

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF THE
GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND
REPORT 2001**

SYNOD EXAMINATION

The prize winners of the 1999-2000 examination were as follows:

Year 1

1 st	Jenni Tweed	Alexandra College
2 nd	Dylan Finnerty	East Glendalough
3 rd	Jessica Preston	Monaghan Collegiate
	Jennifer Hobbs	Ashton School

Year 2

1 st	Grace Bolton	Royal School Cavan
2 nd	Fifi Monahan	Alexandra College
	Liv O'Donoghue	East Glendalough
3 rd	Lucy Mullen	East Glendalough

Year 3

1 st	Florence Hazlett	Monaghan Collegiate
2 nd	Andrew Moffett	Monaghan Collegiate
3 rd	Ramy El-Madany	Monaghan Collegiate

Year 4

1 st	Davina Stewart	Royal and Prior
2 nd	Laura Thorpe	East Glendalough
3 rd	Hugh Brown	Royal and Prior

Year 5/6

1 st	Graham Stewart	Royal and Prior
2 nd	Louise Taylor	Sligo Grammar
3 rd	Janice Foster	Royal School Cavan

Junior Division Prizes

Joan Costello	Alexandra College
Clodagh Ryan	Ashton School
Heather Buttimer	Bandon Grammar
Amy Wheatley	East Glendalough
Gabrielle Preston	Monaghan Collegiate
Ruth Magee	Royal and Prior
Sarah Watson	Royal and Prior
Richard Finlay	Royal School Cavan
Rachel Bourke	Sligo Grammar
Hazel McMeekin	St Aidans Cootehill
Filomena Vellekoop	St Andrews Booterstown
Lesley Trenier	St Bricin's Vocational School
Michael Sexton	The High School
Ben Leonard Kane	The High School
Joanne Neary	The King's Hospital

The Board would again express its sincere appreciation to the APCK for funding the Synod Examination prizes.

There has been increasing interest in the Synod Examination and the syllabus now includes an option which will suit those classes preparing for the Junior Certificate Religious Education Examination. The Board would like to thank the principals and teaching staffs of schools who support the examination and is especially grateful to Mrs L Clarke who assesses the work and Mrs J Byrne who provides the administrative back-up.

APPRECIATION

The Board is grateful to those bodies who support the work of the Church in education both North and South through financial donations. There is particular awareness of the commitment of the Diocesan Education Boards of Clogher and of Dublin and Glendalough. Another body which has given substantial assistance in many ways is the Church Education Society.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

The Board continues to work in three distinct areas:

- A. Education in Schools, Colleges and Universities;
- B. Safeguarding Trust; and
- C. Parish Development

A EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Board once again draws Synod's attention to its additional work load due to the establishment of three departments in the Assembly dealing with education and the three related Assembly Committees.

1. TRANSFEROR REPRESENTATIVES' COUNCIL

The Board continues to work in close co-operation with the Boards of Education of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. The nine person executive of the Council, comprising three representatives of each Board, meets on a near monthly basis. Included in the business undertaken were the following matters:

(a) Selection at 11 Plus

Without doubt the dominant issue in the past year was that of selection and post-primary education.

A consultative document was published by the Department of Education "Unlocking Creativity – A Strategy for Development" (The Gallagher Report). This comprises an 80 page summary of two volumes of research papers totalling over 700 pages. A form of public consultation was commenced involving a Review Body chaired by Mr G Burns.

The TRC in conjunction with the three Churches' Boards of Education conducted its own research. Over seven hundred Church Transferor Representatives and local clergy completed and returned a questionnaire containing responses to thirty-eight questions. This was invaluable in shaping the fifty page submission made by the TRC.

The TRC's comment on the spiritual and societal aspects of this issue is appended to this report (See Appendix B).

The Executive Summary of this submission stated:

"This response is informed by the analysis of 700 questionnaires completed by Transferor members of Boards of Governors in controlled schools and by some local clergy.

1. Esteem of every child and school sector

That each child and type of school should be held in equal esteem.

2. Curriculum

That the secondary school curriculum be revised and be in place prior to any major changes being introduced in the system of secondary schools.

3. Selection at 11+; Selection at 14+

That when, as a result of parental choice, application for places at a post-primary school is greater than the approved intake, the Board of Governors should be permitted to authorise the selection of pupils on academic ability and, if the governors so decide, also to utilise criteria related to social needs and transformation to a religiously integrated enrolment.

(a) That the current system of selection at 11+ be discontinued and replaced in two stages over a five year period.

(i) An interim period using Key Stage Two assessments and entrance examinations or tests by those receiving post-primary schools which require them; such examinations or tests to be in accord with guidelines provided by the Department.

(ii) The introduction within five years (by 2005) of agreed forms of assessment and educational guidance using insights obtained from advances in this area. For example, computer based predictor tests.

(b) That the Department, in consultation with the partners in education, conduct a review of the criteria currently being employed at 14+ with a view to determining their suitability province wide, prior to any further changes in the post-primary schools.

4. Community education audits

That a limited number of models of post-primary schooling be clearly identified and explained and that Community Education Audits be

conducted in local areas to enable communities to choose the model or combination of models best suited to their needs. The Education and Library Boards to be the agencies to conduct these audits employing uniform guidelines determined by the Department of Education in consultation with the various partners in education.

5. Restoration of Community Confidence

Recognising the lack of confidence of the community served by the Controlled Schools in the current system, that dedicated Controlled Schools sub-committees reflecting the management interests in those schools be established within each Education and Library Board as soon as possible. This major and most necessary confidence-building measure to be in place prior to the discussing of the remit of Community Education Audits or changes in the system of post-primary schools.”

(b) Enrolment Figures for Irish Speaking and Integrated Schools

The TRC’s submission to a Department of Education consultation paper stated that:

“Whilst acknowledging parental choice there must also be a due recognition that the establishment of more schools in an area with an over supply of school places, cannot do other than promote further fragmentation. The TRC maintains its position that Controlled Schools exist for all children. With five different school sectors now in existence the TRC recommends that before any further demand for fragmentation is made, (most likely due to parents operating human rights legislation), that a public assessment be completed of the costs which:

- (a) are already being incurred in maintaining the current separations over and above a single system
- (b) would be incurred through any additional fragmentation (even on the basis of one school in Belfast and one in Londonderry).

