



Newsletter

No. 41 April 2017

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A word from the General Secretary

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to our latest Newsletter. I would like to take this opportunity to address a particular issue.

The role of religion in admissions has generated considerable public commentary, a Consultation process, two hearings of the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills and a Private Members' Bill. It has also bemused the vast majority of Principals around the country who have never heard of the issue until debate erupted last year.

Intriguingly, much of the debate, led by a small group of advocacy groups and lobbyists has occurred within the context of a complete absence of hard data to quantify either the scale or indeed the nature of the problem.

CPSMA and the Education Secretariat of the Archdiocese of Dublin conducted an internal survey of Catholic Primary Schools in the Greater Dublin Area, the area most prone to over subscription.

One of the key results of the survey is that only 1.2% of unsuccessful applications were due to the lack of a baptismal certificate, or 97 out of the total 26,968 applications. It is important to note that these figures refer to applications not individuals and therefore it is

likely, due to multiple applications, that the number of people affected is much lower.

The one thing the survey tells for definite however is that the role of religion in unsuccessful school admissions is at 1.2% a minor one, when compared to a much greater issue of a lack of school places in certain areas of the city.

The real issue in admissions is resources not religion.

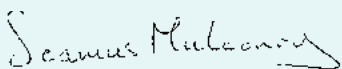
In fact, the feedback from schools is that lack of resources underpins most of the challenges faced by Principals and Boards of Management. It is simply not possible to run a school on the current capitation grant of 92 cents per pupil per school day. Many schools' parents are paying more per pupil than the state is through the capitation grant. Free Primary Education is a constitutional right but the reality is that schools could not survive without financial support from parents and the hard work of Principals who now spend more time fundraising than ever before.

This is time of year when Government Departments put their budgets together. This year CPSMA will be asking as a minimum that the Minister restores the capitation grant to €200 per child. The Irish Primary system has been the Cinderella of the Education →

A Word from the General Secretary – continued

System doing the hard work while others get invitations to the ball. The Primary system has coped and coped well with an incredible amount of change over a very short period of time from increased diversity in the classroom, to ever greater demands from Parents Politicians and Policymakers with minimal investment. This cannot continue. We need investment and we need it now.

In the coming year CPSMA intends to make a forceful case to Government for increased resources for schools and we will do our utmost to focus Government on the real issues facing schools.



Management Matters

Circular 0017/2017

Staffing arrangements for Primary Schools for the school year 2017/2018

[Circular 0017/2017](#) sets out vital information for all schools in relation to staffing arrangements for the coming school year.

The key points to note are:

- The new Special Education Teaching Allocation model, ([circular 0013/2017](#)) combines GAM/EAL and Resource teaching allocations with posts allocated under the new model referred to as Special Education Teaching posts.
- All existing GAM/EAL clusters and any existing sharing arrangements with permanent or temporary Resource posts cease at the end of 2016/17 school year.

Thursday, 30th March 2017 was the key date for schools to:

- Notify relevant Panel Operator of any permanent or fixed term vacancy
- Notify the Department's Primary Teacher Allocations Section of new Special Education Teacher cluster arrangements, using Form S.E.T.Cluster2017 ([Appendix D](#))
- Return Main Redeployment Panel Application Form ([Appendix E](#)) for surplus

permanent/CID holding teachers to the Department's Primary Teacher Allocations Section

- Return "CID Declaration Form Mar 17" ([Appendix C](#)) in respect of all teachers awarded a CID in the 2016/17 school year and a Main Panel Application Form, if applicable, to the Department's Primary Teacher Allocations Section
- Submit completed Staffing Appeals Form ([Appendix F](#)) for the April 2017 meeting of the Primary Staffing Appeals Board to the Department's Primary Teacher Allocations Section.

The Main Redeployment Panels will be published in late April 2017 with a timeline up to mid-May 2017 for schools to appoint teachers from the panels to vacancies.

It is important that school management are familiar with this circular. **If you have missed the key date as stated for any reason please contact the Department directly.** The DES have also published an [FAQ](#) which gives useful guidance. If you have any queries please contact the office.

New Adult Religious Education Project to open in County Wexford

The Parable Garden Education Project is based in Ballinesker near Curracloe in Co. Wexford. It offers opportunities and experiences for individuals and groups to reflect on their lives and to draw from spiritual wellsprings. While inspired by Christian and Irish traditions all who would like to discover a deeper meaning in their lives are welcome.

