

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF THE
GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND
REPORT 2003**

SYNOD EXAMINATION

The prize winners of the 2001-2002 examination were as follows:

Year 1

1 st	Amy Lloyd	The King's Hospital
2 nd	Naomi Hodgins	The King's Hospital
	Paul Hickey	The King's Hospital
3 rd	Richard Elliott	St Bricin's Vocational School

Year 2

1 st	Megan Oliver	Alexandra College
2 nd	Richard Ng	The King's Hospital
	Alasdair Gallie	The King's Hospital
3 rd	Laura Lal-McHugh	Royal and Prior

Year 3

1 st	Trevor McBride	Monaghan Collegiate
2 nd	Helen Allcutt	The King's Hospital
3 rd	Elizabeth Allen	Sligo Grammar

Year 4

1 st	Ryan Roberts	Sligo Grammar
2 nd	Jennifer Russell	Royal and Prior
3 rd	Tristan Clarke	Sligo Grammar

Year 5/6

1 st	Hugh Brown	Royal and Prior
2 nd	Marie-Thérèse Hoelscher	Rathdown School
3 rd	Darren Borland	Royal and Prior

Junior Division Prizes

Sarah Lowry	Royal School Cavan
Malcolm Bourke	Sligo Grammar
Catherine Blair	Royal And Prior
Hannah Gallagher	Royal And Prior
Jessie Falvey	Ashton School
Michelle Scales-Dolan	Alexandra College
Juliette Greene	The King's Hospital
Abby Fortune	East Glendalough
Helen O'Reilly	Newpark Comprehensive
Emma Condell	St Bricin's Vocational School
Tamara McCarthy	Bandon Grammar
Vicky Sloan	Monaghan Collegiate
Jonathan Burnside	Monaghan Collegiate
Ann Hall	St Aidan's Comprehensive
Nicola Hamilton	St Aidan's Comprehensive

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The Board would again express its sincere appreciation to the APCK for funding the Synod Examination prizes and to Mrs L Clarke who moderates the scripts submitted by each school and advises on the structure of the examination.

The syllabus has been adjusted so that those schools following the Junior Certificate Examination Syllabus may continue to avail of the benefits of participation in the Synod Examination. A similar adjustment will be made when the Syllabus is confirmed for the Leaving Certificate. It is already possible to use the Religious Education Module in the Leaving Certificate Applied for the Synod Examination.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

Personalia

The board paid tribute to the Most Rev WNF Empey on his resignation. His cheerful chairmanship and pastoral concern for children and teachers were a constant reminder of the centrality of the individual in the midst of educational legislation and the demands of policies and procedures.

The Board welcomed the Most Rev JRW Neill as Chairperson following his translation to the See of Dublin. Archbishop Neill brings a particular interest in education and in the patronage of schools to his new role.

Primary Schools' Boards of Management

Board members in most areas had the opportunity to participate in an on-going programme of training provided by the partners in education and funded by the Department of Education and Science (DE&S). The Secretary took part in a number of valuable training events, organised by diocesan boards, on a number of topics including ethos and the appointment of staff. Limerick Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) held an extremely valuable seminar on the education of children with special needs and the related resources while Kilmore DBE dealt with health and safety issues and the grievance procedure.

The Board of Education continues to provide an advisory service to schools with the provision of briefing papers and the publication of *Education Newsbrief* at least four times a year. Individual issues and queries from chairpersons, principals and parents are also part of the Board's workload. A substantial number of briefing papers on a number of particular topics are available to chairpersons and principals. Some material has also been prepared for parents.

The Board has also circulated details about new procedures for the appointment of principals, which necessitated the issuing of a new Appendix D for the Constitution of Boards. This constitution will again be reviewed and changed where appropriate prior to the appointment of new Boards during the Winter Term of this year. The Board has also requested the DE&S to review the Rules for National Schools issued in 1965 and, with the partners, to examine the contracts for staff. Work is in hand in relation to the latter.

Submissions

The Board is grateful to all those who have advised in relation to submissions to Statutory Bodies made by the Board and in particular to Ms Rachel Pollard and Ms Helen Empey who advised on particular issues.

The Board has been involved with discussions regarding policies for the recognition of new schools, the amalgamation of second-level schools in areas of declining population, the funding of chaplaincy at second-level, religious education in interdenominational schools, the staffing schedule and appeals procedure and the revision of the complaints procedure at primary level.

The Board met with the Minister for Education and Science, Mr Noel Dempsey TD, soon after his appointment and was able to brief him on particular issues of concern.

