



# Newsletter

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Tel.: 1850 407 200 / (01) 629 2462 E-mail: [info@cpsma.ie](mailto:info@cpsma.ie)

Please photocopy and distribute to members of the Board of Management (BoM). A copy has been sent to the Principal. This Newsletter is also available on the CPSMA website at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie)

## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2013

Catholic Schools Week (CSW) 2013 will take place from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The theme this year is **“Catholic Schools in the Community of Faith: Sharing the Good News.”** This is based on the Year of Faith that began in October 2012 and on the National Directory for Catechesis called *Share the Good News*.

The objective of CSW 2013 is to celebrate the contribution of Catholic schools to society and to our faith. In this ‘Year of Faith’ schools are encouraged to take time in prayer giving thanks for the gift of faith and praying for growth in faith. In addition, during the week, schools are invited to reflect on the witness of the Christian life that is available in the lives of those around us and in the lives of the saints whom we celebrate during the week (28 January, Saint Thomas Aquinas; 31 January, Saint John Bosco; 1 February, Saint Brigid). CSW 2013 also encourages us to look to Christ because faith has its starting and finishing points in Jesus Christ.

As part of CSW, RTÉ One Television will broadcast 11.15 a.m. Mass on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January and on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February from its Donnybrook studios. In addition, *A Living Word* (RTÉ Radio1) will reflect the theme of Catholic Schools Week from 28<sup>th</sup> January - 1 February.

Resource booklets are being delivered to schools by the Catholic Education Service. These resources are also available online at [www.catholicbishops.ie/catholicschoolsweek](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/catholicschoolsweek)

Members will find a link to the information on Catholic Schools Week at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie)

## STRONG SUPPORT FOR DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION

The Minister for Education and Skills has started a process of surveying parents in regard to the patronage of primary schools in 43 areas throughout the country. Pilot surveys were carried out in five of those areas [Arklow, Castlebar, Whitehall (including Kilmore West and Beaumont), Trim and Tramore] in late 2012. The results of these pilot surveys were published by the DES in December 2012 and demonstrated strong support for denominational education, as well as support from a minority of parents for additional forms of patronage.

The surveys of parental opinion on school patronage are now taking place in the remaining 38 areas as follows:

Ballina	Cobh	Loughrea	Rush
Ballinasloe	Dublin 6	Malahide	Shannon
Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Palmerstown/Cherry Orchard	Dungarvan	Monaghan	Skerries
Bandon	Edenderry	Nenagh	Thurles
Birr	Enniscorthy	New Ross	Tipperary
Buncrana	Fermoy	Passage West	Tuam
Carrick-On-Suir	Kells (Ceannanas)	Portmarnock	Westport
Carrigaline	Killarney	Roscommon	Wicklow
Celbridge	Leixlip	Roscrea	Youghal
Clonmel	Longford		

There are 311 primary schools in total in the 38 areas. Schools up to 5kms from the town boundary in each case are included. The survey is available on-line at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) from **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January until Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013**. **A paper based survey is available from the DES (free-phone number 1800 303 621) for those parents/guardians who are unable to complete the survey on line.**

Parents/guardians of primary school going children and pre-school children are eligible to participate. A parent/guardian completing the survey needs to have his/her PPS number ready to allow participation in the survey. The responses of parents/guardians will be used to consider what changes, if any, could be made to widen the choice of patronage in these areas.

CPSMA asks Boards of Management to inform school staffs, parishes and parents of school going and pre-school children of the survey. The pilot surveys in five areas demonstrated that it can be difficult to reach parents of preschool children in particular, so any possible contact with such parents would be beneficial. **It is important that as large a number of parents/guardians as possible, who support Catholic schools, participate in the survey during the four week period.**

### **INCLUSIVENESS SURVEY**

CPSMA thanks those members who completed the questionnaire on inclusiveness, which was issued to schools in December last. CPSMA intends to make a submission to the DES on the issue of 'Greater Inclusiveness in Irish Primary Schools' and the feedback received from members will be invaluable in this regard. The submission will be available to members at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) (submissions section) when completed.