“At a time when the Gallagher report states that selection promotes social divisiveness, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of schools in a divided educational system in a divided society contribute to societal divisiveness.

“The TRC is concerned that a minority language-medium sector could contribute to the societal divisiveness through its restriction from the wider social environment, and its limited diversity of teachers. Unless safeguards are identified and good practice responds to them, segregation will be re-enforced and division rather than diversity will be inevitable.

“The creation of any new school of whatever type in an area where it will lead to the closure of other types of schools, thereby reducing accessibility and choice, needs more thought, debate and consideration.

“The TRC recommends that for new school start-ups, a common ceiling percentage of additional funding be debated and agreed to enable freedom of choice - but not to establish a long term additional differential in the per capita

funding between different school sectors. An exorbitant amount being spent on one parental grouping's choice over and above those of other groupings, could rightly be regarded as a contravention of good practice and the Belfast Agreement.

“The TRC feels that the viability criteria for an Irish medium school should have a minimum intake of 15. This would enable it to develop into a minimum sized school of 105 which would sustain 4 teachers, none of whom would have to teach more than 2 age groups.

Extra funding will also have to be found to:

- train teachers and examiners in Irish
- provide for the expanding costs of examinations, and Key Stage assessments
- ensure that all subjects are taught to the standards required by law.

“The TRC welcomes the recent financial initiatives by Westminster and Stormont. The TRC remains very conscious that much more money is required to update existing school buildings, improving teacher/pupil ratios, promoting nursery/pre-school education, developing pre-school playgroups, accommodating disruptive pupils, and tackling educational underachievement. It is against this background that the TRC strongly counsels the Minister, the Department and the Assembly Education Committee to conduct an informed debate as to how far the small population in Northern Ireland can travel balancing the competing requirements of distinctiveness in provision; parental rights; and communal needs whilst recognising budgetary limitations. There also needs to be a close examination of the total impact of these on societal divisiveness.

“There needs to be an end to ad-hoc developments based on ad-hoc decision making and for an essential debate to occur which recognises the needs of a pluralist society with an increasing number of ethnic and religious minorities.

“The TRC has already made known its policy in submissions to the Working Party on the Promotion of Tolerance. In brief this policy advocates:

- a preference towards the transformation of existing schools where possible, consequent to a community audit conducted by the ELB and involving the principal statutory partners eg NICIE, CCMS, TRC, and local transferors”.

(c) School Performance Tables

The TRC submission to this Department of Education consultation paper stated that:

“The provision of SPTs (School Performance Tables) enables the TRC to better perform its responsibilities. For example, it would have been impossible and irresponsible for the TRC to have evaluated various aspects of the Gallagher report on post-primary education, without having access to the current SPTs.

“The TRC feels that the publication of SPTs is extremely helpful as an overall indicator of trends.

“The TRC requests that serious consideration be given to providing information in two formats and at two levels for (i) Area Board use and (ii) for Provincial use.

“It is essential that parents, pupils and all concerned with education receive SPTs in a format which is most useful to them. Acknowledgement must be taken of the considerable number of parents who chose to enrol their children in schools in other ELB areas.

“With the introduction of new forms of examination and qualifications, and the current debate on post-primary education being but in its initial stages, the TRC would recommend

- (a) the continuation of the SPTs
- (b) their augmentation with new examination/qualification results as they become available
- (c) that consideration be given to production of editions for individual ELBs set against a common layout and criteria
- (d) that parents be able to obtain the SPTs of ELB areas other than that in which they reside
- (e) that copies of all ELB documents be provided by the Department to partner bodies such as the TRC which have a province-wide responsibility”.

The Minister set aside the publication of SPTs. He also ignored the comments of the Assembly Education Committee and he was criticised for so doing by its chairman Mr Danny Kennedy MLA and other members of that committee.

The TRC is also concerned that the disregard of the Assembly Committee’s concerns would undermine the cross-community administration. See comment following on the “Programme of Government”.

There needs to be greater evidence of the spirit of the Belfast Agreement in regard to the Protestant community by the Minister for Education, thereby promoting confidence throughout the entire community in the Executive’s policy.

The TRC drew this matter to the attention of the First Minister’s office.

(d) Programme of Government

Canon McKelvey represented the TRC at a one day conference on the Assembly Executive’s Programme of Government.

The TRC response to the subsequent consultative document on “A Programme of Government” supported the majority of the aims of the administration.

However in the light of the action of the Minister of Education, the TRC submission stated:

“The TRC regrets that it already has its misgivings in this area in respect of the recent cynical approach to consultation in which the comments of the three main Protestant churches could scarcely have been considered by the Minister in respect of viability criteria for Irish-medium and Integrated schools. The TRC is disturbed by the lack of time between the date by which submissions were to be received and the date on which the Minister announced his decision.

“The TRC would caution the Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly that such actions will erode and destroy community confidence in the entire operation of a local assembly.

“The TRC would like to be informed as to the role of the Assembly Committee, the Executive and the Assembly itself when such incidents occur.

“Is the Minister acting with the approval of these bodies? If not, then what confidence can partners in education really place in the vision of partnership and effective consultation?

“The TRC is anxious to continue to engage in the on-going discussion with the Administration in respect of the Programme of Government, but it again stresses that periods of public consultations must (a) be adequate, (b) be timed for periods of the year when those who make voluntary contributions to education are available to consult together, and (c) practise and demonstrate consultation and avoid the abuse and erosion of public confidence by treating or appearing to treat submissions cynically.

Partners in education cannot have confidence in a vision of partnership if the Minister acts unilaterally without effective, all-inclusive consultation with these bodies”.

(e) Education and Training for Industry

In its response to an enquiry from the Assembly Committee for Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment, the TRC made a number of points which included the following:

“Further Education needs to be open to everyone:

- (i) at a reasonable cost
- (ii) at a selection of venues
- (iii) with a variation of approaches to learning
- (iv) ICT should be available to everyone”.

