Blocks* conferences.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Education Bill 2008:** A public campaign by Churches through the TRC secures historic transferors' rights of nomination to boards of governors of controlled schools.

**Review of Public Administration (RPA) Policy paper 20: Publicly owned schools – ownership and representation:** Important proposals for a sectoral support body and ownership models for the future of presently designated controlled schools are considered by the Board.

**Future arrangements for transfer to post-primary schools:** The intervention of Churches into this contentious debate is welcomed by the Board however no political agreement on a way forward has been reached.

**Proposed merger of Queen's University of Belfast (QUB) School of Education and Stranmillis College:** Churches raise concerns regarding the future preparation of teachers for the controlled sector and commit to ongoing engagement with QUB.

**Religious Education and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (CCEA) / RE advisory group:** The issue of teacher support in the delivery of the RE within the curriculum under ESA is to be monitored by Churches.

#### **Education Bill 2008**

This Bill is the key enabling legislation to set up the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). On introducing this Bill to the Assembly in December 2008, the Education Minister gave an undertaking that there would be no change to existing Transferors'

rights to nominate governors for controlled schools. This was very welcome news and represented a reversal in the Department's original proposals for future governance. The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) had made representations to MLAs from all the political parties arguing that their long standing right to nominate such governors should be retained on the basis of fairness and equality. The TRC is grateful to the political parties for listening to its case and making representations on its behalf. The TRC also thanks many members of Churches, school governors, and Education and Library Board members who made representations on this issue. The Board of Education NI has considered wider aspects of the Bill; it noted concern about the very considerable powers of the ESA and questioned the extent of its local 'footprint' which will be essential for the adequate delivery of school services. A submission of comments by the TRC on the new legislation was requested by the Assembly Education Committee in February 2009.

**RPA Policy paper 20: Publicly owned schools – ownership and representation**

This Department of Education (DE) policy paper makes proposals for a sectoral support body and ownership models for the future of presently designated controlled schools. The TRC made a submission to this consultation informed by comment from the various Church Boards. There is a clear need for a representative body to champion the cause of controlled schools with the demise of Education and Library Boards. This paper suggests that a working group of stakeholders from the controlled sector should bring forward proposals for the composition of such a body. The proposals for an ownership body are complex; various models are explored including that of a 'non-departmental public body'. Such a body would have a duty of care for a schools' estate worth approximately £2.3 billion. Transferors believe it is essential that they hold a significant stake in any ownership body, to keep faith with the original legal agreements of transfer of church schools into the control of the state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Board supported the strategy of the TRC to ensure that transferors' rights to oversee the estate of controlled schools are maintained.

**Future arrangements for transfer to post-primary schools**

In November 2008, education spokespersons from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches made a public intervention into the 11+ transfer debate. They spoke out of a pastoral concern for parents, teachers and children in the midst of a growing confusion about transfer arrangements to post-primary education. They underlined the perils of an unregulated system and called upon politicians to stand back from established positions and create a space for the development of a consensus model. They pointed to proposals produced by a group of educationalists with diverse views on academic selection, which focused on age 14 rather than 11 as a more appropriate pathways decision point. The intervention was welcomed by the Board and warmly received by political parties and many educationalists. However no political agreement was reached and in February 2009, the Department issued guidelines for admissions which do not allow for academic selection. However these are not legally binding upon post-primary schools and many Grammar schools have indicated that they intend to set independent admission tests. As a result the system of admission to post primary school is now unregulated and many teachers and parents of year 6 children are understandably feeling bewildered by the uncertainties ahead.

**Proposed merger of QUB School of Education and Stranmillis College**

The Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches through their TRC representatives met last year with the DEL Assembly Education committee, the Vice-Chancellor of QUB and some officials from Stranmillis College to discuss various concerns they have around this proposed merger. The Churches' position at present is to accept that there are good educational reasons for a merged institution with the aim of developing a centre of excellence in teacher education. However, they have concerns regarding the future preparation of teachers for the controlled sector. The Churches believe it important that student-teachers have an awareness of the particular ethos of such schools with their historic Church relatedness and characteristic non-denominational worship and religious education. The Vice-Chancellor of QUB has indicated a willingness to engage with the Churches on this issue in a constructive way. The Churches, through the TRC are currently working on proposals for QUB to address their concerns.