Primary School Funding

Recent reports had noted a regular increase in the funding of schools at both primary and second-level. It was of great concern to note that grants in the current year are to remain static and certain programmes such as Information Technology would receive nothing. The lack of improvement in the level of funding has to be set against inflation in a number of cost areas for schools not least insurance.

The greatest single area of alarm was the effective halting of the building programme. While many schools have had substantial extension and refurbishment there are still many more in need of substantial development. The Minister's commitment to a transparent funding allocation programme has rightly been widely welcomed but it is the limited capital availability that has caused anxiety. It is not right that teachers and pupils should, in some schools, have to work and study in very poor physical conditions. Schools who had hoped to move to new premises on greenfield sites have found that there has been no progress in this much heralded scheme.

The development of a targeted insurance policy by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office (EIO) should be welcomed by those schools for whom the EIO is presently the insurer.

Population changes

The growth of urbanisation on the fringe of the Dublin conurbation has led to a review of existing schools and the possible need to seek new schools in that area. This matter is being currently considered by the diocesan boards involved.

While there is growth in some areas there is population decline in rural areas. This has led to the closure of several small schools. It is a grief for the communities involved but the life and history of the school should be celebrated with thanksgiving as happened when Tubbercurry National School closed.

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Details of population changes and enrolment trends were circulated to patrons and diocesan boards. Preliminary figures for the 2002 census recorded a population of 3,917,336. The enrolments in primary schools nationally have begun to show a slight increase after a period of consistent decline. This increase is unevenly distributed with a particular emphasis on developing areas in the Dublin commuter belt. This increase is projected to continue. However, second-level enrolments will continue to decline for up to ten years.

Church of Ireland College of Education

The continuing role of the College in providing well-trained and committed teachers is valued throughout the Church. The staff under the leadership of Mr Sydney Blain has developed an excellent programme of the highest standard not only for the undergraduate students but also for those who take a variety of in-service courses including learning support.

There would be grave concern throughout the community if the College were to lose its identity by being subsumed into a larger institution. The College Board has indicated the need for the College to have additional resources and developments and this request must be strongly supported. Cashel, Waterford and Lismore DBE has been one of a number of groups that have indicated a concern about a shortage of qualified teachers for the schools and this lack is especially felt in rural areas. This shortage gives an added impetus to develop the College in its present location.

***Follow Me* - the Primary Religious Education Programme**

Mrs Wilkinson, the Editor, is now drafting *Moving On*, which will complete the material for the junior classes. The formatting of the material has been undertaken by Ms Jennifer Byrne and the project is supported by the *Follow Me* Website which has been created by Ms Michelle Carter. Long term planning for the structure of the programme from third to sixth classes (P5/P7) is also taking place. The commitment and creative vision of Mrs Wilkinson has been the keystone of the development.

The Board is extremely grateful to the Religious Education Curriculum Committee under the chairmanship of the Most Rev Dr RL Clarke and to the Advisory Committee of Teachers. Support for the programme from the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund, the Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Education and Diocesan Boards of Education has been invaluable.

It is especially appropriate to pay tribute to the unstinting support of the Church Education Society, which has not only grant aided the programme each year but has also supplied a teacher's book to each school. The Society also provides grants for educational resources to small schools under Church of Ireland patronage.

The generosity of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission on Catechetics and the openness of the Publishers, Veritas, in continuing to allow copyright materials to be used constitute a vital foundation for the programme's development. Substantial artwork has

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been provided for *Moving On* and the skill of the artists Jeanette Dunne (pupil's text) and Mary Cawley (worksheets) is rightly gaining plaudits from teachers and pupils.

Safeguarding Trust

The area of child protection has dynamism as the State strives to work with voluntary organisations through both the provision of legislation and the development of guidelines. The guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Children *Our Duty to Care* and by the Department of Education and Science *Guidelines for the Youth Work Sector* (both based on *Children First*) together with additional legislation necessitated a third edition of *Safeguarding Trust*. This has allowed the provision of user friendly forms and the inclusion of a number of useful working papers and checklists as well as adjusting the Code in the light of comments at training.

The Board has requested Bishops to appoint diocesan trainers who would take responsibility for the delivery of the child protection training at local level. The Board is aware that the Bishop of Tuam has appointed Rev DT Clements and Mrs M Gilmore as trainers while Rev P Heak has been given responsibility for Cashel. The Secretary provided courses for panel members and leaders in a number of areas during the year under review. In addition to training at diocesan and parish level training has also been provided for the Boys' Brigade.

The Children's Office in the Department of Health and Children has been requested to consider the development of a single set of guidelines for all voluntary organisations rather than leave such groups to choose between two sets as at present.