“The TRC stated that there is a need to review:

- (i) the needs of new companies in Northern Ireland
- (ii) how closely Colleges are associated with industry to gain insight into what is needed
- (iii) use of IT and ICT in the learning process”.

The submission concluded by stating:

“The Transferor Representatives’ Council has a concern for all the children and young people in the Northern Ireland community. Its concerns are neither narrow nor sectarian. Its vision of education is one which includes the individual’s need to earn a living, be a responsible member of society whilst being able to appreciate creation and the arts”.

(f) Christian Service in School Management

Central to the Churches' mission is the promotion of christian values throughout society. Schools are a major influence - and for an increasing number of children sadly the only such influence - in the endeavour to inculcate *bona fide* spiritual and social values.

The prime legal responsibility for this rests upon the individual school's Board of Governors which is responsible for the delivery of the total curriculum. Since the Education Reform Order (1988) an ever-increasing amount of responsibilities has been placed upon Boards of Governors, the overwhelming majority of whom perform this role in a most dedicated manner.

The TRC has no hesitation in commending service as a member of a Board of Governors, to the members of its three Churches, as a *bona fide* form of christian ministry and service.

The scale of this service is immense. For example in the Area Boards at post-primary level there are a total of 103 schools which primarily serve the protestant community.

Belfast ELB: 8 Secondary; 2 Controlled Grammar; 8 Voluntary Grammar. Enrolments ranging between 269 and 1,854 pupils.

North East ELB: 20 Secondary; 5 Controlled Grammar; 6 Voluntary Grammar. Enrolments ranging between 179 and 1,250 pupils.

Southern ELB: 17 Secondary; 3 Controlled Grammar; 2 Voluntary Grammar. Enrolments ranging between 100 and 1,258 pupils.

South-Eastern ELB: 15 Secondary; 3 Controlled Grammar; 4 Voluntary Grammar. Enrolments ranging between 314 and 1,434 pupils.

Western ELB: 10 Secondary; 4 Controlled Grammar; 2 Voluntary Grammar. Enrolments ranging between 187 and 888 pupils.

There are now also 4 Controlled Integrated secondary and 12 Grant Maintained Integrated.

The scale of the challenge of managing the primary school sector can be gauged from

- (a) the numbers of controlled primary schools: BELB 44 schools; NEELB 134; SELB 156; SEELB 103 and WELB 70.
- (b) that in the NEELB the 134 primary schools comprise:
 - 49 schools with enrolments below 100
 - 32 schools with enrolments between 101 and 200
 - 21 schools with enrolments between 201 and 300

- 22 schools with enrolments between 301 and 400
- 6 schools with enrolments between 401 and 500
- 3 schools with an enrolments between 501 and 600
- 3 schools with an enrolment in excess of 600.

In 2002 the membership of Boards of Governors is due for re-appointment. This matter has been discussed by the TRC with the Chief Executives of the ELBs. There is agreement that a major joint endeavour will be made to encourage church members to offer their services.

Information leaflets will be produced by the ELBs which will be directed at church membership and with the co-operation of clergy and congregations obtain a widespread distribution.

There are several ways in which church members can offer their services:

- as a church Transferor Representative
- as an elected parent governor
- as the appointee of the ELB representing the local community.

Governor training and support is provided by the ELBs.

Each school has between 9 and 24 governors. On the 9 strong Board, 4 will be Transferor Representatives; on a Board of 16, there are 6 Transferor Representatives and on the Board of 24 there are 9.

The ELBs are responsible for finding 2 community representatives for the 9 strong Board, and this number increases for the 16 and 24 strong Boards.

This is the scale of the challenge to the memberships and witness of the Churches. It is a challenge which dare not be neglected since the schools are the foremost tellers of the Christian Story to the greater majority of children in society today. Without doubt a christian contribution in schools' management helps to shape the future of society and its citizens.

(g) Representatives on Secondary School Boards

The method of electing Transferor Representatives to secondary schools has been kept under review in meetings with the Department of Education and Chief Executives of Education and Library Boards (ELBs). This matter will require legislation to resolve satisfactorily.

(h) Curriculum Review and Examinations

Canon McKelvey represented the TRC at a Curriculum Review Launch organised by Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). A seminar was arranged subsequently for members of the Churches' Boards of Education to obtain an overview of the 14-16 review.

Representatives of the TRC met with CCEA in February 2001 to explore areas of co-operation and also to raise some matters of concern.

(i) Harrogate Visit

As a follow-up to the visit by the TRC, CCMS and NICIE to St Aidan's (Church of England) School and St John Fisher (Roman Catholic) School to observe their joint sixth-form centre, a return visit to Northern Ireland was hosted by the TRC. Both principals, the director of the sixth-form centre and a member of staff from each school came. They visited five schools which demonstrated the variety of provision in Northern Ireland. They staffed a public seminar at Stranmillis University College. An evening reception and dinner was held at Stranmillis for representatives of the principal educational interests. Appreciation is recorded of the co-operation of Professor R McMinn and the staff of Stranmillis.

(j) Education Monitor

Due to the prioritisation of education by the Westminster Government and the variety of knock-on effects on the system in Northern Ireland, a monthly digest of news reports is prepared. The TRC's "Education Monitor" is circulated to the TRC Executive, politicians with a specific interest or responsibility in education, and in turn by the Churches' boards to their members. Several politicians have written to express their appreciation.

(k) Faith in Schools Website

This website which was launched in January 2000 continues to be developed to support Religious Education, Collective Worship and Education for Mutual Understanding in schools. It was selected as "website of the day" by the Education Guardian.

It is used worldwide and the numbers using the site continues to increase. The largest identifiable group of users is at Stranmillis University College. This initiative supported by the four main Churches and the Belfast Hebrew Community was supported by the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation Fund permitting a full time keyboard operator and part-time researcher to be employed for a year. A further three months extension of this support was obtained.

