

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
OF THE  
GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND  
REPORT 2005**

**SYNOD EXAMINATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The prize winners for 2003/2004 were as follows:

**Year 1**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Sallyann Tingle	Alexandra College
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cathal Coyne Roisin Kennedy	Wilson's Hospital Newpark School
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sinead Tobin	Ashton Comprehensive

**Year 2**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Sarah Compton	Alexandra College
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Aoife Kenny	Alexandra College
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lauren Holmes Christie Meath	The King's Hospital Newpark School

**Year 3**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Sarah Cunningham	The King's Hospital
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ben Clifford	East Glendalough
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Grace Sullivan	The King's Hospital

**Junior Division Prizes**

Henry Burrows	Bandon Grammar
Jillian Windrum	Monaghan Collegiate
Kelly Boles	Sligo Grammar
Ciara Bailey	Royal and Prior
Stephen Middleton	St Aidan's Comprehensive
Amy Burnside	Monaghan Collegiate
Nathan Dixon	Cavan Royal
Rachel Condell	St Bricin's Comprehensive

**Year 4**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Sophie Mullen	East Glendalough
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Geraldine Wilshere	Rathdown School
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Hilary Johnson	East Glendalough

**Year 5/6**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Alison Wallace	Royal and Prior
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Laura Cremen	Rathdown School
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Joseph Brown	Royal and Prior

**Senior Division Prizes**

Lucy Cunningham	Sligo Grammar
Donna Gillespie	St Aidan's Comprehensive

**Hackett Special Prize**

Heather Kinch	East Glendalough
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The constant generosity of the APCK in funding the prizes is greatly appreciated. The Hackett Special Prize is funded by the Incorporated Society in memory of a past secretary of that body.

Mrs L Clarke has again moderated the scripts and advised on the structure of the examinations. Mrs Clarke is a member of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessments Religious Education Committee and is able to keep the Board informed of curricular developments in the area and to ensure the Synod Examination reflects the syllabi being used within the schools.

**Revised Catechism**

The Board has for a number of years printed and distributed a revised catechism authorised by the House of Bishops and based on a publication from the Church of England. The House of Bishops has authorised its reprinting. The Bishop of Cashel and Ossory, Rt Rev PF Barrett, has undertaken to chair a small committee to consider a replacement for this revision. This is not to be a substitute for that contained in the Prayer Book but to provide a support in contemporary language for those who teach the faith to young people and particularly for those preparing for confirmation.

**Adult Education**

A number of dioceses currently offer various courses in adult education. The courses are popular but the reasons for participation are varied. This Board has contacted the adult education officers and course organisers regarding the possible validation of such courses which might be linked to other modules of further education in working towards a national certificate or diploma. This matter is under discussion and review.

**Safeguarding Trust**

Safeguarding Trust is the Church of Ireland's Child Protection Policy and the Standing Committee of the General Synod has entrusted the implementation to the General Synod Board of Education. Details on various issues and reports of implementation are contained in the reports of the regional boards reflecting jurisdictional and legislative issues. However it is important to stress that there is constant liaison between the officers of the boards to ensure that a commonality of policy and purpose is maintained on behalf of the whole Church.

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

**Personalia**

Mrs Helen Jensen has been an invaluable advisor to the board in her field of Special Education and had drafted some significant contributions for responses to working papers from the Department of Education & Science (DE&S). Her resignation, due to relocation, was received with regret.

**A New Minister**

Ms Mary Hanafin TD was appointed Minister for Education & Science in succession to Mr Noel Dempsey TD. The new Minister brings her experience as a second-level teacher and her long time interest in the work of the Department to the new role. The Board conveyed its best wishes to her on her appointment and has noted her rapid response to a number of issues particularly in the special needs area.

**Arion Scholarships**

The scholarships for the last two years funded by the Department of Education & Science were both taken up in 2004. Ms Sarah Widger of Kilkenny College attended a Wings and Roots Programme dealing with the dissemination of headship skills in Wales. Ms Anne Reilly spent a week in Estonia studying small primary schools and partnership models. Copies of the reports of both participants were circulated to the Board.