**Religious Education**

Over many years the TRC has found its termly meetings with RE Advisers from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) very valuable. At recent meetings concern has been expressed that due to the stringencies of vacancy controls on RPA affected posts, RE advisers in two board areas have not yet been replaced following retirement. In addition it seems clear that under the ESA there will be a new model for the delivery of curriculum support for all school subjects. It will be important for the Board along with colleagues in other churches to make representations to the ESA to ensure that teachers will receive adequate support in the delivery of the religious education within the curriculum.

**CCEA / RE Advisory Group**

A new appointment process has been commenced to find a successor to Ms Linda Colson who was a support officer for this project. The work of the group has continued focusing on raising awareness among schools of the support materials produced for World Religions and Reconciliation.

**Safeguarding Trust**

The 2008 edition of *Safeguarding Trust* was published in May 2008 and was distributed in a series of information sessions for clergy in each diocese in early June 2008. Training for newly ordained clergy and first incumbents was facilitated in October 2008 and has been followed by a series of training events for parish panel members in Derry, Armagh, Connor and Down and Dromore dioceses.

Ms Margaret Yarr, the Child Protection Officer NI (CPO NI), has facilitated training sessions for a number of parishes, interns on the Jump project, Crosslinks staff and the Church's Ministry of Healing counsellors. In conjunction with Ms Renée English, CPO RI, she has also delivered Safeguarding Trust training to students at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

The introduction of AccessNI – the new vetting service for NI, presented some challenges initially but information and advice from the Board of Education supported parishes and dioceses in the transition to the new service. The Board of Education is

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registered as an umbrella body with AccessNI for processing applications for vetting checks. Mrs Claire Geoghegan, AccessNI coordinator, has relocated from CIYD offices to the Board of Education offices and is a most welcome addition to the staff team.

A Vetting and Barring Scheme is to be introduced to Northern Ireland in October 2009. This new scheme will implement the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation and will require individuals who wish to work with children or vulnerable adults to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The Board of Education will provide information and advice in relation to this to individuals, parishes and dioceses.

The CPO NI has attended a number of training courses including: Safeguarding Children from Sexual Abuse in Ireland, Public Protection Arrangements in NI, Northern Ireland Vetting and Barring Scheme and Creating a Safer Church, (an international Anglican conference focusing on the abuse of children and adults in faith-community settings), where along with the CPO RI, she gave a presentation on the subject of child protection in the Church of Ireland.

The process of parish evaluation has continued to be implemented and is overseen by the CPO NI who provides follow-up reports, on each visit, to the incumbents. The visits are carried out by teams of diocesan evaluators who generously give their time and expertise to assist the Board of Education and support parishes. The Board acknowledges the commitment of the diocesan evaluators and offers sincere thanks for their continuing support to the Board of Education and Safeguarding Trust.

The CPO NI has recruited a number of trainers, who will be trained, to deliver Safeguarding Trust training at a local level. It is anticipated that this new training facility will be available in the autumn. The CPO NI continues to provide support and advice on a range of issues to parishes and dioceses throughout Northern Ireland. The CPO NI is a member of a local faith-based child protection group and maintains close links with statutory and voluntary child protection agencies.

### **Children's Ministry**

Following debate at the 2008 General Synod on Children's Ministry in the Church of Ireland, the Board discussed its role and contribution to this area of work. It brought forward a proposal to the Honorary Secretaries of General Synod that a round table discussion be facilitated to include representatives of all the current providers of children's ministry. Such a group could be tasked to consider the feasibility of a children's ministry department in the context of what was currently being provided at diocesan level and through other agencies.

### **Building Blocks**

In November 2008, the seventh annual *Building Blocks* conference took place in Jordanstown and Dublin. The NI organising committee comprises representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Scripture Union. The Jordanstown event drew over 400 delegates and in Dublin over 300 from a wide range of Churches attended. The keynote speaker was Mr Terry Clutterham, Head of Resource Development at Scripture Union. These events have become established as an annual resource for inspiration and training for children's ministry leaders. Details of the conferences including seminar notes etc are available at: [www.buildingblocks.ie](http://www.buildingblocks.ie).