2. OTHER AREAS OF WORK**(a) Review of Support for RE**

- (i) The Board has consulted with bishops and diocesan boards of education on the type of support which the church should be supplying to schools. The Board also consulted with the other member Churches of the TRC. This work is on-going.
- (ii) The Secretary continued to meet with the RE Advisers to the ELBs. The Board wishes to place on record its appreciation of the support given by the Advisers over the past very difficult year with the introduction of the new A/S and A level courses in 2001 and 2002.

The Advisers continue to ensure a range of courses for teachers meeting the needs of the most recently qualified teacher as well as those completing a master's degree in education with emphases in RE at UUJ.

Further curriculum resource development is planned by the RE Advisers in the form of a CD ROM on a background to the life of Jesus for KS1 and KS2 pupils.

- (iii) The Secretaries of the three protestant church boards met with representatives of the Roman Catholic bishops to plan the commencement of a review of the Core Programme in RE. This agreed programme which was developed by an inter-church working party and recognised by the Department, has been in place since the early 1990s. In common with other subjects it was felt that a review should be conducted by a group appointed by the Churches responsible for the initial development of this vital aspect of educational provision.
- (iv) The Board received a paper by Canon McKelvey detailing the growth in the number of pupils taking RE in public examinations, and the reasons for this most welcome development.

(b) Education Forum

The Education Forum is sponsored and administered by the Association of Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards (ANIELB). It comprises nominees of the Association of Chief Executives; ANIELB; Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; Northern Ireland Teachers' Council; Governing Bodies Association and the Transferors' Representatives Council (TRC).

The Forum is “not a negotiating body, not a decision making body, but one for contact, information and ideas and for undertaking joint initiatives as well as for reacting to events on behalf of the participating bodies”.

During the past year the Forum discussed most of the areas of business addressed by the TRC and reported above. Through the good offices of Mrs H McClenaghan, the representative of the Association of Chief Executives, Forum members spent a day visiting schools in the Southern ELB area as part of its preparation to discuss selection and post-primary education.

Canon McKelvey continues to serve as Chairman of the Forum and as such represents it at the ANIELB's Annual Conference.

(c) Board Structures

The discussion between the two Boards of Education - Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland - reported to General Synod last year, continued.

The Board of Education (Northern Ireland) remains firmly convinced that the current All-Ireland Board of Education is an anachronism due to it being well overtaken by events and that it is not an effective instrument for the Church's work in education. Its principal function is that it provides an outdated electoral mechanism which is but an initial stage in determining the eventual composition of the Board of Education (Republic of Ireland). This function should be solely within the remit of the Board of Education (Republic of Ireland). It incurs an unnecessary expense of time and finance in respect of members from Northern Ireland.

A paper prepared by the Board for Northern Ireland making specific recommendations regarding the creation of a positive relationship comprising a joint liaison committee between the two free-standing Boards of Education for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was agreed and forwarded to the Board of the Republic of Ireland.

Regrettably the recommendations were unacceptable to that Board.

It is the opinion of the Board of Education (Northern Ireland), that if an All-Ireland Board was to continue to exist, to obtain credibility and acceptability, its membership must be changed radically, and redefined to reflect the distribution of population and the scale of engagement in education in the respective jurisdictions, as demonstrated by school enrolments and the numbers of schools.

The Board of Education (Northern Ireland) advocates General Synod's acceptance of the following principles:

- (i) that the present All-Ireland General Synod Board should be abolished
- (ii) that a joint body for consultation be evolved from the present executive structure which ensures co-operation where possible on an All-Ireland basis whilst respecting the established autonomy of each Board
- (iii) that each Board be directly responsible to General Synod, its Standing Committee and in any subsequent permitted negotiations with the Representative Body. (A model for this has been established by General Synod in respect of the Board of Social Responsibility.)

(d) Other Issues

The Board discussed papers on Higher and Further Education 'A' levels and post 16 provision.

(e) Theological Lectures at the Queen's University

The annual theological lectures at The Queen's University are sponsored by the Board through the agency of the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy. This year's lecturer was the Rt Revd Professor Stephen Sykes, Principal of St John's College, Durham. His theme was "Power and Theology".

(f) ACE Ventures

The Board continues to sponsor ACE Ventures which provides opportunities for unemployed persons to gain basic qualifications and work experience through 'Work Trade' and other government initiatives. An average of fifty persons are involved in the schemes. A new computer suite was developed for training courses.

During the year efforts succeeded to forge closer links with the Diocesan Council of Down and Dromore since the area served by ACE Ventures is mainly in that diocese. Nominees of the Diocesan Council have been appointed to the Board of Directors.

B SAFEGUARDING TRUST

Induction courses were held for new parish panel members, the recently ordained and clergy new to the six northern dioceses served by the Board. The programme of triennial visits to parishes by members of the diocesan teams continued.

The Board once again sincerely records its appreciation of the outstanding contribution made by the members of the diocesan support teams, all of whom are volunteers and most of whom have a professional insight in this area. Their approach is a major, significant influence in the acceptance by parishes of the code of good practice.

A one day consultation was held for team members.

Both the Panel Members' and the Parish Leaders' handbooks were revised and reprinted. There continues to be a steady demand for these, as well as for advice in their on-going implementation.

C PARISH DEVELOPMENT

The Board's efforts in this area continue to focus on four areas:

- (a) A Children's Charter for the Church of Ireland
- (b) Diocesan Support for Children's Ministry
- (c) Archbishop's Challenge
- (d) Online resources to support a variety of ministries.

(a) A Children's Charter for the Church of Ireland

The production of a series of papers on "Implementing a Children's Charter" was continued and copies were forwarded to all parishes as they became available. The additional titles since General Synod 2000 are:

- 7. Challenging Bullying
- 8. Building Bridges with Local Schools
- 9. Special Needs

The papers are photocopiable by parishes to facilitate distribution to key individuals and groups.

Conference 2000

"Conference 2000" was held over five days at the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle. The conference had three cords: worship and spiritual development; plenaries and workshops.

Over fifty participants were involved. They came from diocesan children's ministry groups, diocesan and General Synod boards of education, parishes and the Mothers' Union.

