

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

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 (Northern Ireland)

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 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 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

1. **Education Bill 2008**
Transferors call for continuation of their rights of membership of decision-making bodies for the Controlled sector of schools.
2. **Controlled schools – ownership and representation**
The Transferor Representatives' Council seeks a new support body for the Controlled sector integrally linked to ownership.
3. **Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion**
A joint three-Churches' response to this important consultation welcomes the laudable aim of proposals for improving provision but criticises them as highly aspirational.
4. **Arrangements for transfer to post-Primary schools**
The Board expresses concern regarding heightened anxieties of many Primary pupils, their parents and teachers, caused by new transfer arrangements.
5. **Proposed merger of QUB School of Education and Stranmillis College**
The Churches' Boards of Education monitor developments in proposals for a new teacher training institution.
6. **Religious education and CCEA / RE advisory group**
Progress report of work undertaken.
7. **Safeguarding Trust**
A report by the Child Protection Officer NI.
8. **Building Blocks**
A report of another successful annual conference for children's ministry leaders.
9. **Annual Theological Lectures at Queen's University**
The 2010 lectures by the Archbishop of York were well attended and widely appreciated.
10. **Personalia**
Appreciation of former members of the Board.

Education Bill

This Bill is the key enabling legislation to set up the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). The ESA was intended to be established by January 1st 2010; however, the necessary political agreement at the NI Assembly could not be found. Significant matters of concern are: future arrangements for the Controlled sector and the loss of rights of transferors on decision-making bodies for such schools.

The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC), which represents the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland on education matters in NI, believes that the proposals break faith with existing legal rights for transferors. In addition, transferors believe that new arrangements would create a weakened sector lacking the coherence and strength of ownership required to work alongside other sectors in planning the future of the schools' estate.

In existing legislation, transferor Churches have historic rights to nominate a certain proportion of members of each Education and Library Board. These rights safeguarded the Churches' guardianship of the schools they established and transferred into state control; they also recognised the transferor Churches' role along with other community

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representatives and educational professionals in the planning and development of Controlled schools.

Under present proposals, transferors will lose their current role by right in decision-making regarding schools for which they have a major responsibility. They will neither have a role by right on the ESA Board nor on any future ownership body for Controlled schools. Fundamentally this is an issue of parity of treatment; the TRC has called for transferors' historic rights to be secured and for the Controlled sector of schools to receive the same level of support and capacity enjoyed by other sectors within the education system in NI.

As an interim measure until the new legislation can be agreed, the minister has decided that transitional Education and Library Boards will be established with a reduced membership and with a view to developing convergence of services. Transferors have been asked to nominate ten members in four boards. In a fifth board, the South Eastern, commissioners will continue to be in charge. It is unknown how long these transitional arrangements may last and there are concerns that this interim measure could become semi-permanent unless the political deadlock is broken.

It is hoped to bring a resolution to General Synod 2010 to enable debate on this important issue.

Controlled schools –future representation

Under the Review of Public Administration the Department of Education (DE) intends to establish sectoral support bodies which will have the function of representing schools within the various sectors in NI. It has been proposed by the Department that a support body for the Controlled schools be established as soon as possible, that it develops a clear identity and becomes accepted by the sector as its champion.

A working group has been established by DE to develop a Controlled Schools Support Body. Transferors have been part of this group which has undertaken preliminary work to define: the vision and ethos, remit and make up, communication strategy, and business plan of such a support body. However, the future work of the group is linked to a satisfactory outcome to political discussions regarding the issue of the ownership of Controlled schools in the future. It is now widely accepted within the sector that a Support Body for Controlled schools without a connection to ownership could find its authority questioned and its work undermined.

Controlled schools – future ownership

In October 2009, the Department issued a draft second Education Bill which included proposals for a 'Holding Company' which would have a duty of care for the Controlled schools' estate worth approximately £2.3 billion. The TRC has indicated its opposition to these proposals which exclude transferors from membership of the Holding Company by right. The Department contends that transferors cannot be given places by right on such a body because to do so would infringe equality and anti-discrimination provisions within section 6 of the NI Act 1998.

The TRC has spent considerable time lobbying political support for its cause and has circulated all parties with briefing papers and welcomed invitations for face to face meetings. The TRC has subsequently been invited to meetings with education

spokespersons of a range of political parties. Meetings have also been held with the First and Deputy First ministers who have both indicated their support in finding a resolution to the problem.

The Board supports the strategy of the TRC in contending for the rights of the three transferring churches and urges that this work must continue until the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of the transferor Churches. The Board also expresses its thanks to the education secretaries of the Churches for their consistent work in this regard.

Consultation – The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion

In order to respond to this important consultation on SEN and Inclusion, the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches set up a joint working group to consider new policy proposals and make a submission. The group comprised: church members with professional expertise, parents of children with special educational needs, and the secretaries of the three Churches' Boards of Education.