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**Annual Theological Lectures at Queen's**

The 2009 lectures were delivered by Rev Dr David Wilkinson, Principal of St John's College at the University of Durham and lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion. The themes for his lectures were: *Searching for God in the Origin of the Universe* and *Left Behind, Frozen or Fried? Christian Hope in a Scientific World*. It is noteworthy that this year's lectures were delivered by an academic from the Methodist Church tradition. These popular lectures are funded by the Board and arranged by the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast.

**Personalia**

During the year the Board learned of the resignation of Rev Canon John McCullagh as secretary to the Board of Education RI due to his appointment as rector of Rathdrum, Glendalough Diocese. A small presentation was made by the Archbishop of Dublin to Canon McCullagh to express appreciation of his contribution to meetings of this Board and to wish him God's blessing as he returns to parish ministry. The Board also received the resignation of Mrs A McNee and thanks Mrs McNee for her input to discussions, in particular the perspective she brought as a teacher in the primary sector. In January 2009, the Board was informed of the resignation of Rev Canon Dr IM Ellis as an Honorary Secretary to the General Synod. The Board offers its grateful thanks to Canon Ellis who in his *ex officio* role made a valued contribution to its meetings.

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**APPENDIX A**

**THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The following are the members of the Board and its committees as on 31 March 2009.

**THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS**

**THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD**

Ven REB White  
Mr SR Harper

Rev FJ McDowell  
Canon Lady Sheil

***Elected members***

Armagh

Rev Canon JW McKegey  
Mr RF Palmer

Clogher

Rev Canon RT Gillian  
Mr SB Morrow

Derry

Rev S Johnson  
Mr D West

Down

Rev Canon JR Howard  
Mr I Davidson

Connor

Ven SB Forde  
Dr KF Dunn

Kilmore

Very Rev R Ferguson  
Mrs J Johnston

Tuam

Rev Canon DTS Clements  
Professor P Johnston

Dublin

Vacant  
Dr K Milne

Meath

Rev Canon JDM Clarke  
Mr A Oughton

Cashel and Ossory

Rev Canon PA Harvey  
Mrs A Forrest

Cork

Rev AM Wilkinson  
Mr WT Perrott

Limerick and Killaloe

Rev Canon R Warren  
Mr TS Hardy

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**Co-opted members**

Rev RJEFB Black  
Mr I Bolton  
Mr JE Bunting  
Mr M Hall  
Ms S Hall  
Ms S Honner  
Ms E Jackson

Ms R Maxwell-Eager  
Ms H McBain  
Mr RM McKinney  
Rev BJB O'Rourke  
Mrs P Wallace  
Rev GV Wharton  
Mr T Wheatley

**Secretary**

Vacant

*Rev IW Ellis attends in his capacity as Secretary to the Board of Education (NI)*



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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**(FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev AET Harper (Chairman)  
The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev Dr JRW Neill  
Mr JE Bunting  
Rev Canon RT Gillian  
Ms E Jackson  
Rev BJG O'Rourke

Mr RF Palmer  
Canon Lady Sheil  
Ven REB White

**BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)**

*Ex-officio members*

Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev AET Harper  
Bishop of Clogher, Rt Rev Dr MGStA Jackson  
The Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev KR Good  
Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev HC Miller

The Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev AF Abernethy  
Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke  
Rev FJ McDowell  
Canon Lady Sheil

*Elected members*

Armagh            Rev Canon JW McKegey  
                      Mr RF Palmer  
Clogher            Rev Canon RT Gillian  
                      Mr SB Morrow  
Derry              Vacancy - Clerical member  
                      Mr V Carson  
Down              Rev Canon JR Howard  
                      Mr I Davidson  
Connor            Ven SB Forde  
                      Dr KF Dunn

*Co-opted members*

Professor K Bell  
Mr J E Bunting  
Mr TW Flannagan  
Mrs R Forde  
Mrs H McClenaghan

