



A Guide for Chairpersons of Boards of Management of Catholic Schools

CPSMA 2019

Disclaimer

Before going to print (December 2019) every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this Guide for Chairpersons of Boards of Management of Catholic Schools. Boards of Management should consult their patron and/or CPSMA, as appropriate, to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the most recent legislation, Department of Education and Skills' circulars or national guidelines, in relation to specific topics.

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Welcome from the Chairperson of CPSMA



As the Chairperson of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) I want to warmly greet you in your role of Chairperson of the Board of Management of your Catholic primary school. There has always been a strong tradition of Catholic primary schools in Ireland. The existence of our local Catholic primary schools has been, and will continue to depend upon the generosity of the local parish community and the work of the volunteers on our Boards of Management. Thank you for taking on the responsibilities of Chairperson.

CPSMA are here to support and assist you in exercising your responsibilities and this Guide is one of the ways we do so. I hope you will find it useful and we would appreciate any suggestions you may have as to how it can be improved and updated. It is produced in a 'loose-leaf' format with punchholes so as to enable on-going revision (may I suggest you place pages of the Guide in a ring-binder so that you can insert updates as they become available). The Guide points you to other core documents, especially the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023* (available online) and other key sources such as circulars from the Department of Education and Skills and documents from the Catholic bishops. To help you to easily access these core documents, an online version of this Guide is also available at www.cpsma.ie and all you need to do is to double click on the hyperlinks in the online version to go immediately to the relevant procedures and policies.

This Guide includes an Appendix outlining the work of CPSMA, if you want to know more about the association. May I encourage your Board of Management to be an associate member of CPSMA. The CPSMA secretariat can be contacted at 01 6292462 and we have a team of highly qualified Education Advisors ready to answer calls from both yourself and the principal of your school. If you need advice please phone. CPSMA provides a Board of Management Handbook to assist you in your work. In addition, CPSMA has a series of short five minute videos introducing aspects of the Catholic primary school that you and your Board of Management may find helpful. These are constantly updated so please see the CPSMA website (www.cpsma.ie) for further information.

In summary, CPSMA provides advice and support for Chairpersons and Principals of Boards of Management in over 2,800 national schools under Catholic patronage in the Republic of Ireland. Its aim is the advancement of education in the Catholic primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. It facilitates the Boards of Management, Patrons and Trustees of Catholic primary schools in the fulfilment of their responsibilities to the pupils, parents, teachers and staff of primary schools under Catholic patronage as outlined in its constitutional documents, the Education Act 1998 and documents of the Irish Bishops' Conference.

May God bless you in your vital work and may every child in your school flourish under the care of your Board of Management.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew G. McGrady". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that ends in a small flourish.

Andrew G. McGrady Ph.D.
Chairperson, CPSMA
chair@cpsma.ie

1 The Role of the Patron of your School

Your Bishop, as leader of the Catholic community in the diocese, is the Patron of your school, and has ultimate responsibility for it. As a direct appointee of the Patron, your authority as Chairperson derives from this appointment – as does your responsibility to lead the Board in discharging its statutory obligations.

One of the statutory obligations of the Board of Management under Section 15 (2)b of the Education Act is to:

“uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school, and at all times act in accordance with any Act of the Oireachtas or instrument made thereunder, deed, charter, articles of management or other such instrument relating to the establishment or operation of the school”.

Your understanding of how the ethos of a Catholic school is different from ethos of other school types, will guide you in leading the Board of Management in upholding the Catholic ethos.

Section 4 of this document provides guidance on the ethos of a Catholic school.

Section 15 of the Education Act 1998 states that *“(1) It shall be the duty of a board to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.”*

The Education Act 1998 places a responsibility on the Patron to ensure (among other obligations) that:

- the school provides the national curriculum (as prescribed by the NCCA – National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)¹
- the school permits and co-operates with regular inspection and evaluation by the Inspectorate²
- the school operates in accordance with regulations made by the Minister (e.g. “Rules for National Schools”, “Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023”, Department of Education Circulars etc.).³

Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1998, *“It shall be the duty of a patron, for the purposes of ensuring that a recognised school is managed in a spirit of partnership, to appoint where practicable a board of management”.*

The Bishop as Patron, delegates some of his responsibility to the Board of Management which is accountable to him. This responsibility includes the requirement to ensure that the school operates in accordance with Ministerial regulations (as set out above) and relevant legislation.