Michael Drumm and Tom Gunning have developed the Parable Garden Education Project. Michael Drumm is a diocesan priest and lectured in theology for many years before becoming the founding Chairperson of the Catholic Schools Partnership. Tom Gunning is a teacher in Loreto Secondary School in Wexford and is a well-known author of several books in second-level religious education.

Full details about the project and its calendar of events are available at www.parablegarden.ie



New SEN Model for schools

The Department of Education issued [Circular No 0013/2017](#) which addresses Mainstream Primary Schools Special Education Teaching Allocation. The purpose of the circular is to advise schools of the revised allocation process for Special Education Teachers to mainstream primary schools from the 2017/18 school year. Schools should read this circular in conjunction with [Circular 0017/2017 Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2017/2018 school year](#).

This Circular therefore replaces DES Circulars SP Ed 02/05, 08/99, 24/03, and 08/02. It also replaces Circulars 30/2011 which made further adjustments to the scheme and DES Circular 07/2012, which introduced revised arrangements of the General Allocation Model as part of the Primary School Staffing arrangements for the 2012/13 school year, and subsequent annual Primary School Staffing Arrangement Circulars thereafter, the most recent of which was 07/ 2016. All GAM/EAL clusters that are in place for the 2016/17 school year and any sharing arrangements for permanent and temporary Resource posts will cease at the end of the 2016/17 school year.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation will provide a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile.

The additional provision which is being made to support the new model will ensure that no school will receive an

allocation of special education teaching resources, arising from the introduction of the new allocation model, which is less than the combined allocation the school received under their GAM/EAL and NCSE allocations for the 2016/17 school year.

All full-time Special Education Teaching (S.E.T.) posts, both full-time in one school and base posts for S.E.T. clusters are permanent posts. Part-time hours remaining in a school that are not clustered can only be filled in a temporary capacity. The allocations which are being made will therefore initially remain in place for a minimum of two years, following which, revised profiled allocations will be due to be made to schools from September 2019.

Special Education Teaching posts should be filled in accordance with the published staffing and redeployment arrangements which are set out in the Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2017/18 school year.

Schools with high concentrations of pupils requiring EAL support also received additional teaching allocations to make provision for such concentrated needs and this provision will remain in place.

The circular goes on to outline the new method for allocating additional teaching supports to schools which will be based on the school's educational profile. The allocations, which are being provided for schools from September 2017, are based on the profiled allocations for each school and the basis on which the allocation is

calculated is explained.

Profiles will not be updated over the course of the initial two years of the model to take account of new enrolments or the newly diagnosed needs of pupils attending the school, other than as noted in in Section 11 in relation to appeals.

Schools with a balance of Special Education hours additional to the full posts had until 30th March 2017 to enter into a cluster arrangement to achieve a full-time permanent post (25 hours) through sharing arrangements with other neighbouring school(s). The base school in the cluster should have submitted the Form S.E.T.Cluster2017 (Appendix D) to the Primary Allocations Section. S.E.T. hours that are clustered into new full-time permanent posts and received before the March 30th deadline will be automatically approved by the Department. Schools that have not returned the completed form within the above timeframe or where all of a school's S.E.T hours are not clustered into full-time posts will be included, as appropriate, in the Department led clustering process.

Schools continue to engage with the Continuum of Support Guidelines in identifying the needs of pupils with a view to informing interventions. The class teacher will play a central role in collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist and the local Special Educational Needs Organiser.



Ancillary Staff pay Increases – Reminder!

Circular 26/2017

[This Circular](#) replaces Circular 0080/2016 due to the bringing forward from 1 September 2017 to 1 April 2017 of the increase of €1,000 on whole-time annual basic pay up to €65,000 under the application of the FEMPI Act 2015.

This increase applies to grant funded School Secretaries and Caretakers who are paid on a salary scale equivalent to a public service salary scale and also Cleaners employed by schools using ancillary or capitation grant funding.

This Circular also remind boards of a further 2.5% increase in the hourly rate of pay for school secretaries and caretakers from April 1st 2017. This applies to those secretaries and caretakers who are not currently paid on a salary scale equivalent to a public service salary scale and whose pay is funded from the ancillary services grant.

There is no change to the other pay increases/ minimum hourly rate provisions previously outlined in Part A of Circular 0080/2016. As this is a consolidated Circular, the terms of Circular 0080/2016 are now superseded.