Transport Scheme D (Primary Schools)

The number of families qualifying for the scheme now nears 300. Grants totalling €141,930.25 for the school year 2001/2002 were received from the Department of Education and Science and paid out to sanctioned families. The Board also made a once off payment to one family whose circumstances were particularly difficult and is supporting, on an on-going basis, another needy family. We would like to thank those Diocesan Boards of Education who support this scheme and who make the payment of these ancillary grants possible.

Schools have again been reminded that eligibility for the scheme is a matter for the DE&S which has set down very clear guidelines. It follows that all parents be advised about the existence of the scheme.

Nominations

The Board is grateful to all the individuals who so willingly serve on committees, represent the Board at meetings, or provide advice on particular issues. Dr K Milne was again nominated to serve on the council of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Mrs R Morrow to advisory committees a) on a study of reading

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achievement in disadvantaged schools and b) on a national assessment of reading levels in first and fifth classes and Ms E Stokes on interculturalism and the curriculum.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The work of the Northern Ireland Board in the various aspects of its remit is reported, and issues of current concern highlighted.

1. Personalia
2. Relocation of offices – closure of the Education Centre and opening of new office base in Church House Belfast
3. Transferor Representatives' Council responses to important areas of development in the field of education.
 - a. Post Primary review – Burns Report follow-on
 - b. Northern Ireland Curriculum review
 - c. Education & Libraries Bill
 - d. Teacher Exception under Fair Employment
 - e. Role of clergy in schools leaflet
 - f. University funding
4. Religious Education Core Syllabus Review – an outline of the proposals for change in the RE syllabus for use in every school in Northern Ireland.
5. *Safeguarding Trust* – Developments and resources in implementing the Code of Practice of working with children and young people
 - a. Training materials
 - b. Response to the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults Bill
6. Children's ministry
 - a. Children's Workers' Conference
 - b. Strategy Review

Personalia

During the year the Board welcomed to membership the Rt Rev KR Good, Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev MGStA Jackson, Bishop of Clogher, and Rev MRK Ferry (Connor Clerical Rep), and the following as observers: Rev Canon WA Lewis (Transferor Rep BEELB), Ven CT Pringle (Transferor Rep WELB), Rev Canon JR Wilson (Hon Sec Down & Connor Bd of Ed), and Mr W Young (Hon Sec Armagh DBRE).

Relocation of Board Office

In September 2002, the offices of the Board were relocated to Church of Ireland House, Belfast. This move provides the Board of Education with a central location at the administrative centre of two of the northern dioceses. Alongside this has come the appointment of Mrs R Patterson as part-time secretarial assistant to the Rev IW Ellis.

TRC responses to educational developments

The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) continues to have a key role in providing a transferor's response to developments in education in Northern Ireland.

Post Primary review

The Northern Ireland Board endorsed the Transferor Representatives' Council response to the report of the Post-Primary Review Body, which is included as an appendix to this report for record purposes. The TRC Executive has met the Minister and officials from the Department of Education (DE) on several occasions to present and explain our response and it has also discussed the report with other educational partners and government bodies.

After the consultation period, the Department published a report of the responses including the Northern Ireland household questionnaire which received an unprecedented response of over 200,000 returns. There is some consensus in certain areas, namely: the abolition of the 11+ transfer tests, the idea of a new form of assessment through a pupil profile, and some proposed admissions criteria. The notable areas of disagreement are: views on some of the proposed admissions criteria, Collegiates, and attitudes to academic selection. The household questionnaire results illustrated the variation of opinion, for example 57% of respondents agreed that the transfer test should be abolished, yet 64% of respondents did not believe that academic selection should be abolished.

With the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Minister of State, Ms J Kennedy has taken charge of the Department of Education and has confirmed that the transfer tests will end as soon as practicable and that she would take forward the Review of Post-Primary education. The Northern Ireland Board looks forward to an early return of devolved administration when the task of shaping the future of education will return to local politicians.

Northern Ireland Curriculum review

In March 2002, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) published radical proposals for revision of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. These highlight the importance of skills and recommend a reduction of content, connected curriculum areas instead of subjects, and more flexibility and a specific programme of personal development. At primary level a significant change is the introduction of a Foundation stage covering pre-school and years 1 and 2, which will emphasise

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confidence building and enjoyment of learning. At 11-16 proposals include a two year Key Stage 3 course for some pupils, a concept of minimum entitlement irrespective of future intentions, Citizenship education, and Education for Employment. Assessment proposals include an end to key stage assessment and replacement by a single standardised annual report.

The Transferor Representatives' Council and the Northern Ireland Board welcomed many aspects of the curriculum proposals, specifically the shift to life-long learning and emphasis on the acquisition of skills and competences rather than knowledge. We support the holistic concept of preparing children to become well rounded, responsible and fully integrated citizens of the future. We believe that teachers should welcome the reduction of content and the new emphasis on flexibility. We did however foresee huge organisational and managerial problems in the delivery of these objectives.