There will be contact between the Board and the Patron on a number of specified issues – usually through the Chairperson, as correspondent to the Board.

¹Section 30, Education Act 1998

²Section 10, Education Act 1998

³Section 33, Education Act 1998

Examples of issues that require contact with and /or the approval of the Patron include:

- The appointment of the Board members including those nominated by various groups, including the direct appointment of the Chairperson;
- Patrons have a specific role in nominating members to interview selection boards and in the prior approval of appointments;⁴
- The Patron is entitled to request reports or documentation from the school and to receive reports of whole school evaluations;
- The Patron is entitled to request School Accounts, notwithstanding the requirement to submit accounts to the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU);⁵
- In the majority of schools, the ownership of the school building and lands rests with the Patron [or through Diocesan Trusts];
- The Patron must grant permission for any alteration to the school building or premises;
- Building projects must be authorised by the Patron;
- Insurance – it is the Patron’s prerogative to have schools insured under the Allianz School Custodian Policy;
- Use of school premises by other groups – licence agreements must be approved by the Patron (See *DES October 2017 - Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours*);
- Amalgamations of Schools or Reconfiguration for Diversity;
- The Patron is entitled to request any or all of the following:
 - Minutes of Board of Management meetings;
 - Child Safeguarding Statement;
 - Admissions Policy;
 - Code of Behaviour;
 - Anti-Bullying Policy;
 - School Plan.
- The Patron may, with the consent of the Minister, remove a member of the Board or dissolve the Board of Management;⁶
- The Patron may also authorise a report on the operation of the Board, where he is of the opinion that the functions of a board are not being effectively discharged.⁷

⁴ See DES Circulars 0044/2019 (Recruitment/Promotion of Teachers) and 0051/2019 (Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants).

⁵ See DES Circular 0060/2017

⁶ Education Act 1998, Section 16

⁷ Education Act 1998, Section 19

2 Support from the Diocesan Education Secretary

Each diocese normally has a Diocesan Secretary for primary education (or equivalent) who will usually be the link between the school and the Bishop. The Diocesan Secretary should be contacted in the following instances:

- Notification of teacher vacancies (including vacancy of the position of Principal teacher);
- Requests for the nomination of Independent Assessors (Recruitment and Promotion);
- Requests for the approval of the appointment of a successful candidate (teacher or SNA).

In most cases, the Diocesan Secretary is also the Panel Operator for the Teacher Redeployment Scheme, and school Boards are required to co-operate with the provisions of this Panel.

Garda Vetting of non-teaching personnel is also facilitated through the Diocese, and your Diocesan Secretary will direct you on the local protocol for e-vetting.

The Diocesan Secretary will be your first point of contact in relation to other matters that require the Patron's consideration and consent, e.g. the use of school buildings, amalgamations etc.

The Diocesan Secretary should also be informed of any matter of interest or concern to the Board of Management that is likely to enter the public arena.

3 The Diocesan Advisor for Primary Religious Education

The Diocesan Advisor for Primary Religious Education supports religious education in primary schools through a range of activities, including the delivery of in-service for teachers, as well as school visits to advise and support teachers regarding the "Grow in Love" programme.

Appendix 2 provides a template for the recording of Diocesan Contacts. Please complete this template at your earliest convenience, and retain it for ease of reference.

4 Upholding the Ethos of the Catholic primary school - An Introduction for the Chairperson of the Board of Management

What is school ethos?