Key Dates arising from this circular are as in the table opposite:

1 January 2017	Implementation of National Minimum Wage Increase to €9.25. (Part B.3 of the circular refers - not relevant to Secretaries & Caretakers).
1 January 2017	<p>Remuneration of minimum hourly rate of €10.75 to Secretaries & Caretakers. This applies to School Secretaries & Caretakers employed by schools who are not currently paid on a salary scale equivalent to a public service salary scale, whose pay is funded from the ancillary services grant and are paid less than the hourly rate of €10.75.</p> <p>Note: Secretaries and Caretakers who are already on an hourly rate of €10.75 or higher, do not receive an increase on this date. Circular 0080/2016 Part A.2, A.4 and Appendix 1 refers.</p> <p>Applications in accordance with Circular 0080/2016 Appendix A for additional funding should be forwarded to Schools Division Financial, Department of Education and Skills, Cornamaddy, Athlone, County Westmeath, as soon as possible.</p>
1 April 2017	<p>Remuneration of 2.5% increase in hourly rate of pay for School Secretaries and Caretakers.</p> <p>This applies to School Secretaries & Caretakers employed by schools who are not currently paid on a salary scale equivalent to a public service salary scale and whose pay is funded from the ancillary services grant. (Part A.2, & A.5 of circular refer).</p> <p>This increase is in addition to the implementation of minimum hourly rate of €10.75. (Facilitated by increase given in Ancillary Grant in March 2017.)</p>
1 April 2017	<p>Increase of €1,000 on whole-time annual basic pay up to €65,000 under the application of the FEMPI Act 2015. This applies to grant funded School Secretaries and Caretakers who are paid on a salary scale equivalent to a public service salary scale and also Cleaners employed by schools using ancillary or capitation grant funding. (Part B of circular refers.)</p> <p>(Facilitated by increase given in Ancillary Grant in March 2017.)</p>



Vetting Update

As outlined in our December 2016 issue, there are several significant issues still outstanding with the ongoing operation of the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Act 2012 to 2016 \("Vetting Act"\)](#). CPSMA continues to engage with the Department on these matters and will advise as soon as the Department issues any further clarifications on the matter.

Vetting Disclosures

We have received a number of requests for advice when vetting disclosures reveal a conviction of one type or another. This can arise in the context of a parent volunteer or a prospective staff member. While no official guidelines exist for boards in these circumstances, the Teaching Council have published the guidelines they use when considering an application from someone wishing to register as a teacher and they may be of some use to Boards. They are available here: <http://www.teaching-council.ie/en/Publications/Garda-Vetting/Documents/Guidelines-for-the-Assessment-of-Court-Convictions-and-Prosecutions-Pending-Before-the-Courts.pdf>

The principles laid out in the document will also be of use to Boards of Management when assessing a vetting disclosure that reveals a previous criminal conviction. They are presented below in a revised form more suitable to Boards of Management.

1. A conviction raises a potential question about the character and behaviour of the person having been

vetted. In evaluating the seriousness and relevance of an offence, Board members should seek to do so in an unbiased and unprejudiced manner.

2. Full account will be taken of all the relevant information available about the offence(s). This information should be considered in the round and in a proportionate way, which has due regard to the public interest, which includes:
 - a. the protection of students
 - b. the protection of members of the public and colleague staff members
 - c. the importance of upholding proper standards of conduct expected from all working in schools, whether as employees or volunteers.
4. Members of Boards of Management, in dealing with this matter, should be reminded by the Chairperson of:
 - a. the general duty of confidentiality that governs matters before the Board (Sec 15 of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools),
 - b. the requirements of the Data Protection Acts,
 - c. that any use or disclosure of information from a vetting disclosure, other than in accordance with the Act, is an offence under Section 16(4) of the Vetting Act, subject to a maximum penalty of a fine of €10,000, or a 5 year imprisonment, or both.

Factors to be Considered when Assessing Convictions and Prosecutions Pending:

1. The Board, in reaching their conclusions as to the

character of the applicant in relation to a conviction or in relation to a pending prosecution where the applicant accepts the substance of the allegations grounding the prosecution may have regard to some or all of the following matters:

- a. The nature of the offence;
- b. The seriousness of the offence;
- c. The sentence imposed;
- d. In the case of more than one offence whether the offences disclose a pattern of recidivism or repeat offending;
- e. The age and circumstances of the applicant at the time of the offence;
- f. The time elapsed since the offence(s);
- g. The manner in which the applicant dealt with the proceedings in relation to the offence and in particular whether the applicant pleaded guilty and at what point in the proceedings;
- h. Whether the offence involved a serious breach of trust;
- i. Whether the offence is one which by its nature gives rise to specific concerns in relation to the applicant's role or in relation to contact with children or young people generally.
- j. The extent to which the applicant has rehabilitated himself or herself since the commission of the offence(s);
- k. The level of insight and reflection shown.

