

# solas

WINTER 2008



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PLEASE COPY AND SHARE WITH BOARD MEMBERS



## *A Prayer for Advent*

*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,  
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.*

*We who are anxious over many things look  
forward to your coming among us.*

*We who are blessed in so many ways long for the  
complete joy of your kingdom.*

*We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.  
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.  
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"*

*Amen*

*Henri J.M. Nouwen*

## *Your views please....*

*CPSMA would like to hear your views in relation to  
possible changes to Solas...*

What type of content would be most useful to you?

Have you views in relation to design changes?

What items of interest would you like to see featured?

Other thoughts you would like to share with us...

**Solas is available online for download from [www.cpsma.ie](http://www.cpsma.ie)**

Please let us hear from you by post to:  
"Solas" c/o CPSMA,  
New House, St Patrick's College,  
Maynooth,  
Co. Kildare  
or email [info@cpsma.ie](mailto:info@cpsma.ie)

## NEWS

- Disciplinary procedures for teachers have been agreed – information in future edition
- New procedures in relation to filling promoted posts – information in future edition
- Website currently under redesign
- The Charities Bill is currently reaching final stage – implications arising for all schools will be clarified in a future edition.

## INSIDE

- Draft School Leases
- Response to Budget
- Catholic School Week
- Insurance issues

### ↔ Have you checked? ↔

**Contracts in place for all staff – permanent staff, fixed term staff, SNAs, Secretary, Caretaker, part time staff, etc.**

# DRAFT SCHOOL LEASES

In recent weeks where work on the building of new school premises, or extensions to existing schools is involved, the Department of Education and Science (DES) has requested the Board of Management to sign a new form of lease covering the terms and conditions under which the school will be operational.

Discussions in relation to the new Draft Lease between the Irish Episcopal Conference and the DES have been on-going for some time. Progress has been slow and, to date, agreement has not been reached between the parties. In its current format, the new Draft Lease imposes significantly increased liabilities on the Patron, including a requirement for the Patron to

“indemnify the Minister from and against all claims, expenses, costs, actions, proceedings, damages etc” in relation to all aspects of the occupancy / usage of the Demised Premises.

In the absence of an agreed lease wording, the DES is asking the Board of Management to either sign the draft lease or, alternatively, to sign a letter of undertaking agreeing to provide an indemnity as outlined in the preceding paragraph, and to comply with the terms of the Draft Lease.

As there has been no agreement between the DES and the Episcopal Conference in this regard, Boards of Management must not agree to any requests to sign either the new Draft Lease or any form of undertaking. Furthermore as the Draft Lease refers to the DES and the school Patron, all such requests should be referred to the Patron for consideration.

In some such instances the Board of Management has been advised by the DES that the new Building / Extension will be insured by the DES and that consequently there is no need for the Board of Management to do so. However, before taking any such action, the Board of Management should obtain full details of the cover being provided by the DES in writing and refer the matter to the Patron.

Should the Board cancel the insurance on the Building and in the absence of written confirmation from the DES of the level of cover provided by them, the Board of Management (and ultimately the Patron) may find themselves with exposures not protected by the DES and which will require funding from the Schools current resources.



# PRIMARY MANAGEMENT BODIES ISSUE A JOINT RESPONSE TO BUDGET

*Primary Management Bodies seriously question logic of imposing cutbacks at a time when the performance of our education system is universally recognised as the key to our future economic and social prosperity. Primary schools have been seriously underfunded since the foundation of the state. They should be protected in the current realignment of state expenditure. Children only get one chance at primary education and research shows that investment at the primary stage is key to the performance of the system as a whole.*

## **Funding:**

Increases in inflation, VAT and utility charges now far outweigh the increase in capitation announced in the budget. The increase of €26 announced will be quickly absorbed by increases in oil, electricity, water charges etc.

## **EAL and other Support Teachers:**

The reimposition of the cap on the allocation of language support teachers and supports for traveller children dilutes scarce and precious additional supports to schools that are working in areas of greatest

need. It singles out the most vulnerable and least politically vocal for attack. It has the potential to reduce the educational outcomes for such children; reduce their eventual productivity as citizens and increase the costs to the state of expensive later interventions.