**Primary Teachers**

The late issue of the redeployment panels caused significant disruption to the selection procedures and extended the resultant appointments until late summer. This delay was apparently linked to a review of the allocation of special education posts. An assurance has been received that such a delay will not occur again.

The increase of places in a number of teacher training colleges has resulted in an increased availability of candidates for vacancies. The refusal of the DE&S to sanction an increase of places for the Church of Ireland College of Education together with reluctance by second level pupils to consider primary teaching as a career option has resulted in the continuing unfortunate restriction in the supply of teachers who are familiar with and supportive of the ethos of schools under Church of Ireland and other Protestant patronage.

The Board issued a training programme for selection boards, to patrons and diocesan boards. It is important to stress the need for boards, in their role as employers, to ensure that agreed appointment procedures are followed both in relation to vacancies and to appointments to posts of responsibility. The impact of legislation affecting fixed term and specific purpose contracts required boards of management to take particular care regarding the terms of employment of temporary teachers and special needs assistants.

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The use of web advertising for permanent teaching posts continues under active discussion with the DE&S and other education partners. There are also ongoing reviews in regard to certain aspects of the Constitution and rules of procedure for boards of management.

### **Teaching Principals**

The Board is represented on a DE&S Working Party to consider models of best practice to assist principals. It has been made clear that additional resources would not be available in the short term but that supports might be effectively refocused. The possibility of utilising existing allocations of substitute teaching hours for administrative days on a cluster basis is being explored.

The Working Party is conscious of the pressure on teaching principals who must combine a full time teaching role as a class teacher with the full responsibility for the day to day management of the school and with little time given to administration during the class teaching day. The Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) has also been undertaking valuable research in this area and has been in discussion with the Board.

The support of the Church Education Society in providing bursaries to those undertaking post-graduate studies in education is significant in creating a cohort of skilled teachers who can undertake senior management roles in primary schools.

### **Special Education Needs**

The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004 has put in place a series of procedures which are extremely demanding of schools. The commencement of the Act is weighted and the Minister, Mrs Mary Hanafin TD, has indicated the National Council for Special Education will be given statutory basis and responsibility for the special education needs organisers. The pressures and responsibility that the Act places on boards and principals may well exacerbate the concerns that schools are inadequately resourced to serve children with special education needs. The Archbishop of Dublin in his speech to his diocesan synod, subsequently published in Education Newsbrief, drew attention to a number of the issues for schools. These included the failure of resources to travel with children from pre-school to primary school, the failure to extend the hours available for supports as a child moves from infants to 1<sup>st</sup> class with a longer day. He also referred to the lack of linkage between the assessment process at primary level and that at second level resulting in children at second level having to be assessed afresh.

The Board has provided some supporting documentation to assist schools as they draw up and revise their procedures in this area.

Part of the difficulty in the special needs area is not merely the question of the availability of resources but a conflict between the Department and other bodies in relation to the percentage of children who actually require such resources. Until this issue is resolved it will be impossible to ensure the allocation of adequate resources to ensure that schools may provide 'appropriate education' for every child. It is clear that

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schools wish to be welcoming and inclusive but the anxiety regarding the inability in some cases to provide proper resources means that schools can be perceived as being unfriendly towards those families whose children may have specific educational needs and this is to be regretted.

### **Educational Developments**

The Board made submissions in relation to proposed developments for Senior Cycle and on a proposed framework for early learning. Comments were also provided in relation to reviews on Whole School Evaluation and Section 29 appeals. Representatives of the Board serve on a number of committees in the field of education and bring the views of the Board and of schools to bear on discussions.

### ***Follow Me* – The Primary Religious Education Programme**

The development of the programme has continued both with the preparation of *On-Line* the module for 4<sup>th</sup> class (P6) which is the product of the creative work of the editor Mrs J Wilkinson, the informed support of a group of advisory teachers Mrs P England, Rathfarnham NS, Mrs R Treacy, Wandersforde NS, Mr J Shaw, Rathmichael NS and Mrs H Smith, Adair NS, and the input from schools who piloted draft content. The Very Rev MAJ Burrows, Rev Mary Hunter and Rev Stephen Skuce have reviewed the content from the theological viewpoints of the three sponsoring Churches. The input of all involved has been extremely valuable in ensuring the production of a teaching programme which is greatly valued by the schools.