2. The Board should take particular note of offences of a



Vetting Update – continued

sexual, violent, dishonest or drug related nature.

Where a disclosure is revealed as part of the hiring process, or in consideration of permitting someone to be otherwise placed in a school, consideration should be taken as to whether or not the person revealed the conviction during their application process.

Prior to any consideration of a disclosure by a Board, a person should be informed of the contents of the disclosure and invited to provide any information they deem relevant, including any factors relevant to point one immediately above. In making the decision to hire or otherwise place the person in the school, the Board should consider the disclosure information, as well as all other relevant information revealed in the hiring or placement process, such as that revealed in reference checks, in making the final decision to hire or otherwise place the person in the school.

Boards are reminded not to disclose names when discussing disclosures, but the role of the person needs to be discussed.

CIDs – Contracts of Indefinite Duration

[Circular 0023/2015](#) implemented the Ward Report and brought new terms and conditions for the granting of contracts of indefinite duration (CID).

The implementation began at the commencement of the 2015/2016 school year following a report presented by Peter Ward SC.

Key points to note in the circular include:

- Revised terms and conditions in relation to being granted a CID effective from the start of school year 2015/2016
- Reduction of the period of qualification for entitlement to a CID (from “in excess of three years” with the same employer to “in excess of two years”, in certain circumstances)
- Extension of qualification for CID in the case of providing cover for career break and secondment absences
- Hours to be included in a CID, in those cases (uncommon at primary level) where a CID is for less than full-time hours
- Confirmation that a teacher with a CID has the equivalent of permanent status
- A requirement to re-advertise all Fixed-Term positions at end of first year’s contract
- Department sanction process for CIDs

While Circular 0023/2015 sets out the status and further eligibility requirements for CIDs, the publication of the Staffing Circular for the 2017/2018 school year ([Circular 0017/2017](#)) provides further guidance in relation to the granting of CIDs for this year as well as redeployment arrangements where required.

Some of the key points in relation to CIDs in circular 0017/2017 include:

- Schools who have teachers due to be awarded a CID from the commencement of the 2017/18 school year are required to apply to the Department for sanction of same in respect of a teacher who is deemed eligible to be awarded a CID for the first time or a CID for additional hours from the commencement of the 2017/18 school year. Applications may be made using [Appendix H of circular 017/2017](#).
- The Position of a teacher who has been awarded a part-time CID prior to the 2017/18 school year is:
 - i. If the part-time allocation remains in the school and the teacher wishes to remain in a part-time capacity, s/he remains in the part-time post
 - ii. If the part-time allocation remains in the school and the school wish to combine the part-time allocation into a full-time S.E.T. cluster post with that school as the base school, the part-time CID holder may take up the full-time S.E.T. cluster post.
 - iii. If the part-time allocation is no longer in the school due to the new Special Education model, but the school has a full-time post available for the part-time CID holder, the part-time CID holder may take up that full-time post. Schools should note that the part-time CID holder must be suitably qualified for the fulltime post.
 - iv. If the part-time allocation is no longer in the school due to the new Special Education model and there is no



CIDs – continued

full-time post available for the part-time CID holder in his/her own school, the part-time CID holder should submit a Main Panel

- Where teachers have been awarded a CID for the 2016/17, a school must have completed and returned the "CID Declaration Form Mar 17" ([Appendix G](#)) to the Primary Teacher Allocations Section on or before 30th March 2017 for each teacher with a CID awarded under the terms of Part A1 or A2 of Circular 0023/2015 for 2016/17 school year.
- Schools should note that a CID holder remains in their own school as long as there is a vacancy, either permanent or fixed-term available for him/her in the school. In the event that there is no post available and the CID holder is the most junior surplus permanent/CID holding teacher in the school, a Main Panel Application Form should also be completed and returned to the Department.

Where boards have teachers with at least two contracts of a year each and a viable position available for a third year, they should seek further advice from this office or the Department.

Any other queries in relation to this matter can be directed to our office or the Department.

Ethos in Action

Preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation



At this time of year Catholic Schools are busy with so many things, not least of all helping pupils prepare for sacraments of Initiation, in particular First Penance First Eucharist. There is much debate about the role of Catholic schools in this preparation. This is an area which a board of management should be aware of and it is worth taking some time to reflect on how sacramental preparation is carried out in your school.