The policy proposals are quite radical including: the wider concept of additional educational need; an emphasis on early identification and intervention; the widening of the remit of Special Needs Co-ordinators in schools and renaming as Learning Support Coordinators; a move away from statutory statements of SEN to statutory co-ordinated support plans; reviewing teacher training and development; better partnerships between mainstream and special schools; across learning communities and between Education, Health and Social Care.

Although welcoming the laudable aim of improving SEN provision and inclusion, the Churches' submission viewed much of the consultation document as highly idealised and aspirational, far away from the real life experience of parents seeking help for their children. The move towards what might be termed 'supportive inclusion' is welcomed, however, the lack of necessary information regarding financial and resource support undermines the potential benefits of the proposals.

Arrangements for transfer to post-Primary Schools

The Board has been kept informed of developments in 11+ transfer arrangements and discussed the matter at its regular meetings. The issue remains unresolved; the 'official' 11+ test has been discontinued and the minister has issued guidelines which do not include the use of academic criteria. Grammar schools, however, have devised and set independent entrance tests, the results of which will be used by the schools to admit pupils for the school year beginning September 2010. At present it appears that both sides in this battle of wills are irreconcilable.

The minister believes that the Grammar schools will be beset by legal challenges brought by parents unhappy with the outcome of the tests; the schools on the other hand believe their tests are robust and propose to continue using them to select pupils for post primary education. It will be some months before the full effect of using independent tests is known and whether there are any legal challenges. The Board has expressed disappointment that earlier opportunities to find an agreed way forward were not taken and regrets that both sides in this dispute seem determined to test their strength of purpose, leaving children and parents caught in the middle. The Board is concerned that

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the experience of this year's tests has for many parents, children and their teachers, proved much more stressful than under former 11+ transfer arrangements.

Proposed merger of QUB School of Education and Stranmillis College

Developments towards this proposed merged teacher training institution are being monitored by the three Churches' Boards of Education. It is anticipated that a public consultation on proposals will issue shortly from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

Religious education

Over many years the TRC has found its termly meetings with RE Advisers from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) very valuable. From concerns expressed at such meetings, the Churches have indentified that the uncertainty in the establishment of the ESA poses a question about the extent of future support for RE teachers. The TRC has taken the opportunity of raising this issue in its submission to the Assembly Education Committee during consideration of the Education Bill.

CCEA / RE advisory group

During the past year it was reported to the Board that the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has appointed Mr Stephen Livingston, a seconded Primary teacher, as the lead officer for the work of this group. The main focus of his work has been to develop support materials for Primary teachers. New resources include thematic units for use in year 5 and 6/7 developed under the themes of *St Patrick and People of Faith* and *Faith and Light*. These units are designed to enable RE to be taught in thematic way like other Areas of Learning; it is hoped to make these available later in 2010. A third unit has been planned for year 3/4 pending a successful bid for funds in the next financial year. The group is also developing a non-statutory guidance document for Religious Education placing it in the context of the revised curriculum.

Safeguarding Trust

A worker's extract of Parts 5 – 8 of *Safeguarding Trust 2008* was produced in May 2009 and many parishes have purchased this resource for their workers and have found it a useful guide to the essential requirements of the code. In line with the 2008 edition of *Safeguarding Trust* the Child Protection Officer, CPO (NI) has designed and implemented a new training programme for workers and a new two-part model of training for panel members. In order to assist with training, eighteen new trainers have been recruited and trained to deliver Safeguarding Trust training to parish workers and have been operational since October 2009.

Training for newly ordained clergy and first incumbents was facilitated by the CPO (NI) in October 2009 and has been followed by a series of training events for parish panel members in Armagh, Derry, Connor and Down and Dromore Dioceses. In Clogher Diocese a series of training events were delivered by the diocesan Safeguarding Trust team. The CPO (NI) has facilitated training sessions for a number of parishes, the Board for Social Action and interns on the Jump project. In conjunction with Ms Renée English, CPO (RI), she has also delivered Safeguarding Trust training sessions to students at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

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The Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) for NI established under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 has commenced and will be implemented in stages. This will have a significant impact the Church's work with children and vulnerable adults. Diocesan information sessions on the VBS are planned for June 2010. The Board undertook a parish survey during the latter part of 2009 to estimate the numbers of individuals working with children and vulnerable adults in Church of Ireland parishes in NI. This survey was conducted to provide data for AccessNI to estimate future workloads in relation to the VBS. The survey indicated that in NI parishes, there are approximately 6,300 adults working with children and vulnerable adults.

An advisory group has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services to draw up standards and guidelines for working with vulnerable adults. The Board is represented on this group and it is anticipated that guidance documents will be available from June 2010.

The CPO (NI) attended a number of training courses including *Managing Challenging Behaviour* and the CARI (Children at Risk in Ireland) conference on *Restorative Justice and Child Abuse: Can it work?* The Board was asked to participate in a seminar to develop a Memorandum of Co-operation between Faith and Worship Organisations in NI and the PSNI. This memorandum deals with the management of sex offenders in their attendance at places of worship.

The process of parish evaluation continues to be implemented and overseen by the CPO (NI). Follow up reports on each visit, are provided to the incumbents. The visits are carried out by teams of diocesan evaluators who generously give their time and expertise in assisting the Board and to support parishes. The Board appreciates the valuable and dedicated service of evaluation team members and offers sincere thanks to them for their continuing support.

The CPO (NI) continues to provide advice and guidance on a range of issues to parishes, dioceses, mission agencies and related organisations throughout Northern Ireland and also maintains close links with statutory and voluntary child protection agencies.

Building Blocks - Children's Ministry Conferences

In November 2009, the eighth annual Building Blocks conference took place in Belfast and Dublin. The NI organising committee comprised representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Scripture Union. The Belfast event drew over 300 delegates and in Dublin over 200 from a wide range of Churches. The keynote speaker was Kathryn Copsey whose expertise is in working with children in urban and un-churched settings. These conferences, which also feature a variety of practical seminars, have become established as important sources of inspiration and training for children's ministry leaders. Details of the conferences including seminar notes are available at: www.buildingblocks.ie

Annual Theological Lectures at Queen's University Belfast (QUB)

The 2010 lectures were delivered by the Most Rev Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York on the themes *Conflict and Reconciliation: A Theological Perspective* and *A Ugandan Perspective on Mission*. The lectures were particularly well attended this year and widely appreciated as an important link between the Church and the university. The lectures are

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arranged by the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy at Queen’s University Belfast and funded by the Board.

Personalia

The Board offers its sincere thanks to Mssrs Roy Palmer, Victor Carson and Ivan Davidson who have given long and faithful service to the Board and who have now either retired or are no longer elected members. The Board is most grateful to the contribution each has made to its discussions over many years.

During the past year members were saddened by the death of Dr Robin Marsh, secretary to the Armagh Diocesan Board of Religious Education, who had been a faithful observer member of this Board.

B. Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

AIMS

- 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;
- support, through the *Follow Me* programme, religious education in primary schools under Protestant management;
- co-ordinate and encourage the participation of post-Primary Protestant schools in the Synod Examination in Religious Education;
- provide training and advices to bishops and boards of management;
- provide training and advisory service to bishops, dioceses and parishes in the implementation of Safeguarding Trust;
- facilitate Garda vetting of workers and volunteers in Church of Ireland Primary Schools and parishes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Representation: The Board is grateful to those who represent it on various committees and working groups.

Cutbacks: Cutbacks at both levels bite with the removal of support grants at second level, reduction to pupil teacher ratios at both levels and reviews of language support teachers and Special Needs Assistants which have also resulted in staff reductions.

Submissions: Submissions have been delivered to the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) on the establishment of new schools, school transport and revision of the Child Protection guidelines.

Admissions policy: The Board has circulated a guidelines document to Patrons.

Board of Management training: Five modules of training have now been offered to all schools.

Religious Education: *Follow Me* has a new website and the infant teachers’ books are being revised for republication later this year.

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Modern Languages in Primary Schools initiative: Update on the work of the initiative.

Religious Education Reference Group: Implementation of the ‘Goodness Me! Goodness You!’ programme into new model community national schools.

Representation

The Board is very grateful to those who act as representatives on its behalf. Our thanks to: Rev Canon Horace McKinley who has attended meetings of the Religious Education Reference Group; Mrs S Bogle represents the Church of Ireland on the interim Board of Management for Ardgillan Community College; Ms Hazel Crawford attends meetings of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative; Dr Anne Lodge has been nominated to the National Council for Special Education; Ms Margaret Ainsworth acts as our representative on the NCCA RE Course Committee; Ms Eileen Jackson represents the Board on the NCCA’s Early Childhood and Primary Committee and Mr A Oughton and Mr E Lindsay now represent the Church of Ireland on the Secondary Education Committee in place of Rev Canon Doris Clements and Very Rev NN Lynas. Ms Hilary McBain is our representative on the National Council for Curriculum Assessment in place of Dr K Milne. We are indebted to Canon Clements, Dean Lynas and Dr Milne for their very great contribution to the work of these Committees.

Welcome

We welcome Ms Breda Corr to the post of General Secretary of the National Association of Board of Management in Special Education. Breda comes in place of Ms Toni Buggle who has been associated with NABMSE since 1983, became General Secretary in 2007 and has now retired.

We also welcome Mr Caoimhín O’hEaghra to the post of Secretary General of An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge Teo. Caoimhín replaces Mr Dónal O’Chonail who retired at the end of 2009.

We wish both Toni and Donal a long and happy retirement.

Mrs Linda Clarke

The Board was saddened to learn of the death of Mrs Linda Clarke who aided the Board in various ways for many years. Linda has acted as adviser and examiner for the Synod Examination and represented the Church of Ireland on the NCCA RE Course Committee.

Cutbacks

The Board has been conscious of the challenges faced by the fee charging schools following the alteration in the pupil teacher ratio and the removal of support grants. The anxiety generated among parents and the challenge to maintain curricular choice and educational standards while negative in tone has had the positive effect of making the community aware of the role of the schools while the schools have strengthened their links with the sponsoring community. The Board is grateful for the leadership of the Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Cork who have articulated very clearly the impact of the recent budgetary changes. Greater detail will be found in the report of the Secondary Education Committee (appendix B). The Board appoints a number of the members of that Committee on a triennial basis.

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The Board has again noted with regret the delay in the rebuilding project proposed for Newpark School and the lack of response to the need for a significant extension to East Glendalough School. These delays, in view of the recognition of the actual needs of the schools by the Department of Education and Science (DE&S), do not encourage fee charging schools to consider possible options for transformation.

Cutbacks at primary level resulted in an unwelcome increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, bringing many more teachers than usual onto redeployment panels. The Renewed Programme for Government brought promise of no further changes in the ratios for the life of this Government and the decision to cut book grants has also been reversed. While such promises are to be welcomed, the fact remains that schools rely heavily on parental contributions in order to remain solvent. With increasing unemployment, it is unfair to expect parents to maintain high levels of financial support and there is anecdotal evidence that parents are, in fact, now borrowing to meet what are supposed to be 'voluntary' contributions.

Reductions in language support teachers hits at the vulnerable, while the value for money review of Special Needs also gives cause for concern. Audits are still on-going, so the full impact of this process has not yet been realised in all schools.

The suggestion within the McCarthy Report that small schools be amalgamated caused huge concern within our sector where it was estimated that some 44% schools would be affected if schools with under 50 pupils were to be amalgamated and 73% if that number was raised to 100. Parents in numerous parts of the country already drive huge distances to bring their children to Church of Ireland schools. Amalgamation would bring greater hardship and would in reality deny many parents access to education within the ethos of their choice.

Submissions to the Department of Education and Science

Commission on School Accommodation – the Board was asked to make a submission regarding the number of pupils required to open and maintain a viable primary school. This is currently an enrolment of 17 pupils per year over three years. The Board's submission argued that this should not change.

Revision of Child Protection Guidelines – The current guidelines came into effect in 2001 and 2004 for Primary and Post-Primary sectors respectively. A review group has now been set up and the Board made an initial submission based on experience of the current guidelines.

School Transport – A review of the transport system is now underway. The cost to provide this service to parents is very high and there are concerns that some routes are not being utilised fully. Currently there is a charge at second level but not at primary level when attending the nearest suitable school. It has been suggested that in some cases the lack of charge at primary level encourages parents to take tickets for buses even when there is no intention to avail of the service. While the Board is supportive of a review it is important that the term 'suitable' be retained in order that bona fide Protestant children can be transported to their nearest school under Protestant management. Where there is no bus service available, Scheme D Grants are provided by the DE&S. The criteria for the awarding of these grants are also being reviewed.

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Admissions policy - Primary

Due to an increase in the number of Section 29 appeals and a resulting high level of requests from schools for guidelines on admissions, the Board agreed to circulate an enrolment/admissions policy document to Patrons which might be used across our sector. The Diocesan Education Committee in Cork, Cloyne and Ross had already reproduced guidelines which, with permission, were amended and updated following legal advices.

Board of Management training - Primary

Three further modules of training were delivered to Boards of Management through the Catholic Primary School Management Association, Church of Ireland Diocesan trainers and the Acting Secretary. These modules covered Legal Issues, Child Protection and Board Finances. The delivery of this training is funded by the DE&S.

It is important that Boards of Management keep themselves informed of changes that affect their role. All five training modules are readily available from Church of Ireland House if required. Three editions of *Education Newsbrief* were published in 2009 in order to keep Boards of Management up to date on Department circulars and areas of concern.

Redeployment panels - Primary

Changes to the operation of the redeployment panels caused some confusion within our sector, not only as a result of confusing wording within Departmental circulars, but also through lack of clarity regarding the procedures to be used where new teachers come on to panels within a particular Diocese while an appointment process is already in train. As a result of the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, more teachers than usual were placed on panels and some are still in supernumerary positions at the time of writing this report.

School Closure

Fortview National School which has served the community of North Monaghan in various ways since 1871 sadly closed in August 2009. This was wholly as a result of changing demographics in Clogher Diocese. The teaching staff and remaining pupils have relocated to other schools in the locality. The huge commitment and work of the staff, parents and Board of Management to sustain the life of this school until its closure is acknowledged with thanks.

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

During 2009 additional music resources were provided to all Primary Schools under Protestant Management. The *Follow Me* website was revamped and relaunched and will be updated on a regular basis. Work on the revision of the Infant Teachers' books is ongoing. It is anticipated that the revised books will be available free of charge to schools for September 2010.

It is important that the religious education programme delivered in schools is kept up to date and it is intended that planning for a new programme will begin in 2010.

Transport Scheme D - Primary

The number of qualifying families now stands at 339 and grants totalling €176,543 for the school year 2008/2009 were received from the Department of Education and Science

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(DE&S) and paid out prior to 31 December 2009. Workloads and staff changes in the DE&S are still causing delays in payments, but we continue to liaise with them in an effort to resolve these problems.

The DE&S continue to be stringent in adherence to the rules of the Scheme. Applications must be made as soon as possible after enrolment as the Department will not pay retrospective grants. If families are experiencing short-term transport difficulties, they should contact the Board as auxiliary grants may be paid out in exceptional circumstances.

Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative

The MLPSI consultative group meeting took place in December 2009 at which the National Co-ordinator, Ms Tanya Flanagan, reported an excellent start to the school year in terms of team dynamics and team work accomplished. Several conferences have been held with the emphasis on early language learning and on the importance of a whole school approach, language awareness and embedding in language teaching, all of which are significant features of MLPSI work for some time.

There were induction days for new teachers to the Initiative and it was noted that there has been an increase in the number of staff members teaching the languages as opposed to visiting teachers. This is very positive news and shows a willingness on schools to schedule for such arrangements.

Seven seminars for school Principals were held countrywide and all participants were very happy with the level of support being provided.

With 505 Primary Schools (290 French, 96 Spanish, 93 German and 23 Italian) now in the Initiative, there will be continued monitoring of regional support. There will be an expansion of ICT and Language evening courses for professional development. Collaboration with teacher training colleges is proving very fruitful and provides open access to students.

MPLSI will make presentations at forthcoming conferences in Valencia and later in Greece.

Religious Education Reference Group

The Religious Education Reference Group was established by County Dublin VEC in September 2008 to provide expertise and advice as required on issues relevant to the new 'Goodness Me! Goodness You!' multi-belief programme in the community national schools and to support its ongoing development. The Reference Group includes representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Islamic and Buddhist faiths and the Humanist tradition. There are also representatives from the Department of Education and Science, the teaching union, the NCCA and the academic area of religious education in general. The Reference Group meets under the chairmanship of County Dublin VEC; the patron-in-waiting of the first two community national schools (CNS).

The Reference Group met four times in 2009. Much of the work of the first year involved developing an understanding of the 'Goodness Me! Goodness You!' programme as it was being written and implemented. The programme is innovative in that children of all faiths are being taught together during the school day. Elements of all faith traditions

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form part of the narrative of the programme. Parents are encouraged to discuss particular religious issues/rituals through the use of worksheets that are sent home with the children every week. Members of the Reference Group visited Scoil Choilm, Porterstown, Dublin 15, and heard from the teachers that the children are responding very positively to the programme to date. Parents, who are consulted on a regular basis, are also very positive. Representatives of the local churches have visited the schools.

The Reference Group is aware of the challenge that the CNS model presents in trying to build a community of different faith traditions. The challenge includes engaging the parents and also the local individual faith/belief communities to support formation. To build social interaction, Scoil Choilm and Scoil Ghráinne, Phibblestown, Dublin 15, have been running classes for parents in English and family learning and also inviting local community groups to engage with the families. All these initiatives are reported to the Reference Group.

Garda Vetting

Increasing awareness across parishes and schools results in an ever increasing number of applications for processing through the Garda Central Vetting Unit. Almost 1,100 applications were processed in 2009 but many are still being returned unprocessed as vital information is missing on forms.

The vetting of teachers who were in place prior to the introduction of the current scheme on 1 September 2006 has been the main focus of attention over the last year. There is a genuine willingness across all relevant bodies to ensure that all teachers are vetted, but as it does not currently fall within the remit of the Teaching Council to do this, a variation will be required to the Teaching Council Act and the necessary extra resources will have to be provided to the Teaching Council and the Garda Central Vetting Unit to enable it to be done.

All new students into the Church of Ireland Theological Institute are now being vetted through Church of Ireland House.

Religious Education at second level

This year is the tenth anniversary of the examination of Junior Certificate Religion at national level. Most Secondary Schools are offering this programme, devised and monitored by the NCCA, funded by the Department of Education and Science and supported by the major Communities of Faith in Ireland. 2010 seems an appropriate time to examine the Religious Education Syllabus and assess the impact of what was seen in 1999 as a ‘forward-looking and exciting new subject for the new Millennium’. For those involved in its implementation, it has been a long but worthwhile journey and now, ten years later, most parents and students are wholly supportive of the programme.

The NCCA is currently revising the syllabus with a view to removing repetition, merging some sections and making clear exactly what the student needs to know. On 14 December 2009 a Colloquium was held in Kilkenny where educators from all sections of the community, teachers, parents, inspectors, examiners and religious advisors, spend a day looking at the criticism that has been made over the years and listing the ways in which Certification of Religious Education can better meet the needs of modern students. We look forward to receiving the findings of the Colloquium and to the new revised syllabus, which should be available by September 2010.

Safeguarding Trust

Training in Safeguarding Trust for panels and workers was carried out during the year by the diocesan trainers and by the Child Protection Officer (CPO) Ms Renée English.

A training day for newly ordained clergy, new incumbents and clergy who have recently arrived from other jurisdictions was held in October 2009. Mr Kyle Petrie gave an interesting workshop on aspects of electronic communication and how it impinges on young people and those working with them. It is planned to offer such training on an annual basis. Training for students at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute was also provided.

A meeting for diocesan support teams was held in September 2009. It was attended by 13 people representing seven dioceses. The Board greatly appreciates the contribution to Safeguarding Trust implementation which is provided by dedicated volunteers from the diocesan support teams, and we were delighted to welcome several new Diocesan trainers this year.

Parish evaluations continued on a triennial basis, with some parishes included for the first time. The CPO now receives copies of parish evaluations from a number of dioceses which provides valuable feedback regarding implementation and issues arising.

When the 2008 edition of Safeguarding Trust was published, time was allowed in order to gauge demand for a separate booklet for workers. This demand was established and the booklet was published in October 2009. It is available from the Resource Centre, Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

During 2009, the CPO undertook professional training in child protection for children with disabilities as part of her ongoing 'Keeping Safe' trainer role. She also attended a number of training events. The management of convicted sexual offenders who wish to be involved in faith communities presents a challenge for child protection. It is hoped to develop a working paper on this issue.

Conferences

On behalf of the Board, Rev Canon S Johnson attended the Annual INTO Congress in Letterkenny, Mr Niall West attended the IPPN Annual Conference in Killarney and Jennifer Byrne as Acting Secretary also attended CPSMA, NABMSE and IPPN Conferences.

Grants

A grant is being made available to the Church of Ireland College of Education towards the introduction of a new programme leading to a Certificate in Religious Education, the first module of which commenced on 20 January 2010.

The Board provides 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 2008/2009 were as follows:

YEAR 1

Morgan Jellett Fund Prize	Amber Gleeson Helen Roulston	Alexandra College Royal and Prior
2 nd Prize	John Cummins	Newpark Comprehensive
3 rd Prize	Rachel Cosgrove	Alexandra College

YEAR 2

James Fitzgerald Gregg Prize	Amy Ryan	Alexandra College
2 nd Prize	Aura Jurciukonyte	Newpark Comprehensive
3 rd Prize	Chloe Taylor	Wilson's Hospital

YEAR 3

Morgan Jellett Memorial Prize	Kirsten Levermore	Alexandra College
2 nd Prize	Nanci O'Reilly	Alexandra College
3 rd Prize	Alex Reihill	Alexandra College

Junior Division Prizes:

Laura Rankin	The High School
Sarah Bates	Royal and Prior
Iain Crockett	Royal and Prior
Divya Ravikumar	Wilson's Hospital
Ann Marie Finn	The High School
Robbie Lloyd	The King's Hospital
Caro Lloyd	The King's Hospital
Emmeline Cosnett	Cavan Royal
Jenna Goodwin	Newpark Comprehensive
Hannah Schwartz	Alexandra College
Nicholas Graham	Monaghan Collegiate

TRANSITION YEAR

Ferns Fund Prize	Killian Hales	Wilson's Hospital
2 nd Prize	Shauna Clashy	Wilson's Hospital
3 rd Prize	Grace O'Regan	East Glendalough

YEARS 5 AND 6

Ferns Exhibition Prize	Eoghan Hughes	The King's Hospital
2 nd Prize	Adam Gibson	Royal and Prior
3 rd Prize	Joel Cromie	Royal and Prior

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Senior Division Prizes

Gillian Robinson

Aoife Kinahan

Joanna Heaney

Royal and Prior

Wilson's Hospital

East Glendalough

Increasing prizes and additional incentives did not result in a greater participation in the Synod Examination for 2008/2009.

The Synod Examination is administered by the Board of Education on behalf of the APCK. Concern has been raised for some time regarding the low level of support for the examination in its current form. A working group has been set up by the APCK to look at ways in which the examination might be re-targeted and also expanded to Church of Ireland RE students in Northern Ireland. However, the examination will continue as it is for the 2009/2010 school year.

The Board would like to thank Rev David McDonnell who kindly agreed to act as Examiner this year.

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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 2010.

THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Mr SR Harper
Ven REB White

Canon Lady Sheil
Rev FJ McDowell

Elected members

Armagh

Rev Canon JW McKegey

Mr LV Johnston

Clogher

Vacant

Mr SB Morrow

Derry

Vacant

Mr D West

Down

Rev Canon JR Howard

Mr JE Bunting

Connor

Ven SB Forde

Dr KF Dunn

Kilmore

Very Rev R Ferguson

Mrs B Barrett

Tuam

Rev Canon DTS Clements

Professor P Johnston

Dublin

Rev G Wharton

Ms R Handy

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

Ven R Warren

Mr TS Hardy

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Co-opted members

Mr T Flannagan	Rev A Taylor
Mrs R Forde	Dr A Lodge
Mrs H McClenaghan	Mr M Hall
Mr RM McKinney	Mr A Cox
Dr TW Mulryne	Mr I Coombes
Mrs MP Wallace	Ms S Hall
Rev Canon RT Gillian	Ms R Maxwell-Eager
Ms C Bruton	Ms S Honner
Rev Canon RJEFB Black	Ms E Jackson
Rev BJG O'Rourke	Mrs P Conran
	Ms S Farrell

Secretary

Vacant

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2010)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev AET Harper (Chairman)
The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill
Canon Lady Sheil
Ven REB White
Rev Canon RT Gillian
Mr T Flannagan
Mr JE Bunting
Ms Eileen Jackson
Rev BJG O'Rourke
Ms S Honner

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Ex-officio members

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev AET Harper
Bishop of Clogher, Rt Rev MGStA Jackson
Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev HC Miller
Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke
The Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev AF Abernethy
The Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev KR Good
Canon Lady Sheil
Rev FJ McDowell

Elected members

Armagh	Rev Canon JW McKegey Mr LV Johnston
Clogher	Vacant Mr SB Morrow
Derry	Rev MRK Ferry Mr MA McSparron
Down	Rev Canon Robert Howard Mr JE Bunting
Connor	Ven SB Forde Dr KF Dunn

Co-opted members

Mrs MP Wallace
Dr TW Mulryne
Mrs H McClenaghan
Mr TW Flannagan
Mr RM McKinney
Mrs R Forde
Rev Canon RT Gillian
Canon W Young
Professor K Bell

Observers

Rev P McDowell
Mrs F Brunt

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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BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

Ex officio members:

The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill (Chairman)
Honorary Secretaries - Ven REB White, Mr S Harper

Elected by House of Bishops:

Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke
Bishop of Cork, Rt Rev WP Colton

Diocesan Representatives: Mr A Oughton, Rev G Wharton

Post primary representatives: Mr M Hall, Ms R Maxwell-Eager

Third level representatives: Professor P Johnston, Dr A Lodge

Primary representatives: Rev BJG O'Rourke, Ms E Jackson

CIYD: Ms CL Bruton

Sunday School Society: Rev A Taylor

Co-options: Rev Canon RJEFB Black, Ms S Honner

Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland) - Vacant

Acting Secretary - Mrs J Byrne

Appendix B

SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT 2010

Membership

Church of Ireland

Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)
Rev Canon RJEFB Black
Mrs JM Bruton
Mr E Lindsay [from January 2010]
Very Rev NN Lynas [Resigned November 2009]
Mrs P O'Malley
Rev BJG O'Rourke
Ms EE Oldham
Mr A Oughton

The Presbyterian Church

Mr B Duffy
Rev CM Hunter (Deputy Chairman)

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 John E 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 ensure necessitous Protestant children may attend Protestant secondary schools and the representation of the interests of the member churches in the post-primary education system.

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

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Personalia

Rev Canon DTS Clements retired from the Committee in April 2009. Her experience as a primary principal and secretary to a diocesan board of education had been of significant benefit to the Committee's deliberations. Dean Lynas resigned on his appointment abroad. He had been a strong representative for the community in the South East. The Committee welcomed Mr Adrian Oughton and Mr Edward Lindsay to membership on behalf of the Church of Ireland Board of Education.

Block Grant Scheme

Enrolments (2009/10) in the twenty-one fee charging schools totalled 9,863 (9,816 in previous year). This figure does not include the five comprehensive schools. In the school year 2008/09 the audited accounts showed the total amount, received from the DE&S, was €6,555,763 (€6,222,591), the grant in aid of fees totalled €5,528,025 (€5,348,927) and capitation adjustment grant €1,863,082 (€359,405). The net cost of administering the SEC scheme was €14,817 (€28,530). 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 2009/10 school year: 1,622 day grants (1,451), 924 boarding grants (914), 2,546 in total (2,365).

The Committee agreed to increase grants for the school year [2010/11] on a scale from boarding €1,140 - €4,947 (€1,140 - €6,699) day €480 - €2,820 (€480 - €2,505). 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.

The Administrator, Mr Wynne and his assistant, Mrs McAuley, 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.

Educational Developments

The period under review saw an active and effective campaign in setting out the importance of the fee charging schools to the Protestant community, the impact of the negative change in the pupil teacher ratio and the ongoing costs arising from the removal of ancillary and support grants. The campaign led by the Committee on Management involved the lobbying of Government Ministers, opposition spokespersons and other senators and deputies together with a valuable conference on the role of the schools and their future which attracted a capacity attendance of parents, teachers, school governors and educationists.

The so called Bord Snip Nua or McCarthy Report made recommendations which would have been penal in the extreme to the fee charging schools and could have had an horrendous impact on families. A budgetary submission was made to the Dept of Finance and thankfully the McCarthy recommendations were shelved at least for the time being.

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The Minister for Education & Science, Mr Batt O’Keeffe TD, made clear at a meeting that the Block Grant was not in question but that differential funding in respect of the schools in the Protestant sector was no longer possible citing legal advice based on an interpretation of the Constitution. He offered participation in a working party and this was rejected. However, following a meeting of the Archbishop of Dublin and the Chairman with the Secretary General a dialogue has been put in place and a number of options have been set out for consideration by the schools.

Some individual schools have begun to explore the possible implications of providing free tuition which would provide a more beneficial pupil teacher ratio and access to certain ancillary grants while continuing to charge for services provided outside the scheduled timetable. This would also mean a higher boarding grant for pupils who are eligible by reason of distance from their nearest appropriate school.

The Secondary Education Committee has taken initial steps to consider how the delivery and structure of post-primary education for the Protestant Community might be considered in the future taking into account the context of the historic background and question of Protestant identity and ethos. The Committee on Management together with the Council of School Governors has put in place a group to consider both the possible options suggested in discussion with the DE&S and the consideration of other possible approaches to the funding of the schools.

The schools have sought to minimize the impact of the cuts and reductions in teaching resources and the education of pupils has been safeguarded while parents have not yet had to bear significantly increased costs. The long term impact on issues such as maintenance and refurbishment of buildings, many of which are old, has yet to be seen.

Administration

The Committee maintains a review and appeal procedure for applicants who are dissatisfied with a decision by the grants office. There was no use of these procedures in the year under review.

The Committee appreciates the work of the Administrator, Mr David Wynne, and his Assistant Ms B McCauley who continue to give friendly and effective assistance both to applicant parents and to the schools. Canon John McCullagh has continued as Secretary, in a temporary capacity, in which role he also discharges the duties of Secretary to the Committee on Management and the Council of School Governors.

Appendix C

SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY REPORT

In 2009, the Sunday School Society celebrated its bi-centenary. As part of our celebrations, 'Brainarama Special', a fun event for children was held in Castleknock Parish Centre in March. At the beginning of Lent a Special Project was launched to raise money for the work of Sightsavers. The Project was undertaken by Sunday Clubs throughout Ireland using the specially designed leader and children's packs. The packs included lesson plans, games, worksheets, Braille cards, pencils and DVD. Money was collected in the collection boxes provided or in Smartie Tubes. A cheque for €10,000 was presented to Mr John Fleming, Head of Sightsavers Ireland at our final celebration which was a Children's Choir Concert, entitled 'A Celebration of Childhood', in Rathfarnham Parish Church in May.

Throughout the past 200 years many things have changed but the Society is still committed to providing training for leaders and resourcing the work of children's ministry in the Church of Ireland.

A leader training evening was held in February in Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines when our speakers were Rev Anne Taylor, Mrs Heather Wilkinson and Ms Lynn Storey. They explored how to keep children's groups fresh and vibrant by looking at new ways of story telling, craft and games as well as by looking at the many courses available.

In November the eighth annual Children's Ministry Conference 'Building Blocks' took place in Dublin and Belfast. The Society continues to be involved in the organising of the Conference with Rev Anne Taylor as Chairperson of the Dublin committee and Mrs Heather Wilkinson as venue organiser. Along with a wide variety of seminars the keynote speaker was Ms Kathryn Copsey, a trained community worker and founder and Project leader for CURBS (Children in URban Situations). The event was attended by over 200 delegates from all over Ireland and continues to be a great source of inspiration and encouragement. Details of 'Building Blocks' 2010 can be found at www.buildingblocks.ie

2009 saw changes in the Society's Committee membership. We will greatly miss Rev Anne Taylor who served as a committee member for many years and latterly as Children's Ministry Officer though we are pleased that she remains in touch with the Society. We also said a sad farewell to Mr Douglas Bailey who in his time with the Society served as both Treasurer and Secretary. We thank them both for their service to the Society. We welcomed Ms Alana Carter, Ms Sarah Marry and Ms Celia Taylor as new members.

The Society had raised with Standing Committee the concern over the need for a strategic way forward for children's ministry in the Church of Ireland. In response the Standing Committee called a meeting of interested parties and the decision was made to set up a Working Group to look at the issues concerning ministry among children in the church.

Due to financial restraints the Bookshop staff, Ms Gillian Kohlmann and Ms Betty Cox, now have reduced hours in the Resource Centre. They continue to play a vital role in the work of the Society for which we are deeply grateful. The Resource Centre Bookshop is

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now open Monday to Thursday 10.00am to 4.00pm and full details are available on the website www.sundayschoolsociety.ie The Society has very much appreciated the continued support of so many parishes and individuals during a time of recession and hopes to serve the Church of Ireland for many years to come.