The daily worship drew upon various services from different parts of the Anglican Communion. The worship was conducted by members of the conference. The opportunity was taken to explore the recently published Church of Ireland Hymnal. This was greatly enhanced by the presence of Rev Professor Dwight Vogel, Dean of Chapel at Garrett-Evangelical Theological College in Evanston, Illinois and Margaret Nelson the organist of Magheragall Parish in Connor.

Authority of the Generations

A highlight of the Conference was the introduction to the Church of Ireland of the “Authority of the Generations” process. This is a group activity in which members in turn reflect on a biblical passage and respond to a question such as “Where did you see God recently?” As each individual responds a delegated member of the group - the weaver of song - selected a hymn verse to reflect the response, which the group then sang. When the last member had contributed to the process another delegated member - a discerner of story - identified a common thread which united each contribution.

The responsibilities for praise and discernment of the emerging spiritual thread was passed to different group members each time the group met for the “Authority of the Generations” process. In the Conference feedback, this was identified as the major highlight of the event and often with an acknowledgement that Church of Ireland laity had seldom the opportunity for a residential spiritual experience.

Speakers and Workshops

The principal speakers at the conference were Linda Vogel, Professor of Christian Education at Garrett and Susan Graham-Walker, author on children’s ministry and former staff-member of the Toronto Diocesan Christian Education team.

The transatlantic speakers also conducted workshops. A range of local folk also came along to conduct workshops. Rev Dr Johnson McMaster of ISE, and the PACT team from Lurgan, on reconciliation; Rev Marie Walshe on children and bereavement; Mrs Elizabeth Heron and Mrs Heather Ellis of Armagh Diocesan MU on parenting.

On each evening members of the Church of Ireland engaged in various aspects of work in the community, spoke to the conference. These included Elaine Way who heads a health trust in Londonderry. Mrs Way spoke on her needs as a mother and her hopes that her church would do better in meeting the needs of parents today who wish to raise their children within the church’s fellowship and with christian values.

Lynne Peyton who is the executive director of NSPCC in Northern Ireland was accompanied by Catherine Bell. Their presentation on the marginalised and afflicted children of Northern Ireland made even more impact as Catherine disclosed how she herself had been abused as a teenager and how her own church could not supply her need for a confidante at that particular time.

Cyril McElhinney and Mary Good of Shankill Parish Lurgan were part of a group from PACT - Parents and Children Together. PACT has been developed by Shankill

and its neighbouring Roman Catholic parish to enable the development of church-based cross-community children's work. They shared their story and their vision.

On the final evening the Archbishop of Armagh and Lady Eames joined the Conference and the Archbishop in turn shared his hope and vision for the Church of Ireland's ministry to and with children.

At Conference 2000 the Archbishop of Armagh presented Mrs Norma Thompson of Ballymacash Parish, Connor, with a collection of prayers - a token of the Board's appreciation for her continuing assistance in introducing leaders to project work for the Archbishop's Challenge.

Review and Renewal

A follow-up to Conference 2000 is currently underway. It is a major attempt to review and renew the network of Children's Ministry Groups in the northern dioceses. Conference 2000 involved people with a range of gifts and a shared commitment. Diocesan meetings are being held with these participants.

The Board of Education (NI) has formally renewed its commitment to support the development of Children's Ministry and to maintain the Children's Charter process by encouraging parishes to establish annually a focus group to look at a particular aspect of Children's Ministry and to respond to it.

The Board committed itself to (i) maintaining and developing the Archbishop's Challenge which has been a most useful focus for many parishes in their ministry to children, and (ii) the production of new resources for use by parishes and schools.

The most major initiative by the Board in 2001 in Children's Ministry is the provision this year of online resources as part of a large website which is being researched and developed to support "Ministry for All".

The finance for this on-going initiative has been provided by central allocations from the Representative Body, the Priorities Fund, parish and diocesan donations.

(b) Diocesan Support for Children's Ministry

The Board continues where possible to give practical support to diocesan children's ministry groups. The Connor, Down and Dromore group was assisted with the organisation of a training event. The Armagh group was assisted in the development of "Anglican Connect" - a project to enable young members to make contact with others elsewhere in the Anglican Communion using the internet.

Resource materials continue to be developed. The section on Children's Ministry will be the first to be made available on the "Ministry for All" website (see below).

(c) Archbishop's Challenge

The response to the Archbishop's Challenge continues in the parishes. The Young Members' Challenge record books, the handbooks for clergy, leaders and parents

continue to be in steady demand. The Challenge is available to any parish, school or individual Young Member in Ireland. Further details of the Challenge Scheme are available from the Church of Ireland Education Centre, 1-3 Cadogan Park, Belfast BT9 6HG. Tel: (028) 9068 2946 Fax: (028) 9068 7283.

(d) Online resources to support a variety of ministries

The Board took part once more in BBC Webwise programmes and through this was able to provide tutorials on CD ROM and print resources to several parishes. The Board is continuing to encourage parishes to obtain internet facilities due to the immense benefits they bring in education and communication.

The Board continues to provide new resources for parish clergy on the “Parish Ministry” website. Using e-mail clergy are advised of new materials which have been added to the site as well as other communications from the Board. Over 150 clergy in the northern dioceses are currently being supported in this way. Apart from prayer, sermon themes and other worship related materials, there are now over 120 articles available for consultation on the site. The use of the site is restricted to Church of Ireland clergy and diocesan lay readers. Clergy and readers wishing to access the site should contact Canon McKelvey by e-mail at: mckelvey@unite.co.uk. The low cost of e-mail facilities means that the Board has been able to increase the support it gives to parishes.

The “Ministry for All” website is a resource base to support a variety of lay ministries in parishes. When fully developed it will include materials for children’s ministry, the christian nurture of youth and adults, liturgical and administrative ministries.

PERSONALIA

The Rev HJ Parker and Mr D Riley have resigned as Honorary Secretaries to the Board. They have served in this capacity since 1990 when they succeeded Mr WJ Dickson and the late Canon EPM Elliott. The Board records its deep appreciation for their service of quality which was given in the most demanding times. Both Honorary Secretaries brought invaluable experience to the Board, having been principals of large secondary schools.