The following extract from *The Grow in Love Programme* on Sacramental Preparation and Celebration is a useful reflective piece for Boards of Management:

"Share the Good News (SGN) outlines how, in preparing children for their first celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, there are three partners: the home, the school and the parish. Traditionally, our Catholic schools prepare children for these sacraments and have played a prominent role in children's first celebration of Eucharist and Reconciliation, building on the foundation of children's experience of faith in the home and the parish.

With changing times, that foundation can no longer be presumed, and schools often find themselves in a role far beyond what was previously expected. In recent years, various initiatives have been implemented in parishes to encourage and empower home and parish communities to take on a greater sense of responsibility. That said,

Catholic schools contribute an indispensable amount of commitment, expertise and resources to sacramental preparation and celebration. It has been, and will remain, a vital partner in this area, as well as in the religious education of children in a more general sense. However, the role of school and its teachers must be to support families and their parish in the Christian initiation of children, not the other way around. (cf. SGN, 102)

The role of parents and families in their child's religious education is vital from the very first day that they start in a Catholic school. Their involvement is not and should not be confined to times of sacramental preparation, but many parents are more conscious of their role at this time than at others.

The celebration of the sacraments are events in the life of the Christian community, not just in the life of the individual. The celebration for the first time of Reconciliation and Holy Communion are graced moments in the child's initiation into the community of faith. Therefore, they are also moments in the life of that community. Parish communities must therefore take their share of responsibility and ownership for sacramental preparation and celebration."

Read the entire Article at: http://www.veritasbooksonline.com/media/wysiwyg/July-August_2016-GIL_article_1.pdf



CPSMA ART COMPETITION 2017

Celebrating Local Schools

Our local schools play a central role in our communities. They are places where friendships are formed, learning takes place and families join together with the common goal of nurturing our children and enriching our society.

To celebrate all that is good and positive in our primary schools CPSMA invited schools to participate in a national art competition with the theme:

‘Celebrating our local primary school’

The reaction was very positive and schools responded by sending in beautiful art work that celebrated all that was unique and positive in their own school. Winners were chosen after much deliberation. Indeed so high was the standard that CPSMA felt the need to add a category entitled Award for Excellence to our original 3 categories. (Junior, Senior and SEN)

The winning child in each category was awarded a prize as was their class teacher. In addition to this, RECREATE, an award winning social enterprise inspiring Creativity through Reuse, sponsored a year’s subscription to their Warehouse of Wonders (WOW) for one of our winning schools. The recipient of this prize was chosen by lottery from our winning schools, with our senior category winner, Stanhope NS in Dublin walking away with the extra prize.



CPSMA Art competition winners



In the Award for Excellence category the winners were Tashuva Rafiq and Aisling Amponsah, both from sixth class in Scoil Naomh Fiachra in Donegal



As is evident from the winners in our competition, our local schools are models of good practice for inclusion as they facilitate and welcome children from all faiths and none. Our AGM provided a platform for supporting and celebrating our local schools

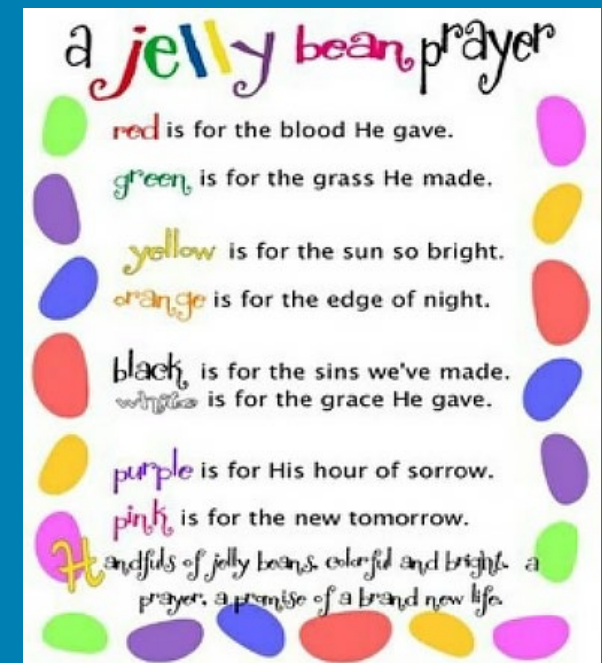


In the junior category our winner came from St. Brigid's N.S. Co. Westmeath, where Isabelle Maher is in Senior Infants. The Special Education Category was won by Rebecca Hynes from fifth Class in St. Patrick's N.S. in Co. Galway. The senior category was won by Vicky Zimeng Lin who is in Sixth Class in Stanhope Street N.S. in Dublin 7.