Mrs Wilkinson facilitated a meeting of senior class teachers and primary religious education committee members which reviewed the needs and concerns of students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes. The out turn from this day was extremely valuable for the initial planning for the programme for these classes. Given the amount of preparation which will be required for many of these units it is anticipated that the module for 5<sup>th</sup> class will not be available until 2007 and that for 6<sup>th</sup> class in the subsequent year. The support of the Priorities Fund and a number of diocesan boards of education has been central to continued financing of the programme.

### **Transport Scheme D (Primary Schools)**

The number of qualifying families is now 313. Grants totalling €165,306 for the school year 2003/2004 were received from the Department of Education and Science. Thanks to the prompt return of forms from the majority of schools, all grants were paid out before 31 December 2004. We are still receiving applications from families who have been enrolled in schools for a number of years, but have not been given grant information. As the DES are not prepared to sanction retrospective grants, we would urge principals to send information regarding grants to all new pupils, so that families do not lose out on financial assistance to which they are entitled.

The Board, thanks to the support over many years by diocesan boards of education, continues to grant-aid two families from its ancillary transport fund. An additional once-

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off transport grant to a family experiencing temporary hardship was awarded. The Board has noted that one parish has been awarded a grant from the Fairbrother Trust which is able to assist poor parishes with the cost of school transport.

### **Commission on School Accommodation**

This body has been tasked by the Minister to produce coherent development plans for a number of differing areas. The analysis and review process utilised will also provide a framework for considering developments elsewhere over a ten year period. In one rural area already surveyed by the Commission the retention of the existing Church of Ireland schools was commended for the benefit of diversity.

### **School Building Programme**

A significant number of primary schools were grant aided in 2004 including several who participated in a devolved grant scheme. This latter transfers responsibility for the oversight of a building project to local level and can be effective in terms of timescale and delivery. It places a very real burden on voluntary boards and particularly chairpersons. The Board is seeking to ensure the experience of those who have taken part in the scheme is available to boards who are being invited to participate.

At the time of writing it is regretted that the second-level schools, particularly the Comprehensives, have yet to benefit from the increased capital funding.

### **Safeguarding Trust**

A summary of the code of good practice in the form of a laminated pocket sized card was circulated to all parishes for distribution to leaders or organisations involving children and young people. A newsletter, highlighting a number of issues included the need for care in the publication of photographs in magazines and websites, was also issued. Further copies of these items are available from the Board.

Discussions were held with representatives of the child protection information and advice officers who are now attached to each health board. There was a welcome for the approach taken in Safeguarding Trust but reservations were expressed in relation to the somewhat narrow view of the reporting responsibilities of the Panel. This latter issue is currently being reviewed and legal advice is obtained. A senior social worker who attended a training presentation for leaders commented favourably on the holistic and balanced approach which looked at health and safety as well as abuse issues and reminded participants that the code existed for the protection of workers as well as children.

A course for trainers in child protection, validated by University College Dublin, is now available through the Health Boards and Kilmore Diocese, supported by this Board, is sponsoring a youth officer's participation. The Secretary continues to provide training to those dioceses who have yet to appoint local trainers and materials including a training presentation are available to support local training.

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The Minister for Children's announcement that vetting will be available for all who work with children has been widely welcomed. This Board and the Standing Committee had made strong representations on the matter. There is as yet no indication of a timescale for the introduction of vetting and the Minister's indication that legislation may be required has caused some anxiety that the introduction may be further delayed. Parishes must take care in obtaining references and interviewing possible volunteers and employed workers.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND)**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. Children's Ministry – background to the Board's research project; report on the *Building Blocks* conferences
2. Post-primary proposals – outline of the Board's views on the Costello report
3. Proposals for Common funding Scheme for Local Management of Schools – aspects of the Board's submission on these controversial proposals
4. Safeguarding Trust – future developments
5. RE Core Syllabus – progress of the Review
6. Ethos and Education – a Transferor's contribution to the values underpinning Controlled schools
7. Recent consultations to which the Board has responded
8. Annual Theological Lectures at Queen's University Belfast
9. Membership - personalia

#### **Children's Ministry – Research project**

The attitudes, needs and experiences regarding children's ministry in the Church of Ireland in NI are perceived to have changed significantly in recent years. The Board established a sub-group to examine this important issue in church life. In June 2004, the Board commissioned Dr Gareth Higgins to conduct some research that may help identify the shape and needs of children's ministry at present and in the future.