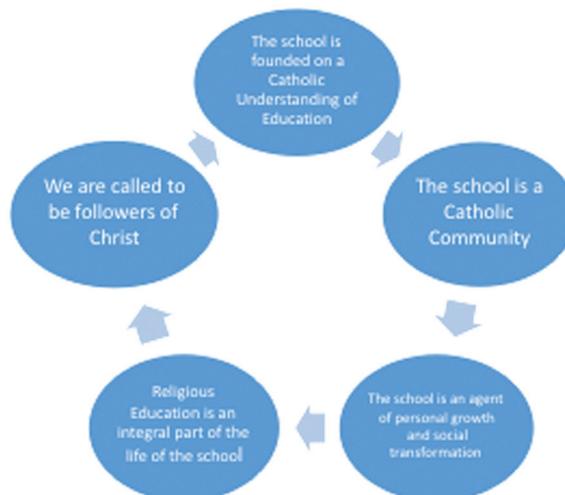
There are many formal definitions of 'ethos'⁸ but perhaps the simplest way to think of it is as the 'look and feel' of the school or what the primary school child will experience as one of its pupils. Ethos is a bit like food – just like there are Catholic schools, Church of Ireland schools, Muslim schools or Educate Together schools (to name a few) so there are different traditions of cooking – French, Italian, Indian, vegetarian or vegan (to name a few). Each style of cooking reflects a distinctive longstanding tradition which is part of the culture and daily life of a community. While many similar ingredients are used (e.g. vegetables), the values and practice of each culinary tradition requires a different mix of these ingredients, the exclusion of some ingredients (e.g. animal products) and the inclusion of other ingredients (e.g. pasta). The important thing is that each culinary tradition results in food with a different flavour and an experience of a unique 'taste'. School ethos is a bit like 'the flavour of the school community'. Another commonly used expression for 'ethos' is 'the characteristic spirit' of the school.

What is my role in strengthening and upholding the ethos of the school?

As Chairperson you have been appointed by the bishop of the diocese who is the Patron of your school. He is depending on you and the other board members to work with the principal, the staff and the parents to ensure that the school remains faithful to its Catholic ethos or characteristic spirit.⁹ This brief introduction to the ethos will offer some suggestions as to how you can carry out this important task.

What makes our primary school a Catholic School?

'Understanding and Living the Ethos in the Catholic Primary School'¹⁰ identifies five key aspects of the characteristic spirit of our Catholic schools. You may find these a useful summary for your work as Chairperson and for the Board:



⁸ The on-line Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'ethos' as 'the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature or guiding beliefs of a person, group or institution'. So it is the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs and practices of a particular group.

⁹ According to section 15 (2)(a) of the Education Act 1998 the Board of Management must 'uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school'...

¹⁰ Download from <https://www.catholicschools.ie/understanding-and-living-the-ethos-in-a-catholic-primary-school/>

A Catholic school is rooted in the parish community. It tries every day to be a community of faith, hope and love for everyone who walks through its door. A Catholic school is inclusive and welcomes children of every faith and those who have a different way of living in the world. Jesus Christ is at the heart of a Catholic school and we try to be like him in everything we do. In a Catholic school we believe that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and that influences how we behave.¹¹

How is a Catholic school like any other primary school?

In many important ways Catholic primary schools are like all national schools including those under other patrons. They enrol pupils from diverse backgrounds, do their best to offer these children an excellent education, have committed and dedicated teachers who teach the primary school curriculum, work with parents, and receive funding from the State. They comply with the Rules for National Schools, legislative requirements and directives issued by the Minister for Education and Skills via circular letter.

So how is a Catholic primary school different?

Because of its ethos. But remember, no two Catholic primary schools are exactly the same and shouldn't be.

- It insists that the full human development of each child (intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual) includes not only a healthy relationship with themselves, other people and the rest of creation but is centred on a living relationship with God. God is not seen as an optional extra in the child's life. The view of education is not secular but values a religious and faith dimension. It promotes not only the good of the individual but the good of local, national and global society as a whole. Other people are made in God's image too.
- It is inspired by teachings, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Getting to know Him means getting to know what it means to be human and what God is like. The school does not only talk about this – the pupils experience this philosophy every day especially in the quality of relationships and in the school environment.
- Using the Grow in Love programme it provides religious education as part of the normal day. This helps the child to understand his or her family faith tradition and the religious tradition and beliefs of others.
- It sees faith formation as important. Prayer is a part of the school day. It provides preparation for the sacraments of First Penance (First Confession), First Holy Communion and Confirmation. This preparation for the sacraments is not a four week flurry of activity packed with rubrical and ceremonial practices - in the case of each sacrament it is a faith nurturing process spread over a number of years (in an ideal world the practical preparation for the ceremony would not absorb teaching and learning time).
- It is often named after a saint whose feast day is celebrated, religious symbols are evident, key religious feasts such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated in a Christian manner, it is involved in work for social justice and care of the environment, there is a 'religious space' and Mass and the sacrament of penance are celebrated in the school.

How can the Chairperson and the Board support the ethos of the school?