Stanhope St. N.S were also the winner of the prize from Recreate. For more information on ReCreate please see their website recreate.ie

Easter prayer for Pupils

It can be difficult to explain the Easter story especially to younger classes. Below is an Easter prayer which can be helpful:



Training update

CPSMA is currently in the process of devising an online training module for “Procedures governing the Appointment of Staff in Schools”, and it is hoped that this module will be available by the end of May 2017. In the meantime, Boards are advised to strictly adhere to the provisions of the appointment procedures as set out in Appendix D (Teachers), Appendix E (Principals) and Appendix H (Special Needs Assistants) of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 – 2019.

Please contact the CPSMA office, if you have any specific queries in relation to appointment procedures.

The Child Protection Procedures (D.E.S.) are currently under review, and the associated training module will be updated when these procedures have been finalised and published.

If you have any other queries in relation to Board of Management training, please contact your Diocesan Office in the first instance, as we liaise closely with the Diocesan Secretaries in relation to the delivery of the National Board of Management Training modules.

Recently Issued Circulars

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 0026/2017 | <u>Revision Of Pay Rates In 2017 For School Secretaries, Caretakers And Cleaners Employed By The Boards Of Management Of Recognised Primary Schools Using Ancillary Services Grant Funding And Revised Rates Of Ancillary Services Grant (Primary)</u> | <u>Primary & Post-Primary Schools for the years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20</u> |
| 0005/2017 | <u>Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2016</u> | |
| 0004/2017 | <u>Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autism Spectrum Disorders)</u> | |
| 0003/2017 | <u>Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils on the Autism Spectrum (AS) for teachers working with Pupils on the AS in Special Schools, Special Classes or as Resource Teachers in mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017/2018</u> | |
| 0002/2017 | <u>Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Involved in Learning Support and Special Educational Needs – 2017/2018</u> | |
| 0001/2017 | <u>Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure 2016-2017 School Year</u> | |
| 0080/2016 | <u>Revision of Pay Rates in 2017 for School Secretaries, Caretakers and Cleaners employed by the Boards of Management of Recognised Primary Schools using Ancillary Services Grant funding and Revised Rates of Ancillary Services Grant</u> | |
| 0078/2016 | <u>Revised Salary Scale From 1 January 2017 for Post-1 February 2012 Entrant Teachers</u> | |
| 0023/2017 | <u>Revision Of Salaries With Effect From 1 April 2017 For Clerical Officers And Caretakers Employed In National Schools Under The 1978/79 Scheme And Clerical Officers Employed In Post Primary Schools Under The 1978 Scheme</u> | |
| 0022/2017 | <u>Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) With Effect from 1 April 2017</u> | |
| 0021/2017 | <u>Revision of Teacher Salaries with Effect from 1 April 2017 (Primary)</u> | |
| 0017/2017 | <u>Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2017/18 school year</u> | |
| 0016/2017 | <u>Statutory Requirements for the Retrospective Vetting of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and others</u> | |
| 0016/2017 | <u>FAQ – Statutory Requirements for the Retrospective Vetting of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and others - Frequently Asked Questions</u> | |
| 0013/2017 | <u>Special Education Teaching Allocation - Primary Schools</u> | |
| 0009/2017 | <u>Standardisation of the School Year in respect of</u> | |



Extract From General Secretary's Report

As my predecessor Fr. Tom Deenihan often remarked, the Annual Report of the General Secretary of the Catholic Primary School Management Association is not just a chronicle of the major issues that the Association has grappled with during the past twelve months, but is also an opportunity to hold a mirror to the Association so that we can see where we are and what we should doing at this point in time.

Before I do that, as new General Secretary, there are a number of acknowledgements that must be made.

In the first place I would like to acknowledge the sterling work of my predecessor Rev. Tom Deenihan who brought his formidable talents and huge capacity for hard work to bear on the many challenges facing CPSMA. I must also acknowledge with gratitude his great kindness to me over the last few months, as I eased myself into a role which he had made his own. He has been an unfailing source of sage counsel and good “stories” over the last six months and I am delighted that his new role as Executive Secretary of the Bishops Council on Education means that we will continue to work closely together.

