

## **DIOCESE OF KILDARE & LEIGHLIN**

### **MEMO RE PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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*This memo is intended for the primary schools under the Patronage of the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin (currently 165 schools, catering for over 30,000 children).*

*This memo, along with further background material on Church policy re Catholic education and CPSMA resources, is available on the diocesan website – [www.kandle.ie](http://www.kandle.ie)*

#### **Catholic Education**

The Catholic Church sees the work of education as central to its mission of spreading the Gospel. It has a duty to help people know and live the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church is committed to providing Catholic schools to cater for the needs of parents who wish their children to have a Catholic education. This is fully supported in Irish law.

Inspired by Gospel values, the goal of the Catholic school is the formation and development of the young person, to address their human and spiritual needs.

Catholic schools provide an important service not just to the Catholic community but to society as a whole. A key element in this wider service is how Catholic schools respectfully welcome, wherever possible, children of other faiths or none. Our parish schools are among the most inclusive in Ireland today.

#### **Need for more choice**

There are significant changes taking place at this time in regard to the provision of Primary education in Ireland. The Catholic Church fully accepts that there needs to be more choice and diversity within the national educational system. In practical terms, this depends on the State planning and funding a plurality of new schools, especially in our fast growing urban areas.

The fostering of greater choice in education should bring benefit to all and will also allow Catholic schools to be more distinctively Catholic. However this does not equate to moving towards 'Catholic only' schools. Parish schools should maintain a welcoming ethos with a particular concern for the needy or disadvantaged.

#### **Link between Parish and Boards of Management**

There are now less Parish Priests/Curates serving as Chairpersons of the BOM of our Parish schools. Some BOMs do not have any priest as a member. It is vital – especially in the latter cases – that all BOMs maintain a close working relationship with the Parish. A Board of Management of a Parish school cannot operate in isolation from the Parish.

#### **School Site – Ownership**

In virtually all cases, the primary schools under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin are on lands owned by the local parish.

Traditionally for each of these schools, the local Parish would have made certain lands available and as landowner entered into a lease with two other parties – school trustees and the Minister for Education – to cover the operation of a school on the demised school site. (*Guidelines re school lease to be covered on separate memo*).

### **School site – authority to act**

A Board of Management has **no** legal authority in regard to the school site. All proposals or applications regarding school sites should be addressed in the first instance to the **Parish Priest** (as the Parish is the landowner). In turn, the Parish Priest is obliged to seek approval from the Bishop regarding the buying or selling of church property.

In practice, the Parish Priest (and/or Parish Finance Committee) will need to consult with the BOM as to their recommendation on the specific proposal re school site.

### **School Building – Parish as client**

In all school capital building projects (in schools under the patronage of Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin) it is essential that all parties understand that the **‘client’** in terms of the Department of Education and Science (DES) is the Parish – **not** the Board of Management.

It is the Parish – as landowner and de facto school trustee - that bears ultimate responsibility for whatever ‘local contribution’ may be required along with the main DES funding to complete the renovation or new building. Thus, school planning (and funding) proposals must be routed through the Parish.

### **Capital Building Projects – Parish application**

It is now diocesan policy that for all capital building projects in our Parish schools that the **Parish Priest** should seek approval from the Bishop **before** any contracts are signed. The new application form has been circulated to all priests and is available on our diocesan website - **www.kandle.ie**

Again, the BOM will need to be closely involved in the planning process and liaise with the Parish Priest in regard to making the application to the Bishop. The BOM should be made fully aware of the finalised submission and the Bishop’s subsequent decision.

### **Paying Local Contribution**

While the Parish has ultimate responsibility for whatever ‘local contribution’ is needed, it is common practice for the school and/or Parents association to undertake fund-raising. These funds are the normal source for paying the local contribution. However, with the necessary prior agreement, it is possible that a contribution could be made directly from Parish funds.

### **New or replacement schools**

When planning a new or replacement parish school, the parish should **not** accept any offer from the State to purchase the required site (or take over an existing site) without full prior consultation with the Bishop.

It is diocesan policy that parishes should maintain the traditional arrangement whereby the Parish provides the site (and a local contribution re building) – unless otherwise directed by the Bishop.

### **Planning for future needs**

Each parish has a responsibility to consider on an on-going basis whether an additional Catholic school is required in their locality and to report any such need to the Bishop.

As stated above, we are in period of rapid change. The optimum number of schools under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin will need to be reviewed in light of these changes and the number of alternative schools (and school places) that will emerge.