### **SICK LEAVE REFERRALS FOR TEACHERS AND SNAS TO THE OHS (MEDMARK)**

Significant changes have been introduced regarding the non discretionary referral of a teacher/SNA to the occupational Health Service (Medmark) in accordance with Circular 04/2013 which is available at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) (Circulars section)

From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013 a BoM must make a referral to the OHS where:

**A teacher** has been absent for either

- (i) 4 weeks continuous sick leave in a 12 month rolling period Or
- (ii) For 12 weeks cumulative sick leave in a 12 month rolling period

**An SNA** has been absent for either

- (i) 4 weeks continuous sick leave in a 12 month rolling period Or
- (ii) For 8 weeks cumulative sick leave in a 12 month rolling period

*From 1 January 2014 onwards* teachers/SNAs on sick leave who have 4 weeks continuous or 4 weeks cumulative sick leave absence in a 12 month rolling period must be referred to the OHS.

A revised Occupational Health Service Standard Operating Procedures Manual to assist Boards in accessing the OHS service for teachers and SNAs is attached to circular 04/2013 which is available at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie)

### **ENROLMENT POLICY- REVIEW BY BOM**

The BoM is advised to review its enrolment policy at this time of year. Members are referred to CPSMA Newsletter (Issue 10) February 2011 and the CPSMA Handbook (Revised 2012, pp196-202), available at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie), for a template document to assist the BoM with such a review. It is important for the BoM to adopt a clear and easily understood enrolment policy. Having put a policy in place, the Board must ensure that it adheres strictly to its terms. Updated enrolment policies should be made available on-line and/or issued in hard copy to parents/guardians. New applicants to the school should be given a hard copy of the enrolment policy. Communications with parents in relation to enrolment applications should come from the BoM.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY**

The BoM is encouraged to develop and maintain a policy statement, specific to the needs of its school, in relation to the approval of leave of absence, covering both statutory leave (e.g. carer's leave, parental leave etc.) and non statutory leave (e.g. career break, job share, teacher exchange etc.). In drawing up

this policy the welfare and educational needs of the pupils should take precedence over all other considerations.

The BoM should remind staff that applications for Career Break for teachers (Circular 10/2011), Career Break for SNAs (Circular 22/2012), Job share Applications for teachers (Circulars 11/03, 30/03 and 123/2006) and Teacher Exchange (Circular 12/03 and 30/03) must be submitted to the BoM **by 1<sup>st</sup> March** in the year prior to the school year to which the application refers. The sole discretion as to whether to grant an application for such leave rests with the BoM. There is no scheme for job sharing for SNAs.

The BoM is required to issue a written response to an applicant for such leave **by April 1<sup>st</sup>**, at the latest. The BoM must submit approved applications in respect of job share arrangements and teacher exchanges to the DES **before the 10<sup>th</sup> April** and must submit notice of career break(s) to the DES (via the on-line claims system), **on or before 1<sup>st</sup> May**. The employer must list the names of all teachers availing of a career break on the annual change of staff form and must list the names of all SNAs availing of a career break on the annual non teaching staff form.

In relation to career breaks for SNAs, Boards should note that time spent by an SNA on career break is **not** reckonable as service for seniority purposes. It is advisable for the BoM to have the SNA acknowledge in writing, prior to going on career break, that s/he is aware that the period of the career break will not be counted as reckonable service and that his/her taking a career break may affect his/her seniority position in the school. CPSMA has drafted a template document for use by members in such situations which may be accessed at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) (Appointments section).

## **POLICY PROMPTS**

CPSMA is currently updating the policy prompt documents on its website. The BoM is referred to [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) (policy section) for updated policy prompts and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) which the BoM may find helpful when drafting/reviewing school policies.

## **NCSE APPLICATION FOR RESOURCES FOR THE 2013/2014 SCHOOL YEAR**

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has set a deadline of the **15<sup>th</sup> March 2013** for receipt of applications for resources for the 2013/2014 school year. Decisions on applications submitted by this date are to issue to schools before they close for the summer break. Schools should commence submitting applications to their local SENO. Application forms are available at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

## **REPORTING OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TO NEWB**

Schools are obliged to report on school attendance to the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. A school is required to submit (A) four student absence reports (Quarterly reports) (B) one annual attendance report each year and (C) report every time a student falls into any of the categories 1-5 set out below.