Of particular concern is the absence of a clear statement of the status of Religious Education and the downgrading of the teaching of Christian belief, values and lifestyles. We share the ideals of developing the spiritual and moral aspects of individuals but believe that specifically Christian values are in danger of being lost.

Education & Libraries Bill

Comments were requested regarding a new Education Bill tabled for consideration in the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Education Committee. The main elements of this Bill, which is largely technical include providing the Department with new power to introduce a common formula for the calculation of school budgets and the power to, in exceptional circumstances, remove governors from office. In addition, the duty of care of Boards of Governors for the safety and welfare of children in their care would be redefined and all schools would be required to have a written anti-bullying policy.

The TRC reserved comment on the new funding scheme until it is published but sought assurance that additional funding e.g. in Small School Support or Targeting Social Need is allocated in a way that is equitable to all. On the removal of governors in exceptional circumstances, we asked that the relevant sections of the Bill should be made more specific and for the nominating body e.g. Transferors, Trustees, parents, teachers, Board to be consulted before removal and a means of appeal provided.

Teacher exemption from Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998

Under Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (FETO), school teachers in Northern Ireland are exempt from the provisions of the Order. The Equality Commission has a duty under FETO to keep this exemption under review. Because of this, and in preparation for the Single Equality legislation, the Equality Commission decided to begin inquiries into the options for the narrowing of the exemption.

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The Commission has given detailed consideration to the results of the research, which show that the exemption is widely accepted within the educational sector. The concerns of the various interest groups were clearly expressed:

Roman Catholic educational interests were concerned that without an exemption for teachers, the Fair Employment Act of 1976 could eventually lead to a system of non-denominational education with the resulting loss of Catholic ethos.

Protestant educational interests, expressed in interviews with the TRC and others, had the concern that protestant teachers would be placed in an unfavourable position. They believed that the state education system would come under the legislation while the maintained sector would not (as they could claim that religion was a *bona fide* occupational qualification). In other words Roman Catholic teachers would have a right to equality of opportunity in controlled schools but Protestant teachers would not have the right to equality of opportunity in Catholic schools.

It should be noted that the report found that within the educational sector, the exemption of teachers is widely accepted and support for change is a minority view. It is widely recognised that the exemption is a consequence of separate religion in schools in Northern Ireland and there is a widespread acceptance of a ‘chill factor’ for teachers.

In contrast to the findings of the research, the Commission does not consider that the continuation of the exemption will further equality of opportunity. It has recommended to the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister that teachers in schools should come within the ambit of the religious discrimination provisions of the Single Equality Act.

Role of clergy in schools

A leaflet has been published by the TRC and circulated to all Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist clergy in Northern Ireland regarding their role in schools. The aim is to provide guidelines for good practice. It gives a brief introduction to the RE core syllabus, guidance for assemblies, classroom involvement and serving as a governor.

University Funding

The TRC responded in support of a joint statement issued by the vice-chancellors of the University of Ulster and Queen’s University Belfast following the publication of the Draft Budget from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The vice-chancellors expressed strong feelings about the continuing failure to address the problem of under funding of university research and development in Northern Ireland. The statement also highlighted the inequality in funding suffered by universities in Northern Ireland compared with those in other regions of the UK. It was pointed out to the DFP, that failure to invest in higher education research will cause irreversible damage to the economy, health service, education at all levels, IT and communications technology and to many other fields of activity directly related to economic growth and quality of life.

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This Board also expressed its dismay at the removal of the Classics Department from Queen's University Belfast, and is asking for a reconsideration of this decision which will lead to a great loss to the cultural inheritance of our society.

RE Core Syllabus Review

In response to a request from the Minister of Education, the four main Church Leaders established a Steering Group and Working Party to undertake a review of the Agreed Core Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) and to include provision for the study of two World Faiths other than Christianity at Key Stage 3 (KS3). The Working Party, which has 22 members selected for their experience and expertise in RE, met for the first time in April 2002.

The main focus of the Working Party's early work was the preparation of a detailed questionnaire for completion by teachers of RE. The purpose of the questionnaire was three-fold:

- to gather information about provision for teaching RE in schools
- to seek RE teachers' views on the fitness for purpose of the existing core syllabus, and
- to obtain their advice on how the syllabus might be revised to take account of wider curriculum change and the increasing ethnic and faith diversity of our community.

A preliminary report confirms that, generally, teachers of RE are content with the core. They would like a reduction in the content on church history and would be supportive of the introduction at KS3 of teaching about World Faiths other than Christianity.