The ethos of your school is best regarded as a living thing and must be nurtured. Supporting and strengthening the ethos of the school is one of the most important joint tasks of the Chairperson and the Board. A useful resource for the Board is *Understanding and Living the Ethos of the Catholic Primary School*. It contains many practical suggestions. The following will get you started to ensure that ethos is always on the agenda and is central to the work of your Board.

- Prayer is the way that we deepen our relationship with God. It is an integral part of the day in a Catholic school. All Board of Management meetings should begin and end with prayer. You might like to light a candle at your meetings as a reminder of God's presence at every gathering.

¹¹ You should also look at the *Schedule of a Catholic Primary School* which is an appendix to this Guide.



- When setting the agenda for your Board meetings ensure that Ethos is always listed as an item. Ask the principal to update the Board on how the ethos of the school is being strengthened and lived. This report could include themes of assemblies, activities for Catholic Schools Weeks, liturgical celebrations, sacramental preparation and celebration; how the school is celebrating the liturgical year, activities to help those who are in need. The Board could consider how they might help resource prayer spaces in the school, how the school makes visible its ethos in symbols and art. Consider using at least one of the school's Croke Park Hours to explore ethos.
- Ensure that all discussions pertaining to the ratification or revision of school policies (e.g. Code of Behaviour) also give due consideration to how the policy reflects the school's charter and characteristic spirit / ethos.
- Ensure that every member of the Board is given a copy of the Mission Statement of the School. Review it at one of the Board's first meetings. Invite the staff to review it also. Make sure that it is on display in the school entrance area. Ensure that a copy of this is given to all new staff.
- Religious Education: Ensure that every class teacher has the resources needed to teach the **Grow in Love** programme. Schedule a review of the Religious Education Policy of the school if there is one in place (this should be part of the whole school plan). If such a policy does not exist ask the principal to begin the process of developing one. Ensure that such a policy makes provision for withdrawal or opting out of Religious Education classes for those parents who desire this.

Provide opportunities for staff to attend in-service in religious education.

Why are our Catholic primary schools important to our communities?

The relationship between faith and education in Ireland is as old and as valued as any aspect of our Irish culture, identity or heritage. In his 1995 book *How the Irish saved Civilisation*¹² Thomas Cahill argues that Irish priests and monks recorded, preserved and saved the cultural legacy of European civilisation during the dark ages following the fall of the Roman Empire. Ireland was renowned as a place of learning, the 'land of saints and scholars'. We still have an education system of international renown.

For generations our Catholic primary schools have been central to the religious, cultural, sporting and artistic life of our local communities. They have done this while also adopting developments in educational philosophies and ways of teaching, in ways of managing schools and technological advances. They are places of joy and love where children are happy to come to be educated and where parents are confident that their children will thrive. They are living educational communities of faith, serving children, their families and their communities every school day in every parish in the country. They inspire and reflect the wonderful local communities they serve. They constantly respond to the challenges and changes in their communities. But the core values of our Catholic educational ethos, the full development of the whole person, mind, body and soul, remains, like the teachings of Jesus, a constant commitment in this ever-evolving world.

The most recent *Chief Inspector's Report 2013-2016*¹³ ranked the quality of teaching in primary schools inspected as 'good or better' in 88% to 94% of reports. The quality of management was ranked as 'good or better' in 89% to 90% of schools. The report also states that 'the vast majority of parents are happy with their child's school'. While the report does not make distinctions between schools under different patrons it is reasonable to assume that since approximately 90% of primary schools are under Catholic Patronage these findings hold true for our Catholic primary schools which are held in high esteem. Our schools are places of excellence.

We have much to be proud of, but nothing to be complacent about, if we are to preserve and continue our treasured Catholic primary school legacy.

¹² Cahill, T. (1995). *How the Irish Saved Civilisation*. New York, Anchor Books.

¹³https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_chief_inspectors_report_2013_2016_executive_memo.pdf

5 The Board as a Charity

Under the Charities Act 2009 there is a requirement for each Board of Management to have its school registered with the Charities Regulator and to verify this information once a year. By their membership of the Board of Management, all Board members become Trustees of the Charity.

As part of the registration process Board of Management members are required to provide their name, start date on the board and residential address. Residential addresses provided will not be made public on the Register. Boards are also required to indicate which board member is the Chairperson.¹⁴

Board of Management members who act with reasonable care and good faith, adhering to the rules and procedures outlined in the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023 and all other relevant rules, regulations and legislation relating to the membership and operation of Boards, meet the requirements outlined in the Charities Regulator publications the *“Charities Governance Code”* and *“Guidance for Charities Trustees”*.