Mrs M Crockett and Mr JE Bunting were appointed Honorary Secretaries. They bring considerable experience from the primary and secondary sectors.

Mr R Kenny has resigned as Honorary Auditor to the Board. The Board records its indebtedness to his professional acumen.

The Ven CT Pringle resigned as the clerical representative of Clogher Diocese. His insightfulness and knowledge of the Western ELB area was especially important. He continues to serve on that body. Rev RT Gillian was welcomed as his successor. Mr S Forsythe also resigned.

The Board records its appreciation of the ministry in education of Canon WR Twaddell who retired this year. Canon Twaddell was an exemplar of diligence in his ministry in schools, on boards of governors and on the SELB.

The Board conveyed its best wishes to Rt Rev MHG Mayes on his translation to Limerick and welcomes his successor, Rt Rev KH Clarke.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)**MEMBERSHIP**

The members of the Board have given generously of their time and expertise. The membership represents a range of education expertise and the contributions of individual members are of considerable benefit to all involved in schools. One of the representatives of the Past Students Association of the College of Education has been Mrs Beryl Tilson who has also served the Primary Religious Education Committee. The Board wishes her well on her retirement. During her years as principal of Taney National School she has overseen the development of that school as a flagship for the Church of Ireland.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

The Education Act, 1998, is now fully operational although discussions are ongoing between the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) and the Partners in Education including this Board regarding various procedures and structures. The formation of school councils and procedures for appeals to the DE&S are two topics under consideration. The latter includes appeals regarding refusal to enrol, suspensions and expulsions of disruptive pupils.

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, was signed into law but all sections need not be implemented until July 2002. The Act raises the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 16, provides procedures for dealing with school attendance, issues relating to the educational welfare of children and the regulations regarding home schooling.

The Teachers Council Bill has been going through the legislative process. The Bill provides for the registration of qualified teachers and would promote and regulate the professional affairs of teachers and act in an advisory role to the Minister.

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 2000 will be commenced by the Minister who will put in place the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to replace the National Council for Educational Awards and National Council for Vocational Awards.

The Minister has also drafted a further amendment to the Vocational Education Act, 1930.

Legislation is not only national but supra-national and a draft directive issued by the European Commission caused much concern. The draft directive sought, very properly, to prevent discrimination but one draft clause would have prevented the religious denomination of a teacher or other worker being considered by an employer who operates a denominational school or other denominational institution. The Board is very conscious of the openness of the Government to the anxiety expressed by the Church of Ireland and the other churches on this matter. The Board is grateful for the effective response by the Government which resulted in appropriate modifications of the directive by the Commission and which now more closely reflects existing national legislation in the Employment Equality Act, 1998.

CHURCH OF IRELAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

The Minister for Education and Science granted a derogation to the College for 3 years allowing it to use religious affiliation as part of the admission criteria. In the debates prior to the passing of the order the supportive response of the Minister and the opposition parties to the needs of our denominational schools was heartening.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Secretary briefed the Board on a meeting he attended concerning the enrolment of refugees in schools. It is hoped that schools will be an open and welcoming place for the children of asylum seekers and refugees. Many of the children have suffered hardship and privation in their home countries and all will value education and bring additional traditions and cultures to the school community.

RELEASE TIME FOR TEACHING PRINCIPALS

The moves to give release time to teaching principals and the greater number of principals who may now be full time administrative principals is to be welcomed. However in those schools which have substantial enrolments but where the principal must still teach full time, give educational leadership and administer the school there is still an excessive burden being shouldered by such principals. Such principals need increased resources from the DE&S and all possible support from Boards of Management.

BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

A debt of gratitude is owed to those who have served on Boards of Management for national schools and to those who have accepted such responsibility for the current triennium. Following consultation by the Department of Education and Science with the partners an amended constitution and rules of procedure have been introduced for new Boards. While the changes are small they are not insignificant and again point to the need for Boards to follow correct procedures. Training and information events are taking place for all Board members on a diocesan basis.

PUBLICATIONS

The publication of Education Newsbrief by this Board and the availability of Solas and the Management Board Members handbook and supplement provides vital support for those in management and keeps Board members up to date. The co-operation of Catholic Primary School Managers Association and the Church of Ireland Primary School Chairpersons Association in making their publications available has been greatly appreciated by the schools.

TEACHER SHORTAGE

A difficulty in filling vacancies for teachers and principals continues. The Secretary, on behalf of the Board, made a presentation on the issue to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science. The concerns about the shortage are shared by parents, other management bodies and the INTO and have been well rehearsed. The difficulty arises in part from welcome improvements in staffing levels, the involvement of teachers in the delivery of in-service training and career breaks. While student intakes have increased it will be some years before the supply of teachers is sufficient. The Church of Ireland College of Education is operating at capacity and also provides other courses for teachers.

The moves to recognise teaching qualifications, obtained outside the State, is a helpful development and redresses the situation where such teachers were previously treated as unqualified.

SCHOOL PLANS

Schools at both primary and second level are required to have a school plan and this incorporates a wide range of procedures and policy statements. This has been an additional demand on staff, boards and patrons. A number of briefing papers on particular issues has been circulated to schools and a variety of groups are looking at particular topics. Some procedures are common to all schools and are drawn up by representatives of all the Partners. However, each school must create the majority of its own policies based on particular needs, traditions and local requirements. A number of schools have found clustering has been a helpful approach to this work. The valuable co-operation at different levels reflects a common mission to deliver education in an effective and child friendly manner with the commitment and co-operation of teaching staffs.

ETHOS

The need to define ethos and to ensure that schools reflect the traditions of sponsoring communities is difficult where pupil intake reflects an increasingly pluralist society. The Legal and Property Department of the Representative Church Body has created arrangements to put in place the Deed of Variation or where the schools lease is incomplete or does not exist a form of resolution to be passed by Boards of Management. This procedure is being undertaken in a sequential pattern based upon diocese. Trustees and Boards of Management are urged to complete the appropriate returns as this will help them with their admissions policy and with other issues.