### Book Grants:

The removal of this grant is a serious miscalculation. There are disadvantaged children in all schools. A Department report shows that one out of ten families has less than 10 books at home. Further reports demonstrate that we have a major issue with literacy which is a significant cost to our society. How can literacy be addressed if children do not have access to books?

### Class Size:

The announcement of a claw back on staffing will seriously affect the daily experience of all children. Many classrooms are already overcrowded. The measures announced will make them the largest classes in the OECD. Such

overcrowding must have a negative effect on educational outcomes.

### Uncertified Sick Leave:

The removal of substitution cover for uncertified sick leave is a profoundly flawed measure, which will cause great difficulty in the management of schools and in their ability to deliver an appropriate education for pupils. It may also result in additional costs to the state, through teachers being absent for longer periods on certified sick leave.

### Abolition of Early Retirement Scheme:

Management is concerned about the suspension of the early retirement scheme. This has proved to be an effective mechanism to provide a

means of exit from the profession to those who feel that they can no longer cope with the demands of the modern classroom.

### Deferral of EPSEN Act:

This indicates a disregard for children with special educational needs. The importance of the intersection of this legislation with that of the Disability Act appears to have been ignored.

### Conclusion

While each measure has its own impact, the cumulative effect of these cuts will create serious issues for many schools and cause great concern to those charged with the statutory responsibility for the management of all primary schools.



# NEW ALLIANZ GUIDE TO INSURANCE, SAFETY & SECURITY IN THE SCHOOL

The Allianz Guide to Insurance, Safety and Security in the School was first introduced in 1991 to provide assistance to Trustees, members of Boards of Management and School Principals in the day to day operation of school activities. An updated version of the Guide was published in 2001, in recognition of changing exposures and demands facing schools at that time.

In the intervening period, these exposures have continued to change, including the implementation of significant changes to legislation in areas such as Employment and Health & Safety, which impact on the operation of schools. It is therefore timely to update the Guide to reflect these changes.

Allianz has retained the "question and answer" format, in relation to the most frequently asked questions by schools, within the new Guide. From the feedback which Allianz has received from schools, this approach is found to be particularly useful in addressing many of the issues which schools encounter on a daily basis.

The main features of the new Guide are as follows:

- The Chapter headed "What does the Allianz Custodian School Protection Policy Cover" has been expanded to incorporate the various enhancements which were implemented in 2007, including:

- Increased limits to various Sections and Extensions
- Additional cover such as the introduction of a new Sub

Section in respect of Trustees, Directors and Officers' liability.

- A new Chapter covering aspects of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 has been included. This Chapter addresses a number of issues in relation to the new Act:

- Brief summary of the main aspects of the Act
- What the Board needs to do to meet the requirements of the Act
- Duties and responsibilities of employers and employees
- Consequences of non-compliance for employers and employees
- How to carry out a risk assessment
- Plan of action to address issues identified in the risk assessment
- Safety Statement.

- Expansion of the Chapter in relation to "Liability of the Board of Management" to incorporate:

- A more detailed explanation of how liabilities and claims can arise in relation to Professional Indemnity, Trustees', Directors' and Officers' Liability, Employment Practices' Liability and Fidelity Guarantee covers
- Details of cover provided by the new Trustees, Directors and Officers Liability Sub Section
- Summary of the procedures which require particular attention by all schools, including:

- Employment Procedures
- Health and Safety Procedures
- Emergency Procedures
- Code of Conduct
- School Admission Policy
- Child Protection
- Internet Usage
- Data Protection.

- New Appendices incorporating:

- Summary of the implications of Health & Safety legislation as regards engineering insurance and the types of equipment which are the subject of mandatory inspection

- Fire Risk Assessment Check List
- Fire Hazards Checklist
- Security Checklist
- Specimen copies of claim forms for:
  - Property Damage/Consequential Loss
  - Employers Liability
  - Public Liability
  - Personal Accident
  - Garda Report form

Allianz views the updating of this Guide as a means of providing assistance to schools in relation to the often complex issues of Insurance, Safety and Security in the school. Copies of the new Guide will be sent to all schools in the near future.