The Working Party has subsequently drafted a revised core syllabus which takes account of the survey findings and attempts to reflect some of the changes proposed for the rest of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The advice of the four main Christian Churches will be taken on the proposed revised draft which will also be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. If necessary, the draft will be adjusted in the light of the responses received. The draft will be printed and will be the subject of widespread consultation.

In due course, the draft will be amended in the light of the feedback received from the consultation, submitted to the leaders of the four main Christian Churches for approval and, if acceptable, will be submitted to the Minister. It would be intended for implementation in step with the introduction of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Safeguarding Trust

The Board continues its role of training, resourcing, advising and evaluating the implementation of the Church of Ireland's code of good practice in caring for children

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and young people. This year, a new training presentation has been produced to help introduce leaders to *Safeguarding Trust*. Basic training on awareness of child abuse is given and in addition a focus is placed on good practice in running children's organisations. The slides are available in either CD Powerpoint or overhead projector format and can be bought or borrowed from the Board office. Copies are also available to borrow from diocesan offices.

Training events for panel members have been held in four of the five dioceses for both new members and refresher evenings for existing panellists. Most were able to sample the new training materials for leaders and given advice on how to use them. The Board is indebted to Diocesan Support Teams and Parish Panel members and offers its sincere thanks for their dedicated service to the church in this way.

Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults Bill – Northern Ireland Assembly

The Board welcomes the intention of this Bill to strengthen and advance the existing arrangements for the Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (PECS). We support the proposal that anyone who is included on the register will commit an offence if he works or seeks work in specified positions, and that it will also be an offence to knowingly offer work to a disqualified person.

We support the proposal that individuals guilty of misconduct which harmed a child, or placed a child at risk of harm or who have been dismissed for misconduct, or suspended or transferred to another non child care position, resigned or availed of redundancy in circumstances in which the organisation would have considered dismissing him, can be referred to the Department's register.

The requirement to carry out checks and make referrals should be extended to all organisations where there is unsupervised access to children – i.e. churches and voluntary agencies. In relation to such organisations working with children, it is proposed to introduce a system of accreditation. We support this principle of setting standards of good practice in child protection and ask that there will be support for such organisations to maintain their standards with appropriate training.

In view of the fact that churches and voluntary agencies have limited financial resources we feel that referrals to the register should be free of charge. We also agree with the proposal that disqualification should apply across jurisdictions.

Children's Ministry

Work in this area of the Board's scope of interest has been limited this year. The Secretary did, however, take part in a co-operative venture with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches along with Scripture Union, in running a **Children's Workers' Conference**. This took place in November 2002 in Stranmillis University College, Belfast, and attracted over 190 delegates – mostly Sunday School teachers from the three organising churches. Interestingly the Church of Ireland had the greatest number of representatives (90).

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The conference seemed to meet a very real need among teachers and Children's Church leaders. The aim was to provide inspiration and vision along with practical ideas and resources for Children's ministry in churches. The main speaker was Ms Penny Frank from the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), who spoke on the themes *Every child a chance to choose*, and *A church lost for words*. A wide range of seminars offered practical help in topics from Storytelling to Children's Talks. Feedback from the event has been very positive and suggestions made for a follow up conference which might be run later in 2003.

The Northern Ireland Board is planning a **Review Day** in March 2003 where it proposes to examine its strategy in Children's Ministry and begin a process of finding a direction for future work in this area.

APPENDIX

Transferor Representatives' Council - Response to the Report of the Post-Primary Review Body - June 2002

Introduction

The TRC believes strongly that there is a duty to ensure that all pupils are catered for fully and that this report on 'Education for the 21st Century' can be the catalyst for reform that is long overdue.

- We welcome the recommendation that the present system of selection should be abolished. Whilst this system has enabled a minority of pupils to achieve high standards of academic excellence, it has been at the expense of a huge loss of the self-esteem of a greater number of pupils who have felt the stigma of being considered 'failures'. The present system also makes little allowance for the range of levels and stages of maturation of pupils, and gives little thought to their full variety of talents, aptitudes and learning abilities.
- We acknowledge that across the province, there are unequal opportunities for admission to Grammar schools - some fill their places with pupils graded C and D, whereas, in another area, only a grade A is accepted.
- We whole-heartedly support the guiding principles, especially that it is of paramount importance that each child should be valued equally. It is also important that each child is facilitated to find the most appropriate educational pathway, and that there should be adequate provision and opportunity for pupils to change pathways.
- We agree strongly that there should be parity of esteem of vocational and academic opportunities. There is an ongoing need for children to be equipped with the values, skills and training to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society, in which the use of information technology and associated skills are constantly developing.