FOLLOW-ME

Follow-Me is the Primary Religious Education Programme and stage 1 for infants has now been completed. There is a text book and work book for each pupil and a teacher's book for each class. The latter has an introduction to the programme and a plan for each class in a week together with resources for the teacher. The workbook for pupils also includes a section for parents to involve them in the education of their child. It is hoped that all national and preparatory schools will adopt the programme.

The Editor, Mrs Jacqui Wilkinson, is now working on stage 2 first and second class. The Board are most appreciative of Mrs Wilkinson's commitment and skill in developing such a valuable resource for the church's mission among children.

Preparation for the programme could not have been undertaken without the financial support of a range of bodies including the Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Education, Diocesan Boards of Education, the Church Education Society and the Priorities Fund. The first two bodies have been represented on the Primary Religious Education Committee under the Chairmanship of Most Rev Dr RL Clarke.

SAFEGUARDING TRUST

Following the preparation of the second edition of the *Safeguarding Trust* Programme for the Republic of Ireland all clergy, replacement panel members and leaders of parish groups involving children have had the opportunity for training. This was delivered by the Secretary and Mr Niall Byrne of the Church of Ireland Youth Department. Dioceses have

been asked to nominate individuals who would act as local trainers and support groups for parishes. The opportunity has been taken to reflect on safety issues to prevent any child being at risk from physical harm in parish premises. The legal requirement to have a health and safety statement has been overlooked until now by a substantial number of parishes.

The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Laffoy Commission) will, in due course, bring forward recommendations to the government that may require some further amendments to the church's programme.

SUBMISSIONS

A wide range of documents and proposals are received and noted by the Board and in some cases submissions are made to the various bodies. These are mentioned in Education Newsbrief. It is not appropriate to list all of them in this report. Key items have been: the National Children's Strategy, the primary school curriculum guidelines for parents 'Our Children's Learning' and the white paper on adult education 'Learning for Life'.

SCHEME D TRANSPORT SCHEME

For the 1999/2000 school year 189 families were sanctioned for receipt of grants. This represents a further increase in the number of families now receiving grants from the Department of Education and Science. At 31 December 2001, only one family had not received payment of their grant and this was due to the school failing to return the completed claim form. A total of £63,307 was paid out to the 188 families whose claims had been received.

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Steering Committee for Pilot Project on Modern Languages in the Primary School – Mrs Hazel Crawford.

National Policy Advisory and Development Committee for Information and Communication Technology – Mrs Heather Lawson.

Study of Mathematical Achievement of Pupils in 4th class, Advisory Committee - Dr Shirley Brook.

Arion Study Visit to Finland – Miss Eileen Jackson.

Science Task Force – Mr Brian Cairns.

The Board also nominated representatives who attended particular conferences on specific topics. The Board is grateful to those who serve so willingly on its behalf.

The Board provided support for "Search" the Church of Ireland journal that is moving to three issues a year from next year and to the Past Students Association for an extremely valuable conference on legal issues in schools. A conference on religious education in post-primary schools has had to be postponed due to ongoing industrial action. It is hoped that this conference will now take place in September of this year.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

RETIREMENT

Mrs Norah Bedlow who as manager of the RE Resource Centre and secretary to the Society was very much the public face of Sunday School retired this year. Her devoted service and meticulous concern for the needs of clergy, parishes and schools was appreciated far and wide not least of all by her faithful attendance at General Synod. The Society and the wider church wish her many happy years of retirement.

Mrs Heather Wilkinson became Chairperson in place of Mr Harold Simms who continues to serve on the Committee.

Ms Beryl Stone resigned from the Committee due to the pressures of work and the Society marked her valuable services with a presentation. Mr Des Kinsella retired as treasurer but continues to make his expertise available to the Society.

DEVELOPMENTS

The Society has been exploring how best to continue the role of supporting those who volunteer week by week to serve the children of our parishes in Sunday Schools and midweek Bible Clubs. It is intended to have a website in place by September together with a revised Newsletter which would provide resources, worksheets, playlets, quizzes and the many items which help children to grow in their faith and their understanding of the traditions of our Church. The Rev Michael Graham generously gave of his time to introduce the Committee to the Web and to the pitfalls of not maintaining or updating a site.

TRAINING

We have continued to strengthen our links with CPAS and together ran a highly successful training day generously hosted by St Brigid's, Stillorgan. This drew an attendance from as far afield as Limerick.

We have also held a number of training evenings and are grateful to Ms Pam Wright and to Mrs Jacqui Wilkinson for their expertise and enthusiasm transmitted so effectively to teachers.

CHURCH HYMNAL

The Resource Centre offered a discount to parishes wishing to bulk purchase the hymnal and the Society is delighted to have been able to assist the Church in encouraging the speedy acceptance of the new Church Hymnal. This role which was shared by our colleagues in APCK does raise the issue of how the distribution and sale of the new Prayer Book will be undertaken.

SUPPORT

The support of clergy for the work of Sunday Schools gives great encouragement to volunteers and an article in the *Gazette* by the Rev Ted Woods pointed to the benefit of a mid week Bible Club as allowing clergy closer involvement with the nurture of parish children. It is also more likely to encourage the involvement of families who are on the periphery of parish life and who may not value Sunday as providing time for worship.

APPENDIX A

The following are the members of the Board and its committees as on 31 March 2001.

The lists set out below are incomplete due to the postponement of a meeting of the General Synod Board of Education at which various elections, co-options and appointments take place.