# Catholic Schools Week

On the week beginning January 26th, 2009 the Catholic Church in Ireland will celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2009.

The theme for Catholic Schools Week is

## “Catholic Schools - A Vision for Life”

### Vision 08

The Pastoral Letter of the Irish Bishops' Conference *Vision 08 – A Vision for Catholic Education* will provide the central focus for the celebrations during this week. Suggestions will be given to help implement the key themes of this important document in the everyday life of our Catholic Schools.

### The School - The Parish - The Nation

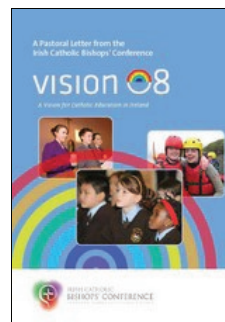
The events scheduled for Catholic Schools Week will take place in schools, in parishes and at national level. In this way the key mission of schools in the Church, the home, parishes and in the life of the nation will be highlighted.

### Catholic Schools - beacons of hope

An indispensable service of Catholic schools is ‘guiding both teacher and student to objective truth..... that enables us to proclaim with confidence the hope which does not disappoint’ (Remarks by Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholic University of America on April 17, 2008). Especially in times of national challenge and economic difficulty it is important that this service is kept to the fore in the hearts and minds of all the stakeholders in our school communities and in those who are part of and shape our civic society.

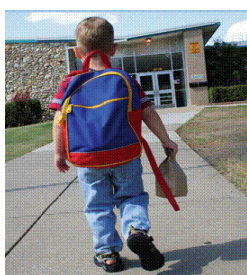
### Catholic Schools – Heartbeat of the Church – Family life – Civic life

The well being of the Church community, family life and our nation is linked to our schools. It is urgent that we reflect on the vision that gives life to the school and seek to ensure its implementation in our schools for each generation of teachers, pupils, parents and staff.



## Conferences in Dublin and Belfast

Catholic Schools week will be launched in Dublin and Belfast with conferences on education and the role of Catholic Schools. The central themes of the Bishops' Pastoral will form the agenda for these Conferences.



## Resource Pack

The main events of Catholic Schools week will take place in parishes and schools. A resource pack for schools is in preparation and will be circulated to arrive in schools in January. Resources will encourage all members of the school community to reflect on two key questions: “What makes a school Catholic?” and “What does it mean to be a Catholic school?” A similar resource will be made available for use at home. Thus, all the partners in Catholic schools are invited to reflect on the questions and find the response that gives meaning to their various roles.

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *Vision 08*
- *The School - The Parish - The Nation*
- *Catholic Schools - beacons of hope*
- *Catholic Schools - Heartbeat of the Church - Family Life - Civic Life*
- *The identity of the Catholic school—formation of witnesses to Christian hope*
- *Catholic schools at the service of truth in every generation*
- *Suggestions for Catholic Schools Week*



## The identity of the Catholic school - formation of witnesses to Christian Hope.

The aim of all Christian education is to lead the believer to an adult faith that can form him/her into a "new creation"; capable of bearing witness in their surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires them. This aim goes to the core of the identity of the Catholic school and raises the question of conviction: Is the faith tangible in our schools? "Religious Education, Prayer and Worship form an essential part of the curriculum, functioning at its core. Such learning is founded on faith and inspired by wonder at the transcendent mystery of God revealed in the complex beauty of the universe." (*Vision 08—A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland—Executive Summary*)

### Catholic schools at the service of truth in every generation

Pope Benedict in his address to the Catholic University of America on April 17, 2008 stated that education is central to and constitutive of the mission of the Church. It is urgent to recall his words and reflect on them in the context of Catholic Schools week 2009: "Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News..... God's revelation offers every generation the opportunity to discover the ultimate truth about its own life and the goal of history. This task is never easy; it involves the entire Christian community and motivates each generation of Christian educators to ensure that the power of God's truth permeates every dimension of the institutions they serve."



### Suggestions for Catholic Schools Week

Schools and Parishes are encouraged to avail of this week to celebrate the life of the school as part of the mission of the Church at the service to society. The steering committee for Catholic Schools Week, consisting of representatives of the stakeholders in Catholic education, recommends that schools consider the following suggestions in planning Catholic Schools Week 2009:

- Catholic Schools Week concludes on Sunday 1st February. We suggest that the Sunday has as its focus a celebration of the Catholic schools in the parish. This will provide an opportunity to create a display about parish schools in the parish church. Members of Boards of Management, staff (present and retired), parents and children might be invited to attend the Mass. The

words of welcome, the homily, the prayers of the faithful, the liturgy are moments to give thanks for the work of the school community and for the ministry of Catholic education. A speaker from one of the post-primary schools might reflect on a School Project or other social justice activity. During the liturgy the parish community might present a bible, candle or other religious symbol to the school to be used in the school's Sacred Space. Liturgical resources will be available in the February edition of Intercom which is published in mid-January.

- An outline for a **School Assembly** will be prepared for use in schools during Catholic Schools Week. This will give the school community the opportunity to reflect together on the identity of the school and to pray for God's blessing on all associated with the school.

- It is suggested each school prepare a **Sacred Space** in the school to highlight the theme of Catholic Schools Week.

- If schools are planning a **special event, anniversary, or new initiative** in the coming year they should include such events in Catholic Schools week.

- **Congregational Charism:** It is suggested that the week recognise the charism of the different congregations involved in Catholic Schools.

- **The Constituent groups of Catholic Schools** (staff, board members, pupils, parents) will be invited and encouraged to reflect on the nature and identity of the Catholic schools using group and discussion resource material.

# Wheelie Bins - A Source of Destruction

Over the past few years there have been a number of fires in schools where wheelie bins have been set alight by vandals. The deliberate ignition of wheelie bins can threaten life and property. They burn fiercely when on fire and if left or moved close to a building can cause substantial damage.

In one such incident a wheelie bin was pushed up against the front of the school building and set alight. The fire spread upwards into the eaves of the building and within a short space of time a large portion of the premises was destroyed.

In monetary terms the cost of damage arising from wheelie bin fires is now running into millions of euro. The disruption and heartbreak to pupils, parents and staff following such a loss cannot be quantified.



The deliberate ignition of wheelie bins can threaten life and property. They burn fiercely when on fire and if left or moved close to a building can cause substantial damage.

Serious fires involving wheelie bins can be avoided and we set out hereunder some precautions which will help to reduce or eliminate the risk:

- Waste must not be allowed to accumulate and should never be stored in the school premises overnight. At the end of each day, more frequently if necessary, waste should be gathered up and taken to a secure, external waste storage area
- Preferably wheelie bins should be kept in a securely locked external shed/building or compound away from the main school building
- Where a segregated storage area is not feasible, wheelie bins should be chained together and to an immobile object, such as a metal pole, at least 10 meters from any building. A good quality chain and padlock should be used to ensure the precautions being taken are effective

• If none of the above is feasible, then as a last resort and as a minimum standard, wheelie bins should be fitted with a locking mechanism

• Wheelie bins should not be left out overnight for waste collections. They should only be put out on the morning of collection and then should be returned to the property as soon as possible after collection. It is also important not to overfill the wheelie bin or leave loose rubbish around it.

Wheelie bin fires are a growing problem, so please take care.

If you would like further advice or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our dedicated Education Team by phone on 01 613 3966 or email at [education@allianz.ie](mailto:education@allianz.ie) or contact your insurance intermediary.

Since 1902 the experienced Allianz school team has been working to provide the very best insurance and risk management in education. Because each team member serves his or her own local schools, he/she is uniquely positioned to respond to your specific requirements. To contact the Allianz Religious/Education Business Executive in your locality, just give us a call on the relevant number below

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