

SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT 2002

MEMBERSHIP

Church of Ireland

Rt Rev WP Colton, Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross (Chairman)
 Rev Canon RJEFB Black
 Mrs JM Bruton
 Rev MC Classon
 Rev Canon JAA Condell
 Rev Canon J Merrick
 Ms S Parkes (resigned September 2001)
 Ms EE Oldham (appointed November 2001)
 Professor TT West (resigned April 2001)

Presbyterian Church

Mr B Duffy (Vice-Chairman)
 Rev CM Hunter

Methodist Church

Rev DA Levistone Cooney
 Dr JW Harris

Religious Society of Friends

Mr R Johnson
 Professor B Murdoch

SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Secondary Education Committee (SEC) is a body comprising representatives from the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Religious Society of Friends.

It draws its authority from a resolution passed by the sponsoring churches in 1965.

The principal functions of the SEC are twofold. Firstly, to distribute a Block Grant provided by the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) to families, where at least one parent is a member of a reformed church and who need assistance to send their children to protestant secondary schools. It also seeks to represent the interest of the member churches in the post-primary education system.

MEMBERSHIP

Ms Susan Parkes resigned having served since 1978. Her knowledge of educational developments had been invaluable to the committee.

Mr Brian Duffy was appointed as Deputy Chairman in succession to Mr Murdoch. This post is held for a triennial period.

Mr Roger Johnson, a representative of the Society of Friends and Ms EE Oldham, representing the Church of Ireland, joined the Committee.

BLOCK GRANT SCHEME

The Government Block Grant Scheme for protestant schools continues to assist parents to send their children to the following schools in the Republic of Ireland:

Alexandra College, Dublin	Bandon Grammar School
Drogheda Grammar School	Dundalk Grammar School
The High School, Dublin	Kilkenny College, Kilkenny
The King's Hospital, Dublin	Middleton College, Cork
Monaghan Collegiate School	Newtown School, Waterford
Rathdown School, Dublin	The Royal School, Cavan
St Andrew's College, Dublin	St Columba's College, Dublin
St Patrick's Grammar School, Dublin	Sandford Park School, Dublin
Sligo Grammar School	Sutton Park School, Dublin
Villier's School, Limerick	Wesley College, Dublin
Wilson's Hospital School, Multyfarnham	

Assistance with boarding costs is currently available to pupils who attend:

Royal & Prior Comprehensive School, Raphoe.

The other comprehensive schools under protestant management are:

Aston School, Cork
 East Glendalough School, Wicklow
 Mount Temple School, Dublin
 Newpark School, Blackrock, Co Dublin

In the school year 2000/2001 the audited accounts show the total amount received from the Department of Education and Science (DE&S) was £3,499, 236 (previous year £3,303,573). Grants in aid of fees totalled £3,012,500 and capitation grants to schools totalled £264,562. The cost of administering the scheme amounted to £78,081 and was partly defrayed by an administrative grant from the Department. The Department has maintained a welcome increase in the block grant and this has again meant an increase in the level of the grants allocated. It is not always possible to match the level of increases in school fees. Schools face a number of increased costs not least in the area of insurance. It is appropriate to note that in the current year there has been an increase in the capitation payment to schools as part of the equalisation process to ensure equal funding between sectors.

The number of pupils assisted with grants were as follows:

Day Grants	1377 (previous year 1480)
Boarding Grants	1163 (previous year 1237)
Total	2540 (previous year 2717).

The level of maximum grant for the school year 2000/2001 was £2,550 (Boarding) £1,050 (Day).

The overall enrolment in the schools continues to show an upward trend but the drop in grant applications is a matter of concern. The Committee is endeavouring to make the scheme more widely known and has circulated information leaflets to national schools, independent junior schools and clergy. The Administrator, Mr Kilroy, has attended a number of meetings to speak about the scheme.

The Administrator annually visits all the protestant schools to explain the assessment criteria and to discuss issues of concern on behalf of the Committee.

Most applicants have assisted the speed of grant allocation by providing the correct supporting documentation from the Revenue while the application form and accompanying directions have been further simplified.

EURO CHANGEOVER

The efficient work of the Administrator and his assistant ensured that the changeover took place without difficulty.

COMPANY FORMATION

The formation of a limited company has now been completed. The formation of the company provides additional protection for the Committee and its work as it has allowed the Committee to effect appropriate insurances.

EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION

Principals and Governors have to review policies and procedures at regular intervals to ensure that all is in compliance with both educational and equality legislation. The speed with which the Government has initiated legislation has meant that the Department of Education and Science has been unable to keep pace in providing the supporting structures. Delays in implementing some legislation while welcome also creates difficulties for all involved in education.

The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill while correctly recognising the rights of those with special needs will merely be a further burden on schools if sufficient resources are not put in place. A simple issue which does not require legislation is to ensure that the teaching resources and supports allocated to primary pupils with special needs transfers with the pupil to second-level. At present a new assessment must be undergone with a consequent delay in responding to the pupil's needs.

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXAMINATION

The support service for the Religious Education programme held a briefing session for Church representatives outlining the developing resources. www.logos.ie is the website supporting this programme. It is hoped that more schools will commit to involvement in the teaching of Religious Education as an examination subject.

The Committee has been delighted to learn of the activities of the schools' chaplains association. It is a policy of the Committee that the post of chaplain should be allocated on an ex quota basis rather than the current position of being a financial charge on school funds.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

It is difficult to comment on what has become a saga of difficulties in industrial relations without being seen as negative. The right of teachers to a level of remuneration which acknowledges their key contribution has always been supported by the Committee. However the difficulty posed by this long running dispute has been the growing burden carried by management in the schools and the level of anxiety experienced by pupils and their parents.

The administrative demands posed by the employment of non-teachers as supervisors is not just an additional chore but actively distracts from the developing of educational structures to support and challenge pupils in preparation for their full participation in society. The value of the informal contact between pupil and teacher during out of class supervision is inestimable and would be a grave loss to the pastoral life and sense of community within schools.

The threat to hinder curricular developments and prevent introduction of new syllabi is a threat to the growth to the country's economy that has up to now benefited from the very quality of education.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

The Committee has noted the ongoing discussions regarding the expansion of boards of management in Comprehensive Schools and supports the proposals agreed by the schools and the Patrons.

COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT

This is a sub-committee that incorporates representatives of Principals, Governors and Parents. The Committee is preparing a handbook containing templates on admission and codes of behaviour. Work has also been undertaken to assist schools in articulating and maintaining their ethos or characteristic spirit.