Education has the difficult task of preparing young people for the anticipated needs of society while at the same time encouraging the development of an all-rounded person, including the intellectual, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, physical, emotional and creative aspects of the individual.

We wish to make comments in particular, on the three main proposals outlined in the report, followed by concluding comments and recommendations.

Use of a pupil profile.

Abolition of transfer tests and academic selection and the priority placed on parental choice.

The collegiate system.

1. Use of a Pupil Profile

We consider that carefully-devised profiles should offer a fairer way forward and will hopefully be more tailored to individual needs and strengths. However we have the following concerns:

- 1.1 It would be vital for profiles to be composed in a uniform way across all primary schools, and for teachers to be provided with appropriate training in their construction.
- 1.2 It would be essential to have a process of moderation of profiles to ensure that there is parity of value and reliability of information included. Meaningful pupil profiles must also have some elements of objective assessment.
- 1.3 Resources should be provided to ensure that primary schools enable pupils to correct deficiencies in their profiles which could lead to underachievement continuing at post-primary level. It is therefore essential that, as early as possible in a pupil's education, areas of weakness and deficiency are properly and expertly diagnosed and that there is then immediate and adequate provision of professional help and resources.
- 1.4 This priority, highlighted in (1.3), is further supported by the 'Northern Ireland Audit Report' which found that 10% of pupils in the Belfast Board and 6% of pupils across the province are leaving without any GCSE qualifications. Also at Key Stage 3 the Department of Education's stated target is that 72% of pupils should be working at level five or above in English and Mathematics. However, in 1999/2000 only 53% of pupils in Northern Ireland were found to be at level five or above in English and only 50% in Maths.
- 1.5 We are concerned that while the intention of Pupil Profiles may be to help parents, pupils and teachers, they may result in Parent/Teacher conflict and disagreement over what is considered to be in the pupil's best interests.
- 1.6 We are concerned about the extra workload the new process will place upon Primary Principals.
- 1.7 We believe that the actual Pupil Profile should be professionally compiled by the school without parental influence.
- 1.8 We draw attention to 8.23 of the report and the use of pupil profiles in connection with 'the educational provision within Collegiates which would match well with the parents' aspirations and the child's preferred learning and career pathways.' For this to be effective, there would need to be impartial, honest and effective information about the types and nature of the educational/vocational provision that is available and an effective means by which such information can be shared.

- 1.9 We believe that parents would value the advice of an experienced post-primary school principal in considering an appropriate pathway for their child. In order for a more fully informed choice to be made, we suggest that a means is found for the pupil profile to be shared with the proposed receiving schools without being used as a criterion for selection.
- 1.10 We refer to 8.26 where there is recognition that 'as a child matures, his/her ability to engage in self-review strengthens.' We are concerned that very often at the age of 11 this ability is not sufficiently developed and so it is important that the post-primary educational pathway into which the pupil enters is such that during and at the end of KS3, the curriculum enables the pupil to transfer to a school that is better suited to his/her strengths and abilities without jeopardising his/her opportunities. In short, all choices should be kept open as long as possible although we recognise that, for some pupils, certain pathways may be unrealistic. We suggest that a common-core curriculum should be delivered in all post primary schools until the end of KS3, when decisions regarding the appropriate pathway could be made.
- 2. Abolition of Transfer tests and academic selection and the priority placed on parental choice.**
- 2.1 The assumption that parental choice should be the dominant criterion in the admission of children to schools is challenged. Parental choice is one of a number of factors which should be considered at transfer. A new way forward might be to devise a system whereby a range of suitably weighted factors and evaluations would be brought together in a points system to determine an appropriate outcome for transfer at the end of KS3.
- 2.2 We note that the report acknowledges in 9.25 that 'it is a natural feature of the Open Enrolment system that some schools will be more or less popular than others.' Perceived 'successful' schools will receive many more first preference choices than can ever be accommodated. We are concerned that the application of the proposed admissions criteria will quickly result in admission mainly by proximity to the school. This and the proposed collegiate system will rule out the traditional large catchment areas of many schools in the urban areas and elsewhere.
- 2.3 With reference to 9.25 we quote 'It is a natural feature of the Open Enrolment system that some schools will be more or less popular than others'. In the light of this we believe that strenuous efforts need to be made to ensure parity of esteem among schools, including a curriculum provision which recognises the differing needs of children.
- 2.4 In order to provide a good range of vocational and technological education, it is important that schools, especially from the end of KS3, are adequately resourced in terms of finance, staff and facilities.
- 2.5 Closely allied to these points is the urgent need to put adequate resources into schools whose pupils demonstrate educational deprivation. This should not be done

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by the inequitable method of previous TSN schemes. It is important that the funding provided should be additional.