**(A)The *Student Absence Reports (Quarterly reports)*** should have been/should be submitted to the NEWB for individual students' cumulative absences for the School Year 2012-2013 as follows:

- from school year start date to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012 - by the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012
- from school year start date to 28<sup>th</sup> December 2012 - by the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- from school year start date to 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 - by 19<sup>th</sup> April 2013
- from school year start date to 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013 - by 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013

These periodic reports should include only those students with serious attendance issues identified during the current academic year i.e.

(1) a student who has been absent from school for a cumulative total of 20 days or more

(2) a student's name is removed from the school register for any reason

(3) a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of 6 or more days

(4) where a principal is concerned about a student's attendance and

(5) where the Board of Management has expelled a student. (**Note:** NEWB must receive written notification of a Board's intent to expel a student and such expulsion cannot take effect until 20 days have elapsed after NEWB has received this written notification on the relevant form available from NEWB)

- (B) The **Annual Attendance Report (AAR)** is the annual statistical report, which gives overall absence information for the entire school population. This report covers all students registered in the school and is due for completion on the day the school closes for the summer break and must be submitted to the NEWB no later than 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013.
- (C) In addition every time a/any student falls into any of the above five categories the school is required to report the student to the NEWB.

**Note:** By making a return of data as set out above, the school is not making a referral. If a school has concerns, in respect of any student, it should contact the EWO and **make a referral**.

Absence reports can be submitted by logging onto [www.schoolreturn.ie](http://www.schoolreturn.ie) or by post using the relevant forms from NEWB. Schools can report concerns between reporting periods either online at [www.schoolreturn.ie](http://www.schoolreturn.ie), in writing, by contacting the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) or by contacting the NEWB education helpline on 1890 36 36 66.

## **BULLYING**

The Department of Education and Skills is to publish an "Action Plan for Bullying". One of the features of the Action Plan is a bullying report template which will oblige schools to keep a formal record of bullying incidents. The Action Plan provides for a national anti-bullying website and will include guidelines for schools on how to record and deal with complaints of bullying. CPSMA will keep members informed as matters progress in this regard.

In the meantime all schools are required to have a Code of Behaviour drawn up in accordance with NEWB guidelines. Schools are required to have policies to prevent/address bullying in school. Schools must explicitly state in their Code of Behaviour that bullying is prohibited and must set out what action the school authorities will take in relation to alleged breaches of the school's bullying policy. Members are referred to [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie) for NCTE Internet safety advice and educational resources. Schools can also use SPHE/Walk Tall programme/ Stay Safe programme etc. to address the issue of bullying.

## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM SCHOOL ROLL BOOK(S) / REGISTERS**

Where a BoM receives a request for information from the school roll book(s) or registers, the BoM should ensure that it adheres to data protection legislation and guidelines.

The provisions of the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003 apply to the personal information of living individuals. Any access to or use of data of living individuals needs to have a legitimate basis, for example the consent of the individuals is needed before any access to their information is permitted. An individual may be entitled to his/her own personal information but the BoM should ensure that information pertaining to any other person(s) is redacted in its entirety.

## **GAS PROCUREMENT UPDATE**

CPSMA is pleased to advise that those member schools who registered on/before the deadline date, for the first round of the gas procurement competition have secured savings of up to 5%.

Those members who have registered for electricity and/or gas savings and whose applications are to be included in the next round of the competition will be contacted by National Procurement Service (NPS) in due course.

CPSMA advises those members who have not yet registered for Gas and Electricity savings to do so by registering at [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) (procurement section).

## **ENERGY MANAGEMENT COURSE**

CPSMA continues to work in partnership with the SEAI (energy in education programme) as the contact point for members wishing to send a representative to an Energy Management course. Participants are guided step by step through the energy management process from understanding bills and energy use in the school to developing and implementing an energy saving plan. Advice, mentoring and assessments by an SEAI appointed Energy Adviser will also be on offer to schools who participate in courses. Attendance at this course is free. For further information visit [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie) or contact [ldunne@cpsma.ie](mailto:ldunne@cpsma.ie).