“The role of the Chairperson of a charity” – Charities Regulator provides useful advice on the Preparation for a Board meeting, as well as advice on the management of the meeting process, and the management of the behaviour of charity trustees.

6 Procedures and Communication

The Board of Management is the employer of all teaching staff and ancillary staff, and as such, must fulfil both its nominal and statutory obligations as an employer. A school environment is no different to any other working environment – good communication is one of the factors that will underpin the school’s success. Less than effective communication will have a negative impact on relationships.

With so many involved in a school’s community – teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and pupils – there is always the likelihood of relationships being damaged when poor communication practices stand in the way of positive staff relations.

Where a culture of positive working relations prevails in a school, instances of staff conflict, adult bullying or harassment rarely occur.

However, where issues arise, an attempt should be made to resolve any difficulties – grievance, disciplinary, staff relations & parental complaints – at the most informal level and at the earliest juncture.

The CPSMA Handbook outlines a number of procedures that should be used when professional relationships are damaged, where employees’ conduct or performance fails to meet the required standard or where a parent makes a complaint.

For advice on any of these procedures – relational or disciplinary, please contact CPSMA and one of our advisors will give initial advice, as well as offering you advice and support as you navigate the different stages of the procedure(s).

¹⁴ Section 18 “Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 -2023”

7 The Role of the Chairperson

Section 10, *Governance Manual 2019 – 2023* outlines the Chairperson's role and responsibilities, and is an important starting point for you as you begin your term as Chairperson.

One of your key responsibilities, chairing a Board of Management meeting, is explored in greater detail in Section 10 of this guide. As Chairperson, your authority will facilitate the balanced allocation of time to various items on the agenda, ensuring that each item is addressed in a fair and impartial manner.

At the first meeting of the Board of Management you should:

- Ensure that each member of the Board of Management signs Form 2 (Formally known as Appendix G) - *Declaration of Acceptance of Membership of the School Board of Management*, and retain it with the minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure that a treasurer is elected from amongst the Board members (Note: neither Principal nor Teacher nominee are eligible for appointment as treasurer).
- Ensure that a Recording Secretary is appointed (in schools where the Principal is not Secretary to the Board of Management).
- Consider other roles for members of the Board, e.g. link to the Parish Pastoral Council, Public Relations, Health and Safety officer etc., as appropriate.

8 The Chairperson and the Principal

The relationship between the Chairperson and the Principal is one of the most important working relationships in the school and it is crucial to the school's effective operation. Both roles are leadership roles and require a close partnership that recognises and respects differing roles and responsibilities.

A clear understanding of your respective roles and responsibilities will stave off difficulties and strengthen your working relationship. When things go well you and the principal will work as colleagues. But it is useful to remember the two roles are different. The principal of your school will be professionally qualified to hold his/her role and is paid to do so. As chairperson you are acting on a voluntary, unpaid basis. But as chairperson you represent the Board which is the employer of the principal who, like the rest of your staff, has rights as an employee.

It is important that you and the school principal have a conversation around your understanding of your roles at the outset, so that you will have a solid foundation for the establishment of a professional relationship that is based on trust and mutual respect.

An effective working relationship with the Principal allows the Chairperson to act as a critical friend, offering support, advice and encouragement as required.

Between Board of Management meetings, decisions may need be taken by the Chairperson and the Principal. It is important that the Chairperson makes a report on these decisions at the next Board meeting.

Meeting regularly is important, particularly when either the Chairperson or the Principal is new, but face to face meetings will be based on availability and can be supplemented by telephone conversations or email.

As Chairperson, you should open the conversation on your respective expectations and devise a system that works for you both, given all your other commitments.

There will be occasions where the relationship will be challenged, but by continuing to build on a respectful and supportive working relationship, you will be better placed to resolve any issues.

Identify your complementary qualities at the outset and build a relationship that is based on honesty and openness – and a willingness to adapt.

Your relationship will benefit from:

- A shared vision and a common purpose;
- Clear communication, and
- An ability to reflect on status of the working relationship.

CPSMA will be on hand to guide you through any aspect of your role as Chairperson. The association will also provide advice and support in respect of any difficulties that might emerge in this critical relationship.