- 2.6 Regarding the criteria set out in 9.30 we express concern that the principle 'that each young person should be valued equally' appears to be set aside by the criterion 'that children of staff at the school' be given preference over other children.
- 2.7 We envisage transport problems arising particularly on boundary areas where parents choose a school in a collegiate, which is not in their grouping. Careful local consultation will be necessary to establish that the groupings reflect traditional feeder routes.
- 2.8 While acknowledging that the process is driven by parental choice, we are concerned that in reality, given the groupings, geography, and community divisions, there is likely to be little choice for many parents
- 2.9 The grounds and procedures for any process of appeal should be clearly set out. This is particularly important for pupils deprived of a place at the school of their parents' preference through not living near enough to the school.

3. The Collegiate System

- 3.1 We welcome the concept of co-operation and co-ordination as against competition, but express concern at the practicalities of delivering these objectives. We consider that the collegiate system as proposed would be impractical. Smaller clusters of schools, co-operating on a voluntary basis, would be more realistic.
- 3.2 We refer to para 48 (page 22): 'We are convinced that a collegial system of post-primary education would provide the structure and opportunity for schools to co-exist and work together to best serve the educational needs and abilities of all their pupils.' We consider that to facilitate such levels of co-operation, funding of schools should no longer be based chiefly on pupil numbers but on pupil need.
- 3.3 The planning, management and support systems proposed appear unnecessarily complicated and seem to be creating layer upon layer of bureaucracy. We would be concerned that resources, which should be targeted at improving the delivery of education in the classroom, will be spent on administration.
- 3.4 We would envisage principals being presented with frequent and impossible dilemmas within the Board of Principals regarding what is best for their school and the demands of collegiate policy.
- 3.5 We are of the view that centres of learning excellence are engendered, not manufactured.
- 3.6 Given the proposal to share resources between schools in a collegiate, we are concerned at the safety of pupils moving around between schools. Who will have

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ownership of these children and be responsible for their protection, safety, pastoral care etc?

- 3.7 We foresee difficulties arising regarding contracts of staff members who may be relocated to other schools and issues regarding discipline and management of staff.
- 3.8 We have concerns regarding the responsibility of Boards of Governors who at present have a vital role in the management of schools. In any new proposals the rights and interests of parents, teachers and transferors must be protected.
- 3.9 We are not clear about the role of Area Boards in the collegiate system particularly in the provision of curriculum support. We believe that the established systems are of great value.
- 3.10 There are also considerable financial implications, so we question if there will be sufficient positive outcomes to merit all the angst generated in managing a collegial system. We, therefore, express concern as to the benefits and effectiveness of a collegiate system in practice.
- 3.11 We believe that schools are living communities which generate loyalties and promote a sense of ownership among parents and pupils. This may well be lost in a Collegiate.
- 3.12 There is a concern, that, in implementing the collegiate system, education is not reduced to 'a screen and a keyboard' and the ethos of schools dissipated.

Concluding Comments

While welcoming the intention to abolish the present method of selection we are very concerned that all possible steps are taken to ensure that the process of change is introduced in a manner that will obtain the maximum possible community support and confidence. Incremental change is therefore important.

- We express deep concern that the proposed criteria for admissions will not, in practice, achieve the objectives as stated in 9.25: 'It is essential that these criteria should be equitable and designed to provide equality of opportunity in support of the best interests of the pupil.'
- In our considered view there are great difficulties surrounding the effective working of a collegiate system that would need to be resolved before such a proposal could be given a greater measure of support.
- We are also aware of the danger of introducing a system that changes what is already good and care must be taken to encourage and maintain excellence.
- While we have welcomed the intention to abolish the present method of selection, we are very concerned that the proposed replacement should have the maximum

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possible support from both the general community and those directly involved in education. We consider the proposed changes highly risky given that the proposals are untried and do not follow the customary piloting procedure.

- We are concerned about the short time scale for the proposals to be implemented and are of the view that it is more important to get it right than to get it soon.