I must also acknowledge with gratitude the great contribution that Mr. Martin Hanrahan the outgoing Chair of CPSMA has made to the organisation. In the six months or so that I have known Martin, I have grown to respect not only his commitment, wisdom and essential decency,



Guest Chair, Judge Ann Power-Forde with Guest speakers, Very Revd. Michael Jackson Archbishop of Dublin and Rev Prof. Eamonn Conway, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

but to treasure his sense of humour and occasional barbed comments (which I learnt were actually a sign of



Delegates at the CPSMA AGM 2017

regard for the recipient). As Chair he was both efficient and effective and always keen that all viewpoints were given a fair hearing. Martin was a real pleasure to work with and working with him was a wonderful educational experience. I sincerely hope that he will have a very enjoyable retirement and that he finally gets to enjoy his Wednesday golf outings free of calls from the office.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all of the members of the Board, in particular to the Chair Prof. Andrew McGrady and Company Secretary Fr. Peter Devlin for their unfailing support, and deep commitment to the work of CPSMA and to the Chairs and members of the various sub committees who are working to steer CPSMA through a process of change and development so that we can better serve and represent our members.

In particular I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing members of the Board, Tom O'Doherty, Sr. Thomasina Finn, Mary Fitzgerald, Eileen Ward, Bill Lowe, and Sr. Marie Jones (who is standing for re-election) for their unfailing commitment, and hard work in the cause of Catholic Education. They have all given great service and leadership to CPSMA during their tenure. May I take this opportunity on behalf of my colleagues in the office to sincerely thank them for all their support and to wish them all the best in the future. In the six months I have been working with this Board I have been impressed not

CPSMA Annual General Meeting – March, 2017

only by the professionalism of Board members, but by the collegiate manner in which they operated. I am very pleased to say that I would regard them all as not just colleagues but as friends, I would hope that the feeling is mutual.

During the past year, two of our valued colleagues have left the organisation, Mr. Matt Melvin to return to the chalk face of education as Principal of Kinnegad National School and Ms. Sandra Moloney who has taken up a position in the office of the State Solicitors. Both colleagues contributed greatly to CPSMA and I hope that their time with us has made a valuable contribution to their careers and the development of their skills.

To compensate for these losses, we have recruited Ms. Miriam McCabe, an experienced Teaching Principal from Oldcastle Co. Meath and Alan Hynes a former parliamentary researcher. Both Miriam and Alan bring their many skills to a team that is committed and hardworking, and to this end, on a personal level and on your behalf, I would like to record my appreciation to all of my colleagues in CPSMA, Ms. Sinead Brett, Ms. Noreen Lawlor, Ms. Deirdre Keane, Ms. Hazel O'Connor, Ms. Lorna Dunne and Ms. Melissa Melia. I am deeply grateful for their flexibility, interest and expertise and not least their patience with me as I read my way into my new role.

I have been in the role of General Secretary of CPSMA for just over six months. It has been a very interesting period and a great learning experience. I would like to use this opportunity to share with you some of what I have learnt



The Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton and Bishop Leo O'Reilly of Kilmore

and my (initial views) on how we can build on the very solid foundations established by both our outgoing Chair and former General Secretary.

Firstly we have a very good Primary system, Catholic Primary Schools are delivering a high quality education to our children, despite being under resourced and sometimes under appreciated.

The main reason we have a good quality Primary System is due to the quality of the people who teach and lead our schools. Primary School Teachers and Principals are intelligent adaptable and committed, and largely because of their skills and commitment, Primary Schools have coped successfully with incredible level of change over a very short period.

In a very real sense however, our Primary Schools have been a victim of their own success. Because they have

coped successfully with change, there is a tendency in some quarters to think we can just continue to load ever more new initiatives onto schools and they will cope. I am not sure that is the case.

When I say underappreciated, I think for example there is a real lack of appreciation amongst policymakers and of the media of the absolutely key role Catholic Primary Schools have played in integrating newcomers into Irish society, and in providing an education for children in some of our most marginalised communities.

Boards of Management play an absolutely critical role in supporting schools and Principals. Where there is a good working relationship based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of their complementary roles the result is a great school. When as they sometimes do things go wrong it is often the Chair and the Board who must step in to steady the ship and lead the school to safer waters. It is a mark of the high esteem in which Catholic Primary schools are held that so many people are willing to serve on Boards of Management despite receiving neither expenses, nor indeed any public recognition, for their contribution to their school and their local community.

As Catholics we are heirs to over 2000 years of educational experience and insight. We are members of the largest educational community on the planet, worldwide the Catholic Church operates more than 144,000 schools and Catholic Schools and Universities are synonymous with excellence. In parts of the world where special forces fear to tread, Catholic nuns are educating young women,



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Priests, Brothers and lay teachers are giving a quality education to some of the poorest of the poor.