Dr Higgins conducted his research by interviewing a sample of clergy in all dioceses in NI, conducting focus groups with leaders, parents and children, and further interviews with a number of individuals with a key interest in children's ministry. The Board at its January meeting received the report and has requested its Children's Ministry Sub-group to consider the conclusions and bring proposals to take forward the various action points identified.

In the light of major cultural and philosophical shifts at large in society, the report identifies the need to reconsider the 'Sunday School' instructional model of Children's Ministry and move towards a pastoral/child development model. It also pinpoints the need for parishes to develop inter-generational or All-Age worship. The report includes: ideas on how best to develop and manage volunteers, finding ways of sharing examples of good practice and practical suggestions regarding

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resources which the Board could make available. A significant proposal is for dioceses to consider appointing Children's Ministry Resource Officers and establish or re-establish Children's Ministry Working Groups. Overall the report recognises that for changes to take place, more strategic support and training for Children's Ministry workers will be required.

The Board intends to make the report widely available and anticipates that the findings will shape the future focus of this area of its work. Rectors may obtain copies of the full report from the office of the Board of Education NI, and a shorter version is soon to be made available for wider readership. The report has been placed on the Church of Ireland website and can be found under Committee News at

<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/committeenews/index.php>

In December 04 the third annual *Building Blocks* conference took place in Dublin and Jordanstown. This collaborative event arranged by the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Scripture Union, provided inspiration, training and resources for over 300 children's ministry leaders at Jordanstown and a similar number drawn from a wide range of churches at the Dublin conference. The speaker was Nick Harding of the Church of England, whose area of expertise is All-Age worship.

### **Proposals for Post-Primary provision**

In June 2004 the Board offered a public statement of its attitude towards the proposals for post-primary provision following the publication of the Costello report. This statement welcomed the broad principles of the proposals, in particular the strong focus on the child and the prospect of schools and colleges from various sectors developing closer working partnerships. The Board emphasised, given the high standard of schools' performance in NI, the continued importance of an academic pathway in our educational system.

The Board also drew attention to the many gaps in the proposals and called upon the Department of Education (DE) to bring forward work on outstanding details, especially in regard to admissions criteria. Greater clarity is required in order to build greater confidence in the proposals across the educational community.

The Department has established a Strategic Advisory Group which has developed advice for the minister on a number of key areas including admissions criteria and the Entitlement Curriculum. At the time of writing a public consultation document on admissions arrangements has just been published. The stalemate in political progress in NI unfortunately also causes great uncertainty and unease in the development of government policy.

### **Proposals for Common Funding Scheme for Local Management of Schools (LMS)**

This scheme provoked a great deal of public comment and concern for the viability of educational provision across the province. In its submission the Board drew

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particular attention to the impact of the proposals upon the Controlled sector, which historically is its particular interest.

This Board noted with grave concern that on the basis of figures supplied by the Dept of Education, the Controlled sector will experience the largest reduction in allocation following the application of the formula. In our highly polarised society and segregated educational system these proposals are hugely divisive because of the way they produce winners and losers. It is unjust that many schools which deliver excellent educational opportunities, struggle with reduced funding yet others have few financial restraints.

Targeting Social Need (TSN) is an important social policy which is correct in principle to place extra resources where there is greatest need. Its implementation in the past has however had a negative effect especially upon many Controlled schools, which have suffered under-funding as a result. It is questionable whether in the past TSN has been properly targeted, monitored or audited. The present proposals for funding TSN through LMS show slight improvements on older formulae, however even more thought is required to ensure fairness and greater accountability.

The consultation also coincided with a period of great financial challenge for Education and Library Boards (ELBs), caused in the main by the demands of new Special Needs requirements and increased costs such as transport and rates. Thus far, the Minister of Education has indicated he is not of a mind to make any extra financial provision. In consequence, Boards have stated that they will be forced to cut some services and undoubtedly schools will suffer.