Usually there is a dedicated CPSMA Education Advisor who will deal with queries from Chairpersons and Principals in your Diocese. As a member school, both Principal and Chairperson will have access to the resources on the membership section of the CPSMA website. You have the option of sharing the log-in details with your Principal, or the CPSMA Help Desk Administrator will set you up with separate access.

9 The Cohesion of the Board of Management

The members of the Board are a corporate group, forming a community with a particular purpose and commitment. Think of a football team. The various players come from different backgrounds and bring different skills, but to be successful they must all play a full part in the game with a common purpose. The same with the Board of Management which you chair as team captain. All board members need to be playing the same game as part of a single team.

So it is important that from the beginning, Board members understand their role within the overall mission of a school which is part of the Catholic educational tradition. Each member should be respected and their talents recognised and affirmed. If this is done from the beginning, it will be clear what each member needs from the other members and what each can contribute to the Board on behalf of the school community. Loyalty to each other among the members of the Board and a common understanding that the agenda of the Board is to provide for the full human development of every child (and cannot be reduced to the concerns of any particular member of the Board) are vital for effective management.

All Board members should be provided with a copy of the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023*. To support them in fulfilling their role, appropriate training is essential for all Board members, and they should be encouraged to attend (or avail of online) training, provided by CPSMA at national and at local level.

Board members may need be assisted in realising and accepting that they carry the collective responsibility for the management of the school, subject to their accountability to the Patron and to the regulations of the Department of Education and Skills. It is important to be clear that although Board members have come to the Board by different 'routes' (nominated by parents, teachers, the Patron or the wider community) they do not sit on the Board to advance the interests of any single group. Thus for example the teacher nominee does not represent the teaching staff, but brings "a teacher's view" to any Board discussion. Similarly, the mothers' nominee and fathers' nominee do not represent the parent body. They were nominated to bring "a mother's view" and "a father's view" to Board deliberations. A clear understanding of the corporate responsibilities of each Board member will stave off difficulties, particularly if Board members are approached by members of their 'electorate' to bring issues to the Board. This might well be addressed at the commencement of the Board's term of office, but over time, individual members may lose sight of the "limits" of their role – and that is not intended to diminish the importance of their contribution. As Chairperson, you will need to be mindful of this.

Cohesion is developed through good communication between members of the Board, so as to unite them as a group. You might find the following tips helpful in achieving this:

- Draw on all members' experience and knowledge. Recognise and affirm their talents;
- Encourage the development of ideas rather than simply accepting or rejecting contributions;
- Encourage the full participation of Board members in discussions;
- Ensure that discussions remain 'on agenda' by bringing it back to the business in hand ensuring that contributions remain relevant and constructive;
- Do not allow education-specific language to exclude any member; and
- Delegate tasks and responsibilities to members of the Board according to their interests and availability.

10 Chairing a Board of Management Meeting

Preparation for a Board Meeting

- Prepare an Agenda, in consultation with the Principal, that is focused on the school's current needs and priorities.
- Invite all board members to the meeting (providing at least seven days' notice) and include the following information:
 - a. Agenda
 - b. Opening and closing time of the meeting
 - c. Venue
- Prepare and review all correspondence and D.E.S. circulars, in advance of the meeting
- Arrive well ahead of the proposed opening time of the meeting.
- Begin each meeting, on time, with a prayer.

The agenda may be sent via email, as it merely sets out the running order of the meeting, and should not include any confidential material/data, e.g. names of individuals or details of Board business.

During the course of the Board Meeting

The Chairperson presides over the meeting and controls the timing of the agenda. All comments must be made through the Chair, who will insist on respectful contributions and interventions. If a member of the Board is overly loquacious, the Chair must intervene in order to expedite proceedings. At the first meeting of the newly formed Board of Management, it is essential that the Chairperson informs the Board members of the corporate nature of the Board; the requirement for confidentiality; the protocols in relation to a Board member seeking to put an item on the Agenda for discussion. It is recommended that a decision should be taken on whether AOB (Any Other Business) be included on the meeting's agenda.

Where AOB is included, it should be made clear that it is for information purposes, or notice of a request for a possible motion for inclusion at a future meeting, rather than matters requiring a lengthy discussion or immediate Board decision. (It is up to the Chairperson and Principal to decide on whether the suggested agenda item should be included in a future meeting, based on its relevance to the school's key priorities).