We are part of a proud tradition and Catholic Primary Schools in Ireland display on a daily basis that same commitment to excellence and same commitment to delivering a quality education to children of all classes, creeds and abilities. Our schools are contrary to the claims of the ill-informed, amongst the most diverse in the country.

We should be very proud of our schools. We should celebrate their achievements and defend their reputation and under my stewardship, as under the stewardship of Rev. Tom Deenihan, CPSMA will do so, and I would urge all of our members to do the same.

It is clear to me that the real strength of CPSMA is in the quality and commitment of our people, and of whom the team in headquarters are but a small part. Our strength is in our network of Chairs of Boards of Management, Members of Boards and Principals and Diocesan Secretaries. To fully leverage the strength of our network we need to improve two way communications and thus draw fully on all the talents of our members in the service of Catholic Education.

My main focus is on improving the service we provide to Principals and Boards of Management and over time to move from helping our members cope with challenges, to being more proactive and helping to address issues before they become challenges. I am very fortunate in



The Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton addressing Delegates at the AGM 2017

this regards that my predecessor Fr. Tom Deenihan left me with a very strong base on which to build, in particular with a strong committed professional team.

I would also like to ensure that CPSMA becomes a more vocal advocate for increased resources for schools. It



Delegates listening to Rev Prof. Eamonn Conway

seems to me that the administrative burden on Principals (and in particular Teaching Principals) has become untenable. The capitation grant is also far too low and should at the very least be restored to the pre-crises level of €200 per pupil. There are plenty of parents paying more for child care for a week than the Government invests in schools for the year. Indeed I am aware of cases where parents are paying more in voluntary contributions than the Government pays in capitation. It is time for us all to demand that Catholic Primary schools are properly resourced.

There is a view in some quarters that religion is irrelevant to modern Ireland and that Catholicism has no place in education or in a pluralist society. Such a view is both ill-informed and misguided.

Where ever there are urgent social problems from drug addiction, to homelessness, to people trafficking, to the alleviation of poverty there you will find committed Catholics inspired by the values of the Gospel doing their utmost to address these problems. An Ireland without people of faith would be a poorer, colder, less welcoming place for all its people.

There is no doubt that the greatest challenge facing CPSMA is to preserve, develop and grow the Catholic Ethos of our schools so that we can provide an authentically Catholic education for young people in a world which is often hostile to faith and gospel values. I do not pretend to have all or indeed very many answers to

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how we meet this challenge, but I am confident that the wisdom to address this challenge can be found amongst our members and our colleagues in the wider Church community. I look forward to working with all of you to meet this our most critical challenge.

Finally I must acknowledge the support, collegiality and friendship that exists between ourselves and the Department Officials, the INTO and the IPPN.

In doing so I would also like to particular to mark the occasion of the retirement of Sean Cottrell the Chief Executive of IPPN. Despite being new to Education, I have known Sean for many years and I have always admired his commitment to bettering the lot and improving the performance of Principals. He is a man who has devoted his life to the development of leadership in the Primary sector and I believe the seeds he has sown will grow and benefit the sector for many, many years to come. On behalf of CPSMA I would like to wish him all the best on his retirement.

Last year (as the remainder of this report will clearly show) was a very busy year for CPSMA. I expect this year to be no less challenging but I would hope with the assistance and support of our members that we will rise to the challenges. Our focus will be on improving our services to our members and advocating for increased resources for schools.

In particular we intend to put the focus very firmly on the need to, at the very least to restore the capitation grant



Eimear Ryan (COI) , Fardus Sultan and AsiyaAl-Tawash (Muslim Education Board) at AGM Conference dinner

to €200. Schools need increased investment now, and CPSMA will fight to see our schools get the resources they need to do their vital work. We will work with our members to get the message across to Government and the wider policy community on the urgent need to increase investment in the sector. No other sector has delivered such value for money to the state, it is high time for the state to recognise the value it gets, and increase the investment.

In my short time with CPSMA I have begun to understand the extraordinary contribution that Catholic Primary Schools are making to their communities, to the country, and most importantly to the lives of pupils. As the Holy Father recently noted "the real secret in any society, whether it be pluralistic or one that has a broad Catholic presence, was the quality of Catholic schools." The contribution needs to be celebrated and sometimes defended.

With the support of our members, we intend to do both next year.

A Happy Easter
to all our
members