BOARD OF EDUCATION*Ex-officio members*

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Very Rev H Cassidy, Dean of Armagh	Rev Canon RD Harman
Mr SR Harper	Lady Sheil

Elected members

Armagh	Vacant Mr RF Palmer
Clogher	Rev RT Gillian Mrs M Glenn
Derry	Ven MS Harte Mr W Arnold
Down	Rev Canon SMJ Dickson Vacant
Connor	Rev Canon JR Wilson Dr AR Acheson
Kilmore	Rev J Merrick Mrs DM Burns
Tuam	Rev DTS Clements Mrs A Wills
Dublin	Ven EJ Swann Ms HF Empey
Meath	Rev Canon JDM Clarke Mrs JM Bruton
Cashel and Ossory	Rev Canon NT Ruddock Mr RP Codd
Cork	Ven REB White Mr JVP Bond
Limerick and Killaloe	Rev SM Neill Mr TS Hardy

Secretary

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2001)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev RHA Eames (Chairman)	
The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev WNF Empey	
Lady Sheil	Mr RF Palmer
Very Rev DR Chillingworth	Miss SG Mew
Rev Canon RD Harman	Rev J Merrick
Mr JE Bunting	Ms E Jackson

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Ex-officio members

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev RHA Eames	The Bishop of Clogher, Rt Rev BDA Hannon
The Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev HC Miller	The Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke
The Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev JE Moore	Very Rev H Cassidy
The Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev J Mehaffey	Lady Sheil

Elected members

Down	Rev Canon S M J Dickson Vacant
Connor	Rev Canon J R Wilson Dr AR Acheson
Armagh	Vacant Mr R F Palmer
Derry	Ven MS Harte Mr W Arnold
Clogher	Rev RT Gillian Mrs M Glenn

Co-opted members

Mr J E Bunting	Mrs M Crockett
Very Rev DR Chillingworth	Mrs R Forde
Mr RM McKinney	Mrs H McClenaghan
Mrs A McNee	Mrs MP Wallace

Honorary Secretaries, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)

Mr JE Bunting and Mrs M Crockett

Honorary Treasurer, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)

Mr RM McKinney

Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)

Rev Canon Dr RJS McKelvey, The Church of Ireland Education Centre,
1-3 Cadogan Park, Belfast BT9 6HG Tel: (028) 9068 2946 Fax: (028) 9068 7283

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev WNF Empey (Chairman)

APPENDIX B**SPIRITUAL AND SOCIETAL**

The TRC recommends:

- that the Review Body, politicians and community leaders recognise that the overwhelming majority in the Northern Ireland community regard each and every child as a gift from God; as being made in the image of God and who must as such be valued and esteemed equally.
- that each child is entitled to access to high quality education which is best suited to the child's ability, and current and future needs: the system of education in Northern Ireland and programmes of study must meet the needs of all children, whatever their degree of academic capability, and should not be based on doctrinaire perceptions or prejudice of any form.
- that a sustained effort be made to produce an educational system where parity of esteem is achieved among the differing branches of secondary education. To further this purpose the public in general and parents in particular should be made fully aware of what the term "academic," "vocation" and "technical" skills mean in a modern environment.
- that effective recognition be taken of the fact that parents and families are the prime nurturers of their children; and that a greater priority must be placed on the provision of resources for parental education and to encourage direct parental involvement in the education of children, because the schools cannot and should not be expected to fully compensate for the lack of a supportive home background.
- that a greater priority be given to ensuring that children do not leave their period of primary education with deficiencies which inevitably lead to their under-achievement in secondary education: under-achievement in secondary education cannot be eliminated simply by concentrating on secondary schools and it is most unfortunate that the Gallagher Report concentrates on the effects of social deprivation at the secondary level. Current initiatives at primary level need to be augmented in order to permit all pupils to reach the highest standard possible by the conclusion of their primary education. This is where the single, best possible contribution can be made to the improvement and enhancement of post-primary education. Greater use must be made of KS1 and KS2 assessments as the basis of rectifying any deficiencies they may identify.
- that due and full recognition be made of the contribution of the large number of exceptionally well qualified, dedicated and hard-working teachers in Northern Ireland; of the variety of excellent schools throughout both the primary and secondary sectors: there is much more that is positive than negative in the overall Northern Ireland system of education. The TRC is concerned that a number of major indices of the quality of the standards in good schools of all types in Northern Ireland have not been included in the Gallagher Report, for example, HMSO, Regional Trends 35. Some of these are listed in Appendix 4 and they indicate that the results from all types of school in Northern Ireland when compared like with like to cross-channel schools, are not only the highest in the United Kingdom but are significantly in advance of those regions with similar social and economic profiles.

- that league tables, based on raw data, should be discontinued; it is manifestly unfair and demoralising to compare the academic achievements of schools which have vastly differing intakes without using criteria to identify the actual progress made by pupils - generally referred to as “value added”.
- that due recognition be taken of the past thirty years of violence and the relationship between the areas in which underachieving schools are located and the activities of para-military organisations: an effective and positive peace (not merely the absence of armed conflict) is a prerequisite for any substantial improvement in the education of many children in areas of underachievement.
- that any process of change is incremental, and gradual rather than radical and is introduced and facilitated in such a manner as to obtain the maximum possible community support and confidence.
- that careful consideration be given to genuine fears which have been articulated to this body (the TRC):
 - that reforms are not driven by political doctrine but are based on sound educational criteria and christian values.
 - that grammar schools in themselves are not responsible for deficiencies in the methodology of selection.
 - that cross-community confidence is engendered and maintained as a priority in any incremental process of change.
 - that if those aspects of education which are highly regarded and are endorsed by parental choice, are jettisoned it could lead to the growth of the independent sector in Northern Ireland - a situation which the TRC would deplore.
- that in every endeavour to obtain improvements full account should be taken of the following prime considerations:
 - (a) that the results of this review will impact upon the lives and well-being of individual children.
 - (b) that those people, in their varying approaches to education, who are currently delivering high quality education to the majority of Northern Ireland’s children are held in high esteem throughout this discussion and debate.
 - (c) that schools cannot compensate for inadequacies in family life or society, no matter how they may and do try.
 - (e) that education is about the mental, emotional, moral and spiritual development of children and thereby of the community.
 - (f) that the language of the debate be inclusive rather than divisive; constructive rather than destructive.
 - (g) that schools are entitled to have different and valid traditions and to possess a distinctive ethos whilst being genuinely open to all children of whatever social background, religious belief, non-belief or race.

Excerpt from The Transferor Representatives’ Council submission on The Effects of the Selective System of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland.