



Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

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Fáilte Ar Ais

CPSMA welcomes chairpersons, principals, staff and pupils back to school and sends warm wishes to those teachers taking up the new Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator (PMHW) roles in DEIS Plus schools this year.

These roles are part of the package of supports for DEIS Plus schools which aim to support students experiencing educational disadvantage, by promoting positive mental health, wellbeing, inclusion and engagement in their schools. As PMHW Coordinators, they will help develop a whole-school approach to wellbeing, with a particular focus on students affected by poverty, trauma, social exclusion, adverse childhood experiences, and emotional or behavioural challenges.

We wish them every success in their role and in the vital work they will be undertaking to support the wellbeing and inclusion of students in our DEIS Plus schools.

We also particularly welcome any school principals or chairpersons in their role for the first time, and invite you to make contact with our office on **01-6292462** or info@cpsma.ie to introduce yourself and ensure that we have your contact details.

We look forward to hearing from you !

Checklist for September

1. Check whether there are any vacancies on your board of management after the summer. These members need to be replaced in accordance with the Governance Manual 2023-2027 and CPSMA can assist with this.
2. Schedule your first board meeting and, at that meeting, consider arranging dates of board meetings for the remainder of the school year.
3. If there has been a change of principal or deputy, the board may have to ratify a new Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
4. Ensure the contact details of any new chairperson or principal have been registered with CPSMA (by phone to our office). Chairpersons should also arrange to have contact details for all board members.
5. Remind all board members of the confidentiality of board meetings - especially at the start of the new school year or when new members join. CPSMA has a short podcast for board members which may assist. [Podcast for Board Members](#)



6. If accepting students into a special class or special school for the 2027/28 school year, your admission policy may need to be reviewed in accordance with [Circular 0063/2026](#) and forwarded to the Patron for approval.
7. Make sure Bi Cineálta (anti-bullying) is always on the board's agenda. Consider watching part two of the [Bi Cineálta video for board members](#) at your next meeting.
8. Boards have until **December 2026** to adopt the new Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2025. CPSMA has sought information on training for those school personnel who may have missed Oide training and we will advise further in this regard.

9. New staff should have contracts signed and vetting received or checked. Contracts are available on cpsma.ie under ["Appointments"](#), or you may contact CPSMA for guidance.
10. Invariably, as you know, September is about getting children and staff back to school and ready for their new term of teaching and learning and any further ambitions may just have to wait a little longer. So be kind to yourself on this front, even if nobody else is !

The Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

The Other Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change;
the courage to change the one I can
and the wisdom to know it's me!*



Enrolments or Admissions for the 2027/28 School Year

Admission Policies

The Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000 regulate the admission and enrolment of pupils in schools.

Their objective is that all schools have fair and transparent enrolment policies and processes in place.

The most important document is your school's admission or enrolment policy. This is the document which governs how places are allocated in your school, and it is important that it is clear, fair and easy for parents to understand.

Your school's admission policy should be approved by your Bishop and Patron, and must be available on your school's website. It sets out how enrolment applications are processed and what happens when there are more applicants than places available.

The criteria used to allocate places must be approved by your Patron.

Such selection criteria sometimes prioritise siblings and those living in the catchment area.

It is not permitted to prioritise enrolments based on a child's religion, except in particular limited circumstances. Application fees may not be charged by the school.

The Department of Education and Youth has developed a [template Admission Policy](#), which all schools are required to adopt.

Special Classes

Special Classes are governed by your school's enrolment policy. However, enrolment in a special class is subject to the child being eligible for admission to that class. [Circular 0063/2026](#) (Department of Education and Youth, 7 July 2026), which replaces [Circular 0039/2025](#) for the 2027/28 school year, confirms there is no change to the underlying eligibility criteria set out in [Circular 0039/2025](#).

In summary:

A parent/guardian must obtain a Letter of Eligibility from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), confirming the child is known to the NCSE and has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class or special school place.

This NCSE Letter of Eligibility is a prerequisite for enrolment in all types of special classes and special schools for the 2027/28 school year, and this requirement must be reflected in your admission policy.

A Letter of Eligibility applies to one school year only - a new letter must be obtained for 2027/28 even where a place offered for 2026/27 was not taken up.

Parents/guardians should notify the NCSE by *1st September 2026* and provide supporting documentation by *15 September 2026*, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

Eligibility Criteria for Special Classes

While it is acknowledged that there are many types of special classes and special schools, given the significant increase in autism special classes in recent years, the following section of Circular 0039/2025 concerns eligibility for enrolment in an autism special class as an example of the approved eligibility criteria.

“Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special class for autism when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:

- Diagnosis of Autism: DSM IV/V*

or

ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multidisciplinary report)

AND

- A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child’s overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports*

AND

- Given the severity or complexity of the child’s support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child’s needs, along with the rationale for same*

AND

- Letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for autism.”*

Discriminatory clauses in Admission Policies

Schools should check their policies for the following clauses or requirements, which are deemed *discriminatory* in nature under [Circular 0063/2026](#).

- *The ability to participate in a mainstream class as an admission criterion.*
- *Prioritising pupils already enrolled in the school for special class admission where this restricts access for eligible applicants.*
- *Preventing children with a recommendation for “a special class or special school” from accessing a school place.*
- *Requiring a current psychological report written within the last two years. This is expressly prohibited.*
- *Requests for additional reports or documentation beyond diagnosis and professional reports confirming eligibility.*
- *References to a child's potential behaviour as a condition of admission.*
- *Making admission to a special class contingent on resources being available.*

Quick Check on your Admission Policy

- ☐ Is your Admission Policy available on your school website?
- ☐ Has your current Admission Policy been approved by your board and your Patron?
- ☐ For admissions to a special class, does your Admission Policy contain the approved eligibility criteria only?
- ☐ Have you checked your Admission Policy for the discriminatory clauses set out above?
- ☐ Is your Admission Policy in the format of the template provided by the Department of Education and Youth?

Annual Admission Notice

The Annual Admission Notice gives notice to parents of an upcoming admission or enrolment process, advising them of the number of places available in the intake classes and the closing date for applications. A Template Annual Admission Notice is available for schools. [Template Admission Notice](#)

The Admission Notice must be published on the school's website at least 7 days before the enrolment process begins, and must contain an Admission Statement confirming that the school will

not discriminate on any of the grounds named in the Equal Status Act 2000.

The Admission Notice must also state the number of places available in any special class –if none are currently available, the number should be stated as zero, and a waiting list prepared in case a place becomes available during the year.

The Admission Notice should give the dates and time period during which applications can be received – (a period of at least three weeks) and should include details of how to obtain the school application form and Admission Policy. Admission Notices may not be issued before 1st October in any year.

Quick Check on your Admission Notice

- ☐ Will it be displayed on your school website for at least 7 days before the enrolment period opens?
- ☐ Is the proposed admission or enrolment period at least 21 days long?
- ☐ Does it state the number of places available in the current intake class and any special class (even if zero)?
- ☐ Does it direct parents/guardians clearly to the school application form and Admission Policy?
- ☐ Is your Admission Notice in the format required by the Department of Education and Youth?
- ☐ Does it contain the required Admission Statement on non-discrimination under the Equal Status Act 2000?

Waiting Lists

Waiting lists must be maintained for all admission processes, for that school year only. Even where no places are available in a special class, a waiting list should be prepared, in case a place becomes available during the year. All applications should be considered and ranked at the time of allocation of places and, thereafter, all names remain on the waiting list in that order. Applications received after the closing date are added to the list afterwards, in the order they are received.

Correspondence on school admissions

Following the enrolment process, schools should communicate with parents/guardians within **21** days of the closing date for applications. The following template letters are available for schools to use in this regard:

- [Template Application for Admission Junior Infants](#)
- [Template Application for Admission to classes other than Junior Infants](#)
- [Template Letter of offer of admission to Junior Infants with acceptance form attached](#)
- [Template letter of offer of admission to class \(other than junior infants\) with acceptance form attached](#)
- [Template Letter of refusal of a place in Junior Infants](#)
- [Template Letter of refusal of a place in classes other than Junior Infants](#)
- [DE Template Request Form for Review by Board of Management where Admission has been refused by a School Principal.](#)

FAQs on School Admissions

Q. Can a school enrol a child without the consent of both parents/guardians?

A. A school must offer a place to a child if a place is available in that school. Where parents disagree about which school a child should attend, it is a decision for the parents (or the courts, if they cannot agree). If two schools have each offered a place to the same child, the parents must decide between them. From the school's perspective, if a place is available, it must be offered to the child.

Q. If an application comes in after the closing date, is it placed on the waiting list in accordance with the selection criteria contained in the Admission Policy ?

A. No. Applications received after the closing date must be placed at the end of the waiting list, in the order in which they are received. Any places arising subsequently during the year must be offered to children in the order that their names appear on the waiting list.

Filling a Vacancy on Your Board of Management

Boards may have vacancies this term arising from resignations, or because the children of parent nominees have left the school, making those nominees no longer eligible as board members.

In these circumstances, it is important to remember that a board may operate with a quorum of five members, if a meeting needs to be held, in advance of the election of any new board members.

If new parent nominees are to be elected, this should be done in accordance with *Appendix B of the Governance Manual 2023-2027*. Two options are available for conducting these elections: Option 1- by holding a meeting of parents, or Option 2- by writing to parents beginning with seeking nominations etc. There are also limited circumstances where a parent nominee can be co-opted onto the board as per Appendix B.

CPSMA has prepared guidance on both options, together with template letters. These templates were prepared for the new boards in 2023 and will require minor amendments to reflect the fact that the boards are already in place.

[Advice on the election of parent nominees](#)

- [Option 1](#)
- [Option 2](#)

If a new Teacher nominee is to be elected, ten days' written notice of a staff meeting to elect a teacher nominee must be given to all staff members, in accordance with *Appendix A of the Governance Manual 2023-2027*.

Any new Patron nominees or Chairpersons will, of course, need to be appointed by the Patron, who should be advised of all new elections.

It is important to mention to potential board members that there is practically only one year left before new boards of management are formed in November, which could be a good way of seeing whether being a board member is something they might like, without a major commitment at this time.

Have Your Say on the Future of School Governance

Department of Education and Youth invites principals and boards of management representatives to a workshop in October

The Department of Education and Youth is inviting primary and special schools to participate in a workshop examining current school governance arrangements. The consultation forms part of the development of Our Schools, Our Future (OSOF), the Department's long-term strategy for education in Ireland.

Working with research partner EDU-Relate, the Department is reviewing school governance arrangements and the wider design of the education system. The workshop will give school principals and boards of management an opportunity to contribute directly to this work.

What Will Be Discussed ?

- The strengths of current school governance arrangements
- The challenges facing existing governance structures
- Opportunities for future development and improvement

IMPORTANT

The workshop will focus on existing governance structures and how they support schools and the wider school community. They are not intended to focus on school patronage or any review associated with the Governance Manual for Primary Schools.

Who Should Attend ?

Each school may send the principal and one member of the board of management, ideally the chairperson. Attendance is limited to two representatives per school. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and each school may register for one workshop only.

Workshop Programme

DATE	VENUE	TIME
1 October 2026	ONLINE WEBINAR (Zoom)	17.30-18.30
13 October 2026	Sligo Education Centre	16.00-17.15
14 October 2026	Laois Education Support Centre	16.00-17.15
15 October 2026	Dublin West Education Support Centre	16.00-17.15
21 October 2026	Cork College of FET, Bishopstown	16.00-17.15
22 October 2026	Clare Education Support Centre	16.00-17.15

Registration

Closing date for registration is **13:00 on Thursday, 1 October 2026**, or earlier, if capacity is reached. Schools attending an in-person workshop are not restricted by location and do not need to be affiliated with the host centre.

For attendance for the online webinar on **1st October**, please use the Department's [registration link](#).

To attend an in-person workshops, please email [**RLG@education.gov.ie**](mailto:RLG@education.gov.ie), stating your preferred location and school sector. You will be sent a registration form to complete.

Schools who are unable to attend, or whose preferred session is full, may submit their views through the Department of Education and Youth's [Microsoft Form](#).

CPSMA encourages principals and chairpersons to consider participating, so that the experience of primary schools is represented in this important consultation.

Vacancy: Faith Formation Officer

Promoting the New Vision for Catholic Education

This Autumn will see the launch of a new Vision for Catholic Education. The Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) would like to hire a suitable person to assist in its launch and roll-out. Please see the advert below for further information.

JOB ADVERT

Faith Formation Officer (FFO)

The Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) is delighted to announce it is expanding its team to include a Faith Formation Officer - a two-year, full-time fixed-term contract/ contract for service. The APTCS office is in Columba House, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, with flexibility for hybrid working by agreement.

The FFO will provide strategic leadership, planning and guidance to Patrons in faith formation, supporting Catholic primary and post-primary schools in both the north and south of Ireland. While the focus will be stronger at primary level, the role will support the implementation and embedding of the new Vision for Catholic Education in both settings.

Interested candidates should request the recruitment documentation, including the Role Profile, by email: recruitment@aptcs.ie

ADVERTISEMENT DATE	CLOSING DATE	PROVISIONAL INTERVIEW
3 September 2026	21 September 2026	29 September 2026, Dublin

The Garda Schools Programme

The Garda Schools Programme was introduced in 1991. Its aim is to strengthen the relationship between An Garda Síochána and their local communities.

The programme delivers a comprehensive curriculum spanning a student's entire academic journey, from pre-primary level onward.

At primary level it covers topics such as the Role of Gardaí, Be Kind Online, My Neighbours, and Personal Safety. At post-primary level, talks cover internet safety and the consequences of criminal behaviour.

The Garda National Community Policing Unit is also developing further lessons for the programme.



Objectives of Garda Schools Programme

- Increase accessibility of An Garda Síochana to children, teachers, and the community.
- Strengthen relationships between An Garda Síochana and the community.
- Give children an understanding of the consequences of criminal behaviour.
- Reduce the level of offending behaviour through early engagement and intervention.
- Increase the wellbeing of children through crime prevention awareness and advice.
- Enhance young people's appreciation of the need to be caring and law-abiding citizens
- Promote road safety awareness among children and young people

CPSMA recommends reaching out to your local Garda Station and Community Policing Unit, who can assist in facilitating the programme in your school.

Engagement with your local Gardaí brings significant benefit to students, teachers and the wider community.

You can find local contact details via the Garda station directory.

For further queries or recommendations, contact the Garda National Community Policing Unit at SchoolsProgramme@garda.ie.



A Million Children Praying the Rosary

The Papal charity “Aid to the Church in Need” has asked CPSMA to inform schools of an international campaign, now in its 21st year, encouraging children to pray the Rosary for peace. The campaign is called “A Million Children Praying the Rosary”.

Children across every continent are invited to join together in the first week of October, and especially on 7th October - the Feast of the Holy Rosary - to pray the Rosary for peace.

"When a million children pray the Rosary, then the world will change."

- St Pio (Padre Pio)

Today, many children are unfamiliar with the Rosary, and this initiative may offer a way for teachers - especially in sacramental years - to introduce prayer into the classroom.

To register your school or to receive resources, please send an email to brandon.scott@acnireland.org.



[how-to-pray-the-rosary-a-step-by-step-guide](#)

OGP Electricity Central Arrangement for Schools

CPSMA strongly encourages your school to avail of the new OGP Electricity Central Arrangement for Schools.

As Boards of Management have a legal obligation to ensure school resources and finances are used as effectively as possible. This scheme offers a timely opportunity to secure significant savings and long-term stability.

The arrangement provides a fixed three-year electricity price, commencing April 2027, protecting schools from market volatility and delivering real savings compared with 2026 rates. Over 2,300 schools have already signed up, and all remaining schools can join immediately if not currently in a contract, or as soon as their existing contract expires.

Schools currently availing of this arrangement should respond immediately once a new contract is received from OGP in the coming weeks.

To participate, schools should:

1. Visit www.spu.ie
2. Complete the registration form and attach a recent electricity bill
3. Await the contract from OGP, which the Board should review, agree, sign and return

Please contact our office at **01-6292462** or info@cpsma.ie for guidance.

CPSMA strongly encourages boards of management to consider this cost-saving opportunity and take the necessary steps now to register.



Employee Assistance Service.

The Employee Assistance Service is a free and confidential service that provides wellbeing support to teachers, SNAs and all school staff. This service is provided by Spectrum.Life.

Your Employee Assistance Service is available 24/7, 365 days a year, providing*:

**'In The Moment'
Support**

**Online Cognitive
Behavioural Therapy**

**Referral to
Counselling**

*On the initial contact, our case manager will complete a quick assessment and when appropriate, referral to short term counselling will be made.

Register for your wellbeing app:
wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login
Organisation code: yVlIU17

SMS:
Text 'Hi' to 087 145 2056
WhatsApp:
Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010
Freephone IRE:
1800 411 057



**Scan the QR Code
to learn more**



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education



Prayer for New Beginnings

*Behind you, all your memories,
Before you all your dreams
Around you, all who love you,
Within you all you need.
Father in Heaven bless us &
Keep us safe on this journey
of New Beginnings.*

Amen.

*(First verse from New Beginnings by Lilli
Vaihere)*



Catholic Primary Schools Management Association
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