This Board views with serious concern both the outcomes of the proposed formula and the extreme financial challenges for ELBs and pleads for an urgent review and significant increase in the NI education budget allocation.

### **Safeguarding Trust**

The Board continues to develop its role of training, resourcing, advising and evaluating the Church's code of practice in caring for children. It is particularly indebted to the diocesan support teams which conduct evaluations in up to 70 parishes per year in NI.

The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order which came into operation in April 2005 has implications for aspects of our policy and procedures. The Board guided by agencies with expertise in this area, is currently revising Safeguarding Trust guidelines in the light of the new legislation and developments in good practice.

A particular area of concern is how Safeguarding Trust relates to non-church organisations using its premises. In order to develop a common protocol of understanding, the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches have held discussions with outside organisations such as Scouts, Guides, BB, GB etc. It

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is hoped that a common protocol might be agreed and adopted by each church in 2005, and included in the third edition of Safeguarding Trust guidelines (NI).

### **RE Core Syllabus**

The process of review of the RE Core syllabus, begun in 2002 was completed in the autumn of 2004. The co-chairs of the working group, Mr T Shaw and Dr A Donaldson submitted final proposals for a Revised Core Syllabus following extensive consultation, to the leaders of the four main Churches in December 2004. The Church leaders have expressed their indebtedness to the professionalism and dedication of the working group and have forwarded the proposals to the Minister of Education with a recommendation for their implementation. The Minister has indicated that the Revised Core Syllabus must now be subject to a further equality impact assessment.

### **Ethos and Education**

The Transferor Representatives Council (TRC) has developed a suggested ethos and values statement for use by transferor governors. The document should be of help when opportunity arises to discuss the issues of a mission statement and core values, or when framing or reviewing the school prospectus, or other policy documents. The TRC encourages such reflection and offers the document as a transferor's contribution to a discussion of the distinctive aims of a Controlled school. It is hoped to publish the document later in 2005.

### **Consultations**

Responses were submitted to the following consultation documents

- a. Special Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2004
- b. Higher Education (NI)– proposals to introduce variable deferred fees
- c. Suspension and Expulsion procedures (submitted by the TRC)
- d. Further Education means Business

### **Annual Theological lectures at Queen's**

These popular lectures continue to be funded by the Board and arranged by the Church of Ireland Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast. The purpose is to provide high quality lectures over two evenings usually in the month of February, by a leading Anglican theologian. The lecturer for 2005 was Rt Revd NT Wright, Bishop of Durham.

### **Membership**

The Board welcomed as co-opted members: Dr W Mulryne; Mr T Flanagan and Mr W Young who bring a wealth of experience from a wide cross-section of sectors of education in NI.

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**Appendix A**

The following are the members of the Board and its committees as on 31 March 2005.

**THE GENERAL SYNOD BOARD OF EDUCATION**

THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

THE HONORARY SECRETARIES OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

Rev Canon Dr IM Ellis	Very Rev RD Harman
Mr SR Harper	Lady Sheil

*Elected members*

Armagh	Rev Canon FD Swann Mr RF Palmer
Clogher	Rev Canon RT Gillian Mr SB Morrow, O.B.E.
Derry	Ven MS Harte Mr D West
Down	Rev Canon SMJ Dickson Mr I Davidson
Connor	Rev SB Forde Dr AR Acheson
Kilmore	Rev Canon J Merrick Mrs J Johnston
Tuam	Rev Canon DTS Clements Mrs A Wills
Dublin	Ven EJ Swann
Meath	Rev Canon JDM Clarke Mrs JM Bruton
Cashel and Ossory	Rev Canon PA Harvey Mr I Dungan
Cork	Ven REB White Mr BD Cairns
Limerick and Killaloe	Rev Canon SM Neill Mr TS Hardy

*Co-opted members*

Rev Canon RJEFB Black	Ms S Mew
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Mr JE Bunting	Ms R Maxwell-Eager
Mr I Bolton	Ms H McBain
Mr B Levis	Rev BJG O'Rourke
Mr M Halll	Ms C Revington
Ms S Hall	Mrs P Wallace
Ms S Honner	Rev G Wharton
Ms E Jackson	Mr T Wheatley

*Secretary*

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
(FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2005)**

The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev RHA Eames (Chairman)

The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev JRW Neill

Lady Sheil

Rev Canon SMS Dickson

Very Rev RD Harman

Mr JE Bunting

Ms SG Mew

Mr RF Palmer

Rev Canon J Merrick

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

The Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev AET Harper

Very Rev H Cassidy

The Bishop of Derry, Rt Rev KR Good

Lady Sheil

*Elected members*

Down

Rev Canon S M J Dickson  
Mr I Davidson

Connor

Rev SB Forde  
Dr AR Acheson

Armagh

Rev Canon FD Swann  
Mr RF Palmer

Derry

Rev Canon JCD Mayes  
Mr V Carson

Clogher

Rev Canon RT Gillian  
Mr SB Morrow, O.B.E.

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*Co-opted members*

Mr J E Bunting	Mrs R Forde
Ven DR Chillingworth	Mrs H McClenaghan
Mr RM McKinney	Mrs MP Wallace
Mrs A McNee	Dr W Mulryne
Mr T Flanagan	Mr W Young

*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).

*Honorary Secretary, Board of Education (Northern Ireland)*

Mr JE Bunting

*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)

Bishop of Kilmore, Rt Rev KH Clarke	Mr M Hall
Bishop of Cork, Rt Rev WP Colton	Ms S Honner
Very Rev RD Harman	Ms E Jackson
Ms S Hall	Rev B O'Rourke
Mr S Harper	Ven EJ Swann (Vice-Chairman)
Mr T Hardy	Mrs A Wills

*Co-opted members*

Mrs Heather Wilkinson (Sunday School Society of Ireland) attends by invitation.

*Secretary, Board of Education (Republic of Ireland)*

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

**Appendix B (For Information)**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY FOR IRELAND**

The work of the Society has reached a significant point as the Rev Anne Taylor has been appointed Children's Ministry Officer on a half-time basis for a period of 3 years from 1 February 2005. As Anne continues as curate assistant of Rathfarnham parish much of her work will be based in the Dublin and Glendalough area though she will travel further afield for training sessions.

*Brainarama '04*, our children's quiz, was enjoyed in St. Andrew's College in February by 27 teams of children from 14 parishes. The trophy was shared between St Thomas' Parish and Clontarf.

The Society manned an information table at the Discovery Exhibition in St George's church in June and allowed members to make contact with those recently settled in the city.

Our postal course "Good News by Post" ceased to operate in June and gratitude and appreciation were expressed to Mrs Rhodanne Heaney who has facilitated the children for so many years. The numbers availing of this facility had been greatly reduced in recent years.

As 2004 was the International Year of the Family a Family Fun Day was organised jointly with the Mothers' Union. This very successful event was held in May in The King's Hospital School in Palmerstown and the use of these premises and facilities was much appreciated.

Three hundred leaders/workers in ministry with children and youth took part in a highly successful Conference in November organised by representatives of the mainstream churches. Mrs H Wilkinson and the Rev AE Taylor represented the Society on the organising committee. The event was held in St. Patrick's Training College, Dublin and the keynote speaker was Nick Harding from England. Nick is a well known writer of books on ministry with children and is a diocesan children's officer in Southwell Diocese.

Teacher training is still high on our agenda and was provided in several venues including Tullamore. The Society continues to be affiliated to CGMC (Consultative Group for Ministry among Children) which operates under the umbrella of CTBI and this link has provided much useful information and resources. Our representative is the Rev AE Taylor who has now been elected on to the CGMC Executive.

The RE Resource Centre continues to flourish under the able management of Mrs Olive Rhodes. Mrs Muriel Bryan, who had given long and valued service, retired and Mrs Janette McKim was welcomed to the staff.

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The Society continues to support first year ordinands and student teachers with the gift of a book token. The Resource Centre is open from 10am – 4pm Tuesday – Friday in its premises in Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines. It is open on the Monday of RB week to facilitate people coming to Church House from outside Dublin. Customers should note that the Resource Centre is closed for the month of July.

Mrs Deirdre Deverell resigned from the committee and we thank her for her time and expertise while two new members joined us Nigel Swanwick and the Rev Derek Sargent.