Recommendations

- We consider that the end of KS3 is a more appropriate age for informed decisions to be made about the future of educational pathways for a child. (cf Report, 8.26)
- We consider the continuing development of the pupil profile throughout KS3 to be important to facilitate the choice of the most suitable pathway for each pupil. During or at the end of KS3 the pupil should be enabled to transfer to the pathway that is best suited to his/her strengths, abilities and gifts.
- To enable this to function more smoothly we suggest that a common-core curriculum be delivered in all post-primary schools until the end of KS3.
- We believe that, with all urgency, every effort should be made to improve and enhance the ethos and standing of schools that are perceived to be 'less successful' within the system.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

The Sunday School Society is entering into a new and exciting time as a Society. It is developing new ways of providing training for Sunday School teachers and has also developed its programme of events for children. The Resource Centre has also been a focus not only in developing the wide range of materials available but also in enabling the Society to support ordinands and student teachers with the gift of a book token for each new first year. The Resource Centre situated in Holy Trinity Church in Rathmines is open 9am – 4pm Tuesday to Friday but is now also open the Monday of RB week to facilitate those travelling to Church House from outside Dublin.

The Society held a training event entitled 'Sowing Seeds' – a training morning of growth and encouragement for Sunday School Teachers. This event was held in February in the College of Education. There were four contributors on a panel who discussed such issues as bereavement, fear and anxiety in children, separation and being different. Workshop topics included the use of music for the non-musical and organising special days.

There was also a joint training event held in conjunction with Church Pastoral Aid Society in November. The keynote speaker was Rev Philip Mounstephen, an Anglican priest from the Church of England who is head of ministry for CPAS. Philip's topic was 'Bridging the Gap' – tackling the problem of fall-away of young people from the Church after confirmation. This event included a lunchtime talk for clergy as well as a Saturday training event for Sunday School teachers.

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The Society has developed a new training scheme for Sunday School teachers to be provided at parish or rural deanery level. The first of these have been provided in Killeshandra (Kilmore) and Dunlavin (Glendalough).

The annual Sunday School table quiz, entitled 'Brainarama', continues with over thirty teams enjoying a fun afternoon. This quiz is for children from third to sixth class and is held in St Andrew's College, Booterstown to whom we are very grateful for the use of their premises.

The Society continues its affiliation with The Consultative Group on Ministry among Children (CGMC) and the Society's representative is the Rev AE Taylor. CGMC are involved in developing and researching the church's ministry amongst children.

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APPENDIX A

The following are the members of the Board and its committees as on 31 March 2003.

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	Rev Canon FD Swann Mr RF Palmer
Clogher	Rev RT Gillian Mrs M Glenn
Derry	Ven MS Harte Mr W Arnold
Down	Rev Canon SMJ Dickson Mr I Davidson
Connor	Rev MRK Ferry Dr AR Acheson
Kilmore	Rev Canon 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 B Cairns
Limerick and Killaloe	Rev SM Neill Mr TS Hardy

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Co-opted members

Rev BJG O'Rourke	Ms E Jackson
Ms E Gregg	Mr T Wheatley
Mr I Bolton	Mr A Godsil
Ms I Reed	Mr A Oughton
Mr JE Bunting	Ven DR Chillingworth
Mrs P Wallace	Rev Canon RJEFB Black
Ms C Revington	Ms SG Mew
Rev G Wharton	

Secretary

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2003)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev RHA Eames (Chairman)	
The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill	
Lady Sheil	Mr RF Palmer
Rev Canon SMS Dickson	Ms SG Mew
Rev Canon RD Harman	Rev Canon J Merrick
Mr JE Bunting	Ms E Jackson

BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Ex-officio members

Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev RHA Eames	Bishop of Clogher, Rt Rev MGStA Jackson
Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev HC Miller	Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke
Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev AET Harper	Very Rev H Cassidy
Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev KR Good	Lady Sheil

Elected members

Down	Rev Canon SMJ Dickson Mr I Davidson
Connor	Rev MRK Ferry Dr AR Acheson
Armagh	Canon FD Swann Mr RF Palmer
Derry	Rev Canon JCD Mayes Mr V Carson

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Clogher Rev RT Gillian
 Mrs M Glenn

Co-opted members

Mr JE Bunting	Mrs M Crockett
Ven DR Chillingworth	Mrs R Forde
Mr RM McKinney	Mrs H McClenaghan
Mrs A McNee	Mrs MP Wallace

Observers invited to attend: Rev Canon WA Lewis (Transferor Rep BEELB), Ven CT Pringle (Transferor Rep WELB) Rev Canon JR Wilson (Hon Sec Down & Dromore & Connor Bd Ed), Mr W Young (Sec Armagh DBRE)

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 IW Ellis, Church of Ireland House, 61-67 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2QH

BOARD OF EDUCATION (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill (Chairman)

Ven EJ Swann (Vice-Chairman)	Ms E Jackson
Bishop of Cork, Rt Rev WP Colton	Rev Canon J Merrick
Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke	Ms SG Mew
Ms E Gregg	Rev BJB O'Rourke
Rev Canon RD Harman	Mrs I Reed
Mr SR Harper	Mrs A Wills

Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)

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