

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE
CHURCH OF IRELAND
REPORT 2007**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Synod Examination

Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

2. Safeguarding Trust and the provision of Garda Vetting for volunteers, new State legislation, the treatment of the Boys' Brigade as an external organisation and the treatment of vulnerable adults.
3. The inception of the Teaching Council and issues concerning the employment of teachers, appointment procedures and the redeployment panels.
4. Boards of Management and support for volunteers, insurance matters and the implementation process for deeds of variation.
5. Educational developments, a welcome for the proposed revision of section 29 of the Education Act, school funding and building
6. The primary religious education programme and the publication of a module for 5th class (P7).
7. Scheme D transport grants and parents losing out through late application.
8. The Secondary Education Committee and its report.
9. Grants and appointments.

Board of Education (Northern Ireland)

10. Review of Public Administration – implications for Transferors of proposals for major reform in education administration in NI
11. Bain Report – a response of the churches to a strategic review of schools.
12. Education (NI) Order 2006 – post primary arrangements are linked to political progress
13. RE Core Syllabus – a new Core Syllabus is approved and resourced by the Minister
14. Safeguarding Trust – the appointment of a Child Protection Officer
15. Children's Ministry – Reports on the Building Blocks and Core Skills Conferences
16. Consultations responded to by the Board
17. Annual theological lectures at QUB
18. Membership

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SYNOD EXAMINATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The prize winners for 2005/2006 were as follows:

YEAR 1

Morgan Jellett Fund Prize	Lindsay O'Driscoll	Ashton School
2 nd Prize	Sian Williams	The King's Hospital
3 rd Prize	Tricia Hepburn	Wilson's Hospital School

YEAR 2

James Fitzgerald Gregg Prize	Tom Roseingrave	The High School
James Fitzgerald Gregg Prize	Louise Farrell	The King's Hospital
2 nd Prize	Rory Van Oosten	The King's Hospital
2 nd Prize	Julie Gillis	The King's Hospital
3 rd Prize	James O'Neill	Newpark Comprehensive

YEAR 3

Morgan Jellett Memorial Prize	Niamh Beirne	Wilson's Hospital School
2 nd Prize	Rebecca Finnegan	Wilson's Hospital School
3 rd Prize	Ian Lovett	Monaghan Collegiate

Junior Division Prizes:

Ruth Redmond	East Glendalough School
Elizabeth Murphy	The King's Hospital
Hilary Kelleher	Ashton School
Lydia Poland-Cronin	Ashton School
Gunda Marl	Wilson's Hospital School
Róisín Manning	Wilson's Hospital School
Katie O'Brien	The High School
Caitríona Callan	Alexandra College
Robert Breadon	Monaghan Collegiate
Jack Roberts	Sligo Grammar School
Ruth Lowry	Cavan Royal
Ben Oliver	Royal and Prior
Leslie Middleton	St. Aidan's Comprehensive
Katie O'Flynn	Alexandra College
Megan MacAllister	Newpark Comprehensive
Matthew Gregorowski	Newpark Comprehensive
Naomi Young	St. Bricin's Vocational School
Mark Trenier	St. Bricin's Vocational School

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TRANSITION YEAR

Ferns Fund Prize	Gary Bradshaw	East Glendalough School
2 nd Prize	Sophia Whelan	East Glendalough School
3 rd Prize	Osgur McDermot-Long	East Glendalough School

YEARS 5 AND 6

Ferns Exhibition Prize	Michael Warren	Royal and Prior
2 nd Prize	Naomi Hanlon	Royal and Prior
3 rd Prize	Lisa Byrne	Alexandra College

Senior Division Prizes:

Natasha Drury	St.Aidan's Comprehensive
Denver Gray	St.Aidan's Comprehensive
Dawn Williams	Sligo Grammar School
Danielle Borland	Royal and Prior
Stephanie Doyle	Alexandra College
Zoe Coghlan	Ashton School

Hackett Special Prize:

Hilary Grubb	Wilson's Hospital School
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The constant generosity of the APCK in funding the prizes is greatly appreciated. The Board itself provides additional funding in relation to participating schools.

Mrs L Clarke has, with her usual skill and generous time commitment, moderated the scripts and advised on the future structure of the examinations. The Synod Examination at junior cycle is now totally based on the State syllabus for religious education and the pattern for senior cycle pupils is also altering to reflect the syllabus for Leaving Certificate at that level.

Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

Religious Education

The Board provided two DVDs as resources in religious education to second-level schools; these were an item on Islam presented by the Church Missionary Society and an initial part of a course on confirmation and faith development produced by *3Rock*, the Dublin & Glendalough Diocesan Youth Body. The Board also noted that the APCK has put in place a generous scheme to assist second-level schools obtain religious education materials for school libraries.

Vetting of New Employees and Volunteers

The introduction of a vetting procedure for volunteers and parish workers and for ancillary staff in primary schools is a very significant development which had been long sought by this Board. Mrs Jennifer Byrne was appointed as the authorised signatory to

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handle all vetting applications and to process same for onward transmission to the Garda Vetting Unit. In order to support this development training was provided by Mrs Byrne and Canon McCullagh to dioceses so that clergy and boards of management would be able effectively to ensure the implementation of the vetting process at local level. Vetting does require a certain element of judgement and the Board will advise where difficulties may arise. It has been stressed that the handling of vetting information must be treated with the utmost sensitivity and this emphasises the need for schools and parishes to have proper data safeguards in place.

Safeguarding Trust

The inclusion of *Safeguarding Trust* in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland has been widely welcomed and has been an encouragement to those who provide supports as diocesan trainers to individual parishes.

The authorisation of the appointment of a child protection officer received significant public endorsement and this process was put in hand. Regrettably at the time of writing it has not yet been possible to nominate such a person for appointment.

As a result of the introduction of vetting and the decision by the Boys' Brigade (RI Battalion) to vet its own appointees through a consortium of youth organisations it was decided that it would be inappropriate to consider the Boys' Brigade (RI Battalion) as a church organisation in the manner in which the Girls' Friendly Society and Church Lads and Church Girls' Brigade is treated. This does not reflect in any way on the Boys' Brigade but simply puts it on the same standing as Scouting, Guiding and the Girls' Brigade.

Parishes and dioceses were advised of significant changes in legislation in regard to child protection. Specifically a new crime of reckless endangerment was advised and the duties of those in authority, in relation to proper behaviour towards children, were also underlined very clearly in the Sexual Offences Amendment Act 2006. The latter Act places very strong penalties on those in positions of authority who abuse children.

The remit of *Safeguarding Trust* is as a child protection policy. It is however potentially also applicable to vulnerable adults. As yet the Department of Health and Children has not provided a parent document in relation to protections for vulnerable adults. Given the issue which has been highlighted in relation to the care and protection for those in nursing homes it is likely that a similar policy should be extended to all vulnerable adults including those who are aged and infirm and those adults who have significant intellectual disabilities. The Board noted that the Church of England has issued a significant advisory document about the care of those to whom it ministers in these particular categories and the duties of the caregivers.

Safeguarding Trust does not apply to schools as the Department of Education & Science (DE&S) and the other Partners have agreed child protection policies for both primary and second level areas. Boards of Management were asked recently to confirm that their child protection policy was in place and that a member of staff, usually the principal, had been appointed as the designated liaison person to handle any necessary reports of suspected abuse. The DE&S has advised that training is available for such designated persons.

The Teaching Council

The vetting for those entering the teaching profession for the first time or after a break of some three years is operated through the Teaching Council. The Council also commenced its role as maintaining a register of all qualified teachers and as a professional body setting standards for the professional practice and conduct of its members. These later standards will include a disciplinary process analogous to that of the Medical Council and similar professional bodies. It is likely that these roles will develop and alter resulting in an enhanced status for the teaching profession.

Employment of Teachers

The Board issued a circular drawing the attention of boards of management to the need to comply exactly with the procedures for the appointment of teachers. The Board also commended the provision of a fee for those who act as external assessors on selection boards for the appointment of teachers or the appointments to posts of responsibility. The appointment of teachers is one aspect of the increasingly complex role of boards of management. It is of some concern that some school employees are still not receiving appropriate contracts and the Fixed Term Employment Act has highlighted the employment of a number of teachers who had been employed in a part or full time capacity but on a temporary basis over a considerable period of time. This Act also applies to other staff within the school and a number of circulars have been issued to schools relating to these issues.

The redeployment panels for teachers were issued promptly in 2006 and this was a welcome development which allowed panels to clear and schools to be able to complete their staffing arrangements for the subsequent school year in good time. Only in one diocese, because of a lack of vacancies, has a panel not cleared for the school year 06/07.

Religious Education Qualification

The Board of Education requested the Church of Ireland College of Education to consider the possible provision of a specific qualification in religious education which would assist teachers and also assist boards of management in the appointment process. This proposal has received an initial welcome from the College and a working group has been put in place, under the chairmanship of the College Principal Mr Sydney Blain, to consider how this might be put in train.

Boards of Management

The Board of Education is most appreciative of the voluntary commitment which members of boards of management of national schools have given during the current term. The term of office, running now for 4 years, will complete in September 2007. Training for boards was again provided in a number of dioceses. At the end of 2006 the Minister announced her intention to fund such training and to provide some retrospective funding for training which had taken place over the preceding three years. This was a welcome return to the situation which had previously been obtained. Volunteers on boards of management deserve to be given the very best professional advice and support

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to carry out their duties in compliance with legislation and the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education.

The Board continues to support members by the provision of regular issues of *Education Newsbrief* and occasional circulars on particular topics. Canon McCullagh and Mrs Byrne are also available to advise individuals in relation to specific issues and to indicate where, when necessary, further advice may be obtained.

The Secretary to the Board met with representatives of the Ecclesiastical Insurance regarding the cover provided by that insurer to boards of management, patrons and trustees. The insurer subsequently provided a brief article in *Newsbrief*. The Board also requested a diocesan board of education to undertake a project reviewing the risk management applicable to schools. This project has commenced.

Deed of Variation

The Deed of Variation refers to a decision made in 1997 when the structure of boards of management was altered at national level. The Deed of Variation when attached to a school's lease is a protection for the school's ethos by controlling, at the patron's direction, the enrolment of the school. The DE&S advised the Board that it had begun processing those Deeds of Variation which had been furnished. The Board then wrote to diocesan boards and patrons encouraging the completion of the process of preparing such deeds.

Structure of the Board

The Board welcomed the attendance of a member of the Methodist Board of Education at its meetings. Dr Shirley Brooke, who was appointed to this role by the Methodist Board, is an experienced teacher who has both advised the Church of Ireland Board of Education in relation to the *Follow Me* Project and represented the Board in relation to mathematics committees. Her involvement in the meetings of the Board has been greatly welcomed.

The Board itself set up a sub-committee to look at the structure of the Board and the required supports. Much work has been done in this area and it is anticipated that it will come to fruition during 2007. This will include the provision of additional staffing resources for the work of the Board within Church of Ireland House.

Education and Other Matters

The announcement by Minister Mary Hanafin, T.D. that she intended to provide an amendment to Section 29 of the Education Act was welcomed by the Board. There has been much concern about the appeals process particularly where schools had found themselves constrained by weaknesses in their internal procedures when subject to the light of very precise scrutiny.

The announcement by the Minister of the Estimates for 2007 appeared to indicate a general increase in funding for schools. The Board however was greatly concerned that the ancillary support grant would be more than absorbed by the increase in the minimum wage which applies to many part-time caretakers and cleaners while increases in fuel, electricity and insurance have also continued to eat in to the funding available to schools for the primary purpose of education. The Board conveyed its concern to Minister

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Hanafin and pressed the Minister to make further representations to the Department of Finance for increased funding.

The introduction of an employee assistance scheme was welcomed in that it provided an independent support system for teachers experiencing personal difficulties. This scheme in a previous pilot form was successful in supporting teachers and keeping them within the system by ensuring they were able to function professionally at the highest level.

The Board was represented, with other partners, on DE&S committees considering the role of principal and in school management and the online claim service delivery. The Board also met departmental officials in relation to Garda vetting, the redeployment panels and possible alterations in the constitution for boards of management.

Archdeacon EJ Swann and Canon McCullagh met An Foras Pátrúnachta, on behalf of the Board to discuss the proposals by An Foras to further develop interdenominational Gaelscoileanna. This was a useful exchange of views and allowed the representatives to indicate the Board's support for religious education reflecting the pattern used in the *Follow Me* programme in such schools.

The Board was represented at meetings of the Child Poverty Forum and was able to indicate some of the supports which are available to necessitous families in the area of education.

School Building

National schools have continued to benefit from significant capital funding and a number of schools within the sector have recently completed extensions or totally new builds and other schools have been approved to go to planning or building for significant extensions or complete new buildings. The Devolved Capital Works Grant has been difficult for some schools in that the capital funding has not been sufficient in terms of local building costs and two schools were unable to proceed with their projects under this particular heading. These schools subsequently were sanctioned for development under direct capital funding by the Department itself. Schools have also benefited from the Summer Works Grant and this allows schools to undertake certain key projects during the vacation.

The capital funding available at second level is insufficient in relation to the overall cost of school projects and there has been as yet no positive move in relation to some comprehensive schools where the fabric of the buildings continues to deteriorate or in relation to voluntary secondary schools who wish to undertake significant extensions so as to provide improved educational facilities. School communities are faced with significant fund raising so that schools may undertake such work on a private basis. This is tantamount to indirect taxation.

The Board has welcomed the decision by Minister Hanafin to allow Newpark Comprehensive School to progress the replacement of the present buildings with a new school but continues to be concerned at the failure to put in hand the extension of Mount Temple and developments at East Glendalough.

***Follow Me* the Primary Religious Education Programme**

There was no publication in the year under review as the development of the modules for 5th and 6th class required a longer lead in time. The module for 5th class will be published in May 2007. The two new modules will be different in format and content from the modules provided for more junior classes. The text books are more detailed in content reflecting the general reading abilities of children at this level and are more challenging in style. The teachers' support material is however more limited while still providing a range of additional resources. There is no expectation that teachers would merely 'teach the text book'.

The Board is indebted to the tremendous commitment and skill of the Editor Mrs Jacqui Wilkinson who has led the project and to the teachers who form the advisory group reviewing initial content and looking at reports from piloting. The development of the project has been overseen by a Primary Religious Education Committee of experienced educators under the chairpersonship of Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Bishop of Meath and Kildare.

Transport Scheme D (Primary Schools)

The number of qualifying families now stands at 322 and grants totalling €163,065.20 for the school year 2005/2006 were received from the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) and paid out prior to 31 December 2006. Workloads and staff changes in the DE&S continue to cause delays in payments, but we are liaising with the DE&S on this issue to try and resolve the problems.

Schools have been reminded through *Education Newsbrief* that the DE&S will not pay out retrospective grants. Applications must be made as soon as possible after enrolment. Unfortunately, some families are still losing out on grants because the forms are not completed on time.

Two auxiliary grants were paid out since last year to families experiencing transport difficulties. Both families now have adequate transport facilities in place. If other families are experiencing short-term transport difficulties, they should contact the Board. The Fairbrother Trust, under the aegis of the Representative Church Body, supports two parishes in providing transport to certain primary schools.

Secondary Education Committee

The Secondary Education Committee is composed of representatives of four Churches including eight members nominated by the Board of Education to represent the Church of Ireland. The report of the Secondary Education Committee is appended as Appendix B.

Second Level Education

The Board again noted and conveyed to the Department its concern regarding the failure to provide funding for chaplains in voluntary secondary schools. The expansion of the boards of management of comprehensive schools to include parents and teachers on a statutory basis was delayed due to difficulties in regard to the protection of ethos in those schools. Considerable work on the issue has been undertaken by Rt Revd WP Colton, Bishop of Cork in his capacity as chairperson and patron of Ashton School.

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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 often includes articles on education. In 2006 an entire issue of the Journal was dedicated to a number of important educational issues both North and South. 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. This conference is a valuable training resource for teachers as well as giving the opportunity to partake of some relaxation and fellowship.

The Board nominates a teacher to avail of an Arion Study Scholarship for one week and in 2006 Mrs Jacqui Wilkinson was awarded the scholarship.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The Board at the request of the Minister nominated two possible candidates for membership of the NCCA for its next term of office. The Minister subsequently nominated Dr Kenneth Milne as the Board's representative on the Council. Dr Milne has given long and valuable service and chairs the Religious Education Sub-Committee of the NCCA. He addressed the Board on developments which effected both primary and second level schools.

The Executive Committee of the Board

The Board nominated Ms Eileen Jackson, the Revd Brian O'Rourke and the Deputy Chairman, Venerable Edgar Swann to the Executive Committee of the General Synod Board of Education.

BOARD OF EDUCATION – NORTHERN IRELAND

Draft General Synod Report – 2007

Introduction

The system of education in Northern Ireland (NI) is currently facing a most extensive and far reaching period of change. Policy developments are still unfolding, so the report which follows can only provide a ‘snap-shot’ of the many aspects of educational change. Many of the changes are also contingent upon political progress and the restoration of the NI Assembly. It is important therefore to appreciate that the future direction of some policy issues discussed in this report remains uncertain.

Review of Public Administration (RPA)

This is the most extensive and radical review of Public Administration in NI since the 1970s and will broadly affect the departments of Education, Health and Local Government. In November 2006, the Department of Education (DE) published its policy papers to guide the development of legislation to implement the Review in Education.

The Transferor Representatives’ (TRC) submitted a response to these policies based on contributions from the Boards of Education of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. The response document can be accessed at;
www.ireland.anglican.org/index.php?do=information&id=122

Whilst acknowledging the need for reform of administration of education, Transferors have stressed that following this review, any efficiency savings must lead to increased resources allocated to schools. As there is no indication of the level of local support and services for schools, assurances are needed that centralisation of administration will not lead to a loss of local service provision.

Some of the proposals recognise the important role of Protestant church transferors and acknowledge their need for support so that they can be a leading voice for the presently designated controlled sector. Other proposals however, particularly around governance will lead to a diminution of rights. Transferors have been advised by the DE that it is not legally possible, in forming new legislation under Equality provisions, to extend existing transferors’ rights for all controlled schools to future arrangements. This has very serious implications and the Transferor Representatives’ Council (TRC) has formed the view that this legal opinion should be tested independently.

The proposals indicate that the role of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will be to support schools and hold them to account for performance. A key concept in the policy proposals is that the relationship between schools and the ESA should be characterised by ‘maximised supported autonomy’. Transferors have great concerns for the controlled schools in the new administration, in particular their ownership and sectoral support, details of which are at present unclear in the policy papers.

The Department also proposes the establishment of an Education Advisory Forum to which all stakeholders including Transferors will have membership. It is however unclear how this Forum will operate; Transferors have serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of such a group advising the Department.

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This is a crucial point in the history of church involvement in education in NI; it is an opportunity to enable churches to reaffirm their historic link with schools and to strengthen that relationship for the future.

Bain Report – Independent Strategic Review of Education

In February 2007 the Department outlined its response to Professor Bain's report following the Strategic Review of Education. Broadly the review indicates a future estate of fewer, larger schools on average, planned on an area basis and characterised by sharing and collaboration.

An important recommendation which the Department has accepted, relates to enrolment minima which will form the basis for a proposed sustainable school's policy. These minima are – Primary: 140 pupils in urban areas and 105 pupils in rural areas. Post – primary: 500 pupils. The minimum enrolment for a new sixth-form in an age 11-18yrs school should be 100 pupils. It is proposed that when the enrolment in an existing school falls below the relevant level, the future of the school should be reviewed. The Department states that recommended minima are not drivers to sudden rationalisation. Rather, the review will be centred on educational quality and the particular needs of local areas, and schools will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The response of the Board and the TRC highlighted concerns while acknowledging that certain measures are necessary as a result of falling school enrolments and consequent over-provision of school places. Transferors are supportive of efforts to develop more collaboration between schools and across school sectors to find solutions which offer enhanced educational provision for children. There is a necessity for local area planning with the involvement of all stakeholders in decision making. However a grave concern is that, especially in rural and isolated areas, this policy could lead to the closure of small schools and to the fracture of vulnerable communities. Some schools may have to close in order to lead to better educational provision, but some may have to be supported to remain open for reasons of the greater good of the communities they serve.

Education (NI) Order 2006

The Education Order was approved by both Houses of Parliament and became law on 19 July 2006. The Order provides the broad legislative framework to implement the revised statutory curriculum, and to give effect to aspects of the new arrangements for post-primary education, including the curricular Entitlement Framework and powers to introduce new admissions arrangements. The Order, as amended by the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006, includes the abolition of academic selection within admissions criteria, but makes it subject to a vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly if the Assembly is restored by 28 March 2007.

The Board notes that the future of academic selection is now tied into the future of a devolved Assembly. At the time of writing there is a sense of great uncertainty and bewilderment especially among parents about what will replace the transfer test. It is in the interests of all that locally accountable ministers are able to come to a consensus on the way forward on this contentious issue.

Religious Education (RE) Core Syllabus

Following a long period of delay after an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed revised core syllabus, the Minister announced she had accepted the churches' draft syllabus. A number of measures was also announced to mitigate any adverse impacts as defined by Equality legislation. One such measure is that the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has appointed an RE officer, and along with the churches, has established an advisory group to support work in developing RE guidance materials. The group is co-chaired by CCEA and the Churches and its members represent: RE Advisers, Diocesan Advisers, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Inter-Faith Forum, St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges, Queen's University Belfast (QUB), University of Ulster (UU), and RE teachers.

The proposals as accepted introduce world religions at Key Stage 3 and schools will have the flexibility to extend this to Key Stage 4. The Department has asked the advisory group to develop such materials. The Minister also emphasised that the core syllabus always provided a minimum for schools to build upon in a way that suits the needs of their pupils and the ethos of the school and this could include greater coverage of world religions. The revised curriculum also provides schools with greater flexibility in what they teach and will provide scope for additional material.

The proposals also pointed out that a school should be an inclusive environment where the beliefs of every pupil are respected. However schools should ensure that parents are aware that they have the right to withdraw their child from some or all RE classes and collective worship on the grounds of conscience if they so wish.

The Board welcomes this decision of the Minister and looks forward to the early emergence of legislation to enact the revised core syllabus. An important piece of work also to be undertaken by the advisory group is to present the core in the format of the new curriculum, so that the approach to RE matches that of the other learning areas of the new curriculum.

Safeguarding Trust

A most significant development of our church's *Safeguarding Trust* policy has been the creation of a new post of Child Protection Officer. Following a recruitment and selection process, Ms Margaret Yarr has been appointed and members welcome her warmly to her post. Ms Yarr, who brings professional social work expertise and experience of practicing in the statutory sector, commenced duties on 5th March 2007. She can be contacted through the Board of Education (NI) Office, Church of Ireland House, Belfast. The Board views this as a vital appointment; the role will include: developing and reviewing policy; designing and delivering training; supporting parishes and dioceses in taking appropriate action to recognise and respond to concerns about the welfare of children; monitoring implementation of the code and forging links with statutory organisations and other bodies.

General Synod 2006 passed legislation which places the code of practice on a constitutional basis, and puts an obligation on parishes and dioceses to adopt and implement *Safeguarding Trust* in all activities with children and young people.

Children’s Ministry

In November 2006, the fifth 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 SU. The Jordanstown event drew over 400 delegates and in Dublin over 300 from a wide range of churches. The speaker was Marlene LeFevre, a well known children’s ministry writer and practitioner from the USA. These events have become established as an annual resource for inspiration and training for children’s ministry leaders. Details of the conference including seminar notes etc are available at: www.buildingblocks.ie

In September 2006 six Children’s Ministry workers nominated by their dioceses attended a conference in Nottingham organised by the Consultative Group on Ministry with Children (CGMC), entitled *Core Skills*. The conference provided an introduction to this new programme which could provide a very useful model of training for children’s ministry leaders in dioceses

Consultations

The following are consultations to which the Board made a response:

- a. Equality Impact Assessment for Proposals for a Revised Core Syllabus for Religious Education in Northern Ireland (March 2006)
- b. Independent Strategic Review of Education (July and September 2006)
- c. Review of Public Administration – Policy Papers (January 2007)

Annual Theological Lectures at Queen’s

These popular lectures continue to be funded by the Board and arranged by the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy at Queen’s University Belfast. The 2007 lectures were delivered by Richard Bauckham, Professor of New Testament Studies, St Andrews.

Membership

At the December 2006 meeting, members marked the retirement of Archbishop Eames with a presentation in appreciation of his leadership as chairman of the Board over the past 20 years. Members also expressed their appreciation to Revd Canons SMJ Dickson, and FD Swann who retired after many years of service to this Board and to the South Eastern, and Southern Education and Library Boards respectively. The Board extends a welcome to Revd Canon R Howard, Revd Canon JW McKegney and Dr KF Dunn who have recently been elected as diocesan representatives.

APPENDIX A

The following are the members of the Board and its committees as on 31 March 2007.

THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Rev Canon Dr IM Ellis	Very Rev RD Harman
Mr SR Harper	Lady Sheil

Elected members

Armagh	Rev Canon JW McKegney Mr RF Palmer
Clogher	Rev Canon RT Gillian Mr SB Morrow, O.B.E.
Derry	Rev Stanley 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	Ven EJ Swann 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

Co-opted members

Rev Canon RJEFB Black	Mr M Hall
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Mr I Bolton
Ms S Honner
Ms E Jackson
Mr B Levis
Ms R Maxwell-Eager

Ms S Hall
Ms H McBain
Rev BJB O'Rourke
Dr K Milne

Secretary

Rev Canon JE McCullagh, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2007)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev AET Harper (Chairman)
The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill
Lady Sheil
Ms Eileen Jackson
Rev BJB O'Rourke
Ven EJ Swann
Mr RF Palmer
Mr JE Bunting
Rev Canon RT Gillian
Very Rev RD Harman

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Ex-officio members

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

Elected members

Armagh Rev Canon JW McKegney
 Mr RF Palmer
Clogher Rev Canon RT Gillian
 Mr SB Morrow
Derry Rev Canon JCD Mayes
 Mr V Carson
Down Rev Canon Robert Howard
 Mr I Davidson
Connor Ven SB Forde
 Dr KF Dunne

Co-opted members

Mr J E Bunting
Mrs R Forde
Mrs H McClenaghan
Mr RM McKinney
Mrs A McNee
Mrs MP Wallace
Dr TW Mulryne
Mr TW Flannagan
Mr W Young
Professor K Bell

Board of Education – Report 2007

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill (Chairman)

Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke

Bishop of Cork, Rt Rev WP Colton

Rev Canon RJEFB Black

Very Rev RD Harman

Mr M Hall

Mr S Harper

Mr A Oughton

Ms S Honner

Ms E Jackson

Professor P Johnston

Ms R Maxwell-Eager

Dr K Milne

Rev BJG O'Rourke

Ven EJ Swann (Vice-Chairman)

Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

Rev Canon JE McCullagh, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

Board of Education – Report 2007

Appendix B

Secondary Education Committee

Report 2007

Membership

Church of Ireland

The Rt Revd WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)
The Rev Canon 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

The Methodist Church

Rev N Fallows
Dr JW Harris

The Religious Society of Friends

Mr RH Johnson
Mr D Grubb

Secretary to the Committee and to the Company

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. Firstly, to distribute a Block Grant provided by the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) to families, where at least one parent

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is a member of a reformed church and who need assistance to send their children to Protestant secondary schools. Secondly it also seeks to represent the interest 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.

Personalia

Four members who had served the Committee over a long period of time resigned during 2006. The commitment and interest in the work of education of Canon John Merrick, Mr Gerald Jephson, Mrs Linda Clarke and Professor Brian Murdoch had been greatly appreciated. Professor Murdoch had served as Deputy-Chairman of the Committee and as Chairman of the Committee on Management. The Revd Canon DJ Clements, The Very Revd NN Lynas and the Revd BJK O'Rourke were appointed as representatives of the Church of Ireland and Mr David Grubb was appointed by The Religious Society of Friends.

The Committee records its appreciation of the commitment and service to parents and schools of the Administrator, Mr David Wynne and his assistant Mrs Bridie McCauley.

Block Grant Scheme

Enrolments (2006/07) in the twenty-one fee charging schools totalled 9,653 (9,611 in previous year). This figure does not include the five comprehensive schools. In the school year 2005/06 the audited accounts showed the total, received from the Department of Education & Science (DE&S), was €5,571,568 (€5,338,894), the grant in aid of fees totalled €5,032,711, (€4,983,287) and capitation adjustment grant €357,790 (€355,607). The cost of administering the SEC scheme was €121,837 (€116,898). 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 2006/07 school year: 1,493 day grants (1,433), 1,006 boarding grants (1,049), 2,499 in total (2,482).

The Committee agreed to increase grants for the school year 2007/08 on a scale from boarding €1,140 - € 5,250, (€1,140 - €4,725) day €480 - €1, 998, (€480 - €1, 800). An increase in certain allowances was also agreed in relation to the reckoning of assessments. This will result in improved access to grants for a number of families.

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 and makes personal 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. He also attended the Cashel & Ossory Diocesan Synod at Kilkenny and addressed the Board of Kilkenny College and the Committee of Kirwan House on the work of the SEC. The Administrator continues to participate in the Council of School Charities which operates under the auspices of Protestant Aid. Charities linked to the Council use the objective allocation of SEC grants as a yard stick for the allocation of supplementary grants.

Auditing of the Scheme

In recent years the Department of Education and Science has requested and received the annual audited accounts of the company. In November 2006 the Controller and Auditor General's Office indicated that the scheme would be further reviewed by that office in the near future as the accounts comprise a grant from funds voted by the Oireachtas.

An official from the Controller and Auditor General's office indicated that it would, in future, be appropriate to alter the manner in which capital allowances in respect of the self-employed are assessed within the grant allocation. This will bring the scheme more closely in line with the pattern which applies for third level grants. It is anticipated that this change will be implemented over 5 years and may have a significant effect for some applicants.

The change in the application of the Capitation Adjustment Grant which has developed in the last 2 years has provided schools with the facility to further grant aid pupils from necessitous Protestant families where there is significant financial difficulty. The Administrator also has the discretion to increase grants, with immediate effect, where due to bereavement, unemployment or long term illness a family experiences sudden financial change.

Schools are required under Section 18 of the Education Act, 1998 to provide and make available to the school community audited accounts in respect of public funding. These accounts would include the block grant element provided to schools either in support of fees or as the capitation adjustment grant. A sub-committee of bursars representing the schools has been in discussion with the Financial Support Services Unit of the Joint Managerial Body to consider how this requirement may be effectively addressed.

Chaplaincy

Regrettably there has been no change in the Department's attitude to the funding of school chaplains in voluntary secondary schools. This is of concern not only to the Churches represented by the Secondary Education Committee but to the vast majority of voluntary secondary schools. The role of chaplain is extremely significant in relation to the pastoral care of students, staff and the wider school community. It is unfortunate that the DE&S has not altered its attitude in relation to a belief that public policy is inimical to the funding of such positions in these schools while at the same time funding such positions in the community and comprehensive sector.

Bursars' Conference

A third Bursars' Conference was held by the Committee and again this has proved to be a most useful exercise for all those involved. Items at the conference included a presentation on the effective use of property assets, developments in the grant scheme and a forum on the auditing of school accounts. There is also the benefit for schools of bursars taking the opportunity to make personal contacts and exchange relevant strategies.

School Building

The development of Summer Works Grant has continued to be of significant value to schools which have put in place a number of significant improvements to the fabric of buildings, improving access for all and upgrading science laboratories. There has however been no development in significant capital funding for a considerable number of schools both voluntary and comprehensive and this hinders the effective delivery of education in such schools. Monaghan Collegiate completed during the year a significant extension which had received capital funding.

Boards of Management Training

The Secretary has provided a presentation on the functioning of boards of management in several venues at the request of the parents' organisation COMPASS. The number of schools with functioning boards of management continues to increase.

Denominational Membership

The Committee exists in part to support necessitous Protestant families to access education. For many years the term Protestant did not pose any difficulties in relation to the allocation of grants. In recent years with a wide range of church memberships it has become increasingly difficult to make an objective decision as to the appropriateness of one membership over another. The Committee does not see its role as being theologically exact but is obliged to be objective and careful in the administration of State funds in relation to the purpose for which they were granted.

APPENDIX C (For Information)

SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY FOR IRELAND

The Sunday School Society continues to expand its involvement in children's ministry providing training for those involved in parishes throughout Ireland.

The programme of training continued in 2006 which included events held on a parish, diocesan and national basis. These included:

The fourth annual children's ministry conference Building Blocks in November. This ecumenical training event attracted over 300 participants from all over Ireland. This conference is held in conjunction with 'Building Blocks' Belfast and Rev. Anne Taylor sits on both committees. The Conferences will be held in 2007 in Belfast on 24th November and in Dublin on 1st December.

A training event to encourage new leaders was held in October – this event was run jointly between Rev Anne Taylor and Barbara McDade, Presbyterian Children's Development Officer. The event entitled 'Tops Tips for Children's Ministry' helped encourage new leaders and offer resources and ideas. Other training sessions took place in parishes which had requested training for their own groups of children's leaders.

The annual table quiz for children from 3rd to 6th class primary school took place with an increased number of parishes taking part. The Society is indebted to St. Andrew's College for the use of their premises. The Society held the annual Fun Sunday in April and the children took part in many different activities during an afternoon which centred on the theme of caring for God's world.

In November a television Harvest Celebration was broadcast involving children from Rathfarnham, Whitechurch, Castleknock, Rathmines, Tallaght, Booterstown & Mount Merrion and Greystones parishes. Many compliments paid tribute to the singing and reading of the children which enhanced the worship.

The Rev. Anne Taylor is the Society's representative, serving on the executive, on the Children's Ministry Consultative Group which works under the umbrella of C.T.B.I. Anne serves as children's ministry officer for the Society on a half-time basis combining this with her role as a curate. The Society has been greatly encouraged by the generosity of parishes in supporting this post which addresses a significant need in the Republic.

2006 saw the launch of the Society website www.sundayschoolsociety.ie. The website is an easy way to browse some of the books and resources available in the Resource Centre Bookshop as well as up to date information on forth coming events. The Resource Centre, kindly hosted by Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines, welcomed a new member of staff, Betty Cox, as assistant to the administrator Olive Rhodes.

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