Mr RM McKinney  
Dr TW Mulryne  
Mrs MP Wallace  
Canon W Young

*Observers*

Mrs F Brunt  
Dr R Marsh

Rev PK McDowell

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***Honorary Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)***

Mr JE Bunting

***Honorary Treasurer, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)***

Mr RM McKinney

***Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)***

Rev IW Ellis, Church of Ireland House, 61-67 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2QH

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Ven REB White

***Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)***

Vacant

Board of Education – Report 2009

**APPENDIX B**

**SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**REPORT 2009**

**Membership**

***Church of Ireland***

Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)  
Rev RJEFB Black  
Mrs JM Bruton  
Rev Canon DTS Clements  
Very Rev NN Lynas  
Mrs P O'Malley  
Rev BJG O'Rourke  
Ms EE Oldham

***The Presbyterian Church***

Mr B Duffy  
Rev CM Hunter (Deputy Chair)

***The Methodist Church***

Rev N Mackey  
Dr JW Harris

***The Religious Society of Friends***

Mr A Harrison  
Mr D Grubb

**Secretary to the Committee and to the Company**

Rev Canon JE McCullagh

**Administrator (Grants Scheme)**

Mr D Wynne

**Secondary Education Committee**

The Secondary Education Committee (SEC) is a body comprising representatives from the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends.

The Committee derives its authority from a resolution passed by the sponsoring Churches in 1965.

The functions of the SEC are twofold. The distribution of a Block Grant provided by the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) to families, where at least one parent is a member of a Reformed Church, needing assistance to send their children to Protestant secondary schools and the representation of the interests of the member Churches in the post-primary education system.

## Board of Education – Report 2009

The Committee operates as a Limited Company thus allowing both the corporate body and the liability of individual members to be appropriately insured.

### **Personalia**

Mr Roger Johnson resigned having served as a valued member of the Committee and finance sub-committee. His experience in education and his compassionate approach for difficult cases were important marks of his contributions. The Religious Society of Friends nominated Mr Alan Harrison in his place.

Dr John Harris completed his term as deputy chairperson, representing the Methodist Church and Rev Mary Hunter undertook the role on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. Dr Harris continues as chair of the Committee on Management and the Council of Governors. Rev Canon John McCullagh returned to parochial ministry but continues as secretary to the Committee and the Company pending a permanent appointment.

There were several joint meetings of the Committee on Management and Council of Governors during the period under review. These meetings give representatives of the Irish School Heads' Association, COMPASS the parents' body and the Governors the opportunity to meet with members of the Secondary Education Committee and to provide a common platform for discussion and representation.

The Secretary also attended the annual meeting of the five Comprehensive boards of management which was held in the Royal and Prior School in Raphoe.

### **Committee Meetings**

The Committee and its Finance Sub-Committee met four times during the year under review. The meetings included the Annual General Meeting of the Company.

Messrs Deloitte continue as auditors to the company Secondary Education Committee Ltd.

### **Block Grant Scheme**

Enrolments (2008/09) in the twenty-one fee charging schools totalled 9,816 (9,784 in previous year). This figure does not include the five comprehensive schools. In the school year 2007/08 the audited accounts showed the total amount, received from the DE&S, was €6,222,591 (€5,844,235), the grant in aid of fees totalled €5,863,185 (€5,482,067) and capitation adjustment grant €359,405 (€362,168). The net cost of administering the SEC scheme was €28,530 (€48,764). There is a small grant to assist the running of the office but it is necessary to utilise interest from the grant received to provide a further subvention for these costs.

The following numbers of grants were awarded in respect of the 2008/09 school year: 1,451 day grants (1,544), 914 boarding grants (981), 2,365 in total (2,525).

The Committee agreed to increase grants for the school year 2009/10 on a scale from boarding €1,140 - €6,699 (€1,140 - €5,775) day €480 - €2,505 (€480 - €2,160). An increase in certain allowances was also agreed in relation to the reckoning of assessments. This resulted in improved access to grants for a number of families.

## Board of Education – Report 2009

The Administrator, Mr Wynne, again attended a number of open days at the request of schools and took the opportunity to discuss issues with individual parents. He also made contact with each school to discuss the functioning of the grant scheme. This ensures that schools have every opportunity to draw attention to the difficulties of any individual family. Participation in the Council of Schools Charities has also been ongoing, providing a yardstick for other charitable bodies.

### **Educational Developments**

Four schools, in a representative capacity, had undertaken a legal action against the Minister and the Department of Education & Science (DE&S). Following certain agreements and the payment of legal costs by the Department the action was discontinued. The intrinsic tension between the board of management as employer and the DE&S as paymaster remains. This is exacerbated where schools employ teachers using school funds and such staff have expectations of long term employment.

The sudden deterioration in the State finances led to the DE&S altering the pupil-teacher ratio for 09/10 and discontinuing certain grants. These measures affect all second-level schools and have a particular impact on pupils who suffer economic or educational disadvantage. The situation was made significantly worse for the 21 fee charging schools under Protestant management as the Minister removed certain other grants with effect from January 2009 giving the schools no opportunity to plan for such significant financial cutbacks. This action was further compounded by a decision to worsen the pupil-teacher ratio for fee charging schools by a further point.

A meeting with the Minister and his senior officials provided certain clarifications but no hope of significant change in the current economic climate. It was indicated that the Secondary Education Committee might use certain funds under the Committee's control to assist a small number of schools as a transition mechanism. Parents however have been reassured by the guarantee of the continuance of the Block Grant. The grant will continue to assist necessitous Protestant children to attend schools with an appropriate ethos.

### **Grant Structure**

In recent reports there has been reference to a review of denominational membership in relation to eligibility for grants in support of school fees. The DE&S has stressed that grants are for necessitous Protestant children and this narrower interpretation will impact on some families but there will be some measures in the short term to ameliorate the impact on families, already in the system, where there is financial eligibility but where the pupil does not have denominational eligibility.

The Committee maintains a review and appeal procedure for applicants who are dissatisfied with a decision by the grants office.

The Committee appreciates the work of the Administrator, Mr David Wynne, and his Assistant Ms Bridie McCauley who continue to give friendly and effective assistance both to applicant parents and to the schools. Mr Wynne arranged a well attended bursars' conference in the spring which considered some of the issues in relation to developments in the assessment of grants.

**APPENDIX C**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY REPORT - 2009**

2008 has been another year of important decisions in the Sunday School Society.

Rev Anne Taylor's three year contract as Children's Ministry Officer ended in August. It was decided to extend the contract for a further twelve months as 2009 is our Bi-Centenary year. Due to inadequate finances we will be unable to fund this post beyond 2009. We were delighted that Rev Taylor was agreeable to this and also the Parish of Rathfarnham who share Rev Taylor's time with us.

Book tokens were distributed once again to the first year students of both Church of Ireland Theological Institute and Church of Ireland College of Education to assist them in their work with children.

On Saturday 29 November *Building Blocks* the annual inter-denominational Children's Ministry Conference, took place in St. Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra. Over 300 attended with many Church of Ireland people travelling from all over the country. Our keynote speaker was Mr Terry Clutterham, Head of Resource Development for Scripture Union Publishing. *Building Blocks* Conference 2009 will take place on Saturday 14 November, the venue is to be confirmed.

As part of our bi-centenary celebrations in 2009, the Society is launching a Lenten Children's Project in conjunction with Sightsavers Ireland. More information is available from the Society website [www.sundayschoolsociety.ie](http://www.sundayschoolsociety.ie)

We welcomed Rev Niall Sloane to our committee and look forward to having him working with us.

Ms Gillian Kohlmann and Ms Betty Cox have done great work in the Resource Centre for which we are extremely grateful. Profits this year are well up on last year. These profits also reflect the great work done by Rev Taylor with resources as she travelled the country giving leader training sessions in a number of parishes. Many leaders have reason to be grateful to Rev Taylor for her time and expertise which goes to show that a Children's Ministry Officer should play a vital part in the life of the Church as a whole.

As the year draws to a close, we are aware of a downturn in the economy and we hope this does not have an adverse effect on the Resource Centre in the future.