Attendance and Apologies

These should be noted.

Quorum

You must ensure that the meeting is quorate, i.e., a minimum of five in attendance in a Board of eight members, and in Boards with four members (one-teacher schools), there should be a minimum of three in attendance. The meeting should be quorate throughout, and should be concluded in the event that a member has to leave, and the meeting is no longer quorate.

Disclosure of Interests

Remind all members of their obligation to disclose any relationship that might compromise their impartiality in any board discussion. Disclosure of Interest/Integrity of Board Proceedings¹⁵ deals with disclosure of interests in great detail, but essentially, Board members should be aware that they cannot participate in any Board discussion, where they have an interest that would prejudice the Board's deliberation and decision making.

¹⁵Section 15, *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 - 2023*

The Minutes of the previous meeting

The Board will decide how to convey the minutes to the members bearing in mind the implications of Data Protection legislation, but in general the minutes are read aloud at the beginning of a meeting. Emailing of minutes is not recommended and should only be considered if the emails are encrypted.

It is recommended that Chairpersons establish a dedicated email account for the purposes of Board business only. Personal and/or professional email accounts should not be used.

As part of the meeting, minutes should be checked for accuracy and completeness. Required changes should be carefully recorded. Minutes should then be proposed and seconded. Once adopted, they should be signed by the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Minutes are the property of the Board. They must be available on request to the patron, the trustees (in schools where there are trustees) and the Department of Education and Skills. Consideration should be given to secure storage of minutes in the school building and Boards should be cognisant of their obligations in relation to the confidentiality, accuracy and security of all records and data held by the school.

The minutes could be stored securely in the Principal's office, with the Chairperson of the Board of Management nominated as an additional key holder for the filing cabinet in which they are stored.

From time to time, the Chairperson will be required to retain confidential Board material (e.g. results of an interview process to appoint a new Principal). Provision should be made for the secure retention of this information in a separate location on the school premises. Again, an additional key holder should be nominated (e.g. second Patron nominee) in the event that this information is required, and the Chairperson is unavailable.

Recording the minutes of a meeting

It is essential to record decisions arrived at by the Board – even if the “decision” was to defer the decision to a subsequent meeting to allow time for further research. It is not necessary to record details of the discussion of the particular agenda item. If a vote is taken, the minutes will record the number of votes for and against, but not the names of Board Members and how they voted.

The minutes should reflect the order of the Agenda. As already noted, where AOB is included, it should be made clear that it is for information purposes, or notice of a request for a possible motion for inclusion at a future meeting, rather than matters requiring a lengthy discussion or immediate Board decision.

You will find a Sample of Board Minutes in Appendix 5. Please note that there is no “narrative” included in this example. It records action based decisions, including decisions to defer.

Correspondence

If there is a considerable amount of correspondence, it can be helpful to have a list prepared for each Board member. This would merely state the origin and the subject matter of each item of correspondence and would include a list of Department Circulars that have issued since the last Board meeting.

The Board should be made aware of all correspondence addressed to the Chairperson. Much of the correspondence needs simply to be noted by the Board of Management. This can be indicated on the list of correspondence. Other items may need some discussion and decision by the Board.

If the correspondence is required to be dealt with under a particular procedure, it is sufficient to note that, for example, a letter of complaint (no details shared) has been received, and will be addressed under the relevant procedure.

Please make careful note of the following:

If a letter of complaint is sent to the Chairperson, it must be dealt with under the agreed procedures. For example, if a parent makes a complaint against a teacher to the Board of Management, the complaint should not be brought to the Board until the earlier stages of the agreed Parental Complaints Procedure have been exhausted. This is to ensure that every effort is made to resolve the issue at the least formal stage. This is a five stage process. If the complaint is brought to the Board at the incorrect stage, it could prejudice any Board discussion that may take place a further stage of the process.

Child Protection complaints must be dealt with under the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES 2017)*.

Anonymous letters to the Chairperson should not be brought to the Board. If the anonymous letter relates to a child protection issue, it should be dealt with under the Child Protection Procedures, and the appropriate advice should be sought from Tusla.

The Principal teacher may deal with correspondence if addressed to him/her, or she/he may decide to bring the matter to the attention of the Board for their information or to seek the advice of members of the Board.

Board of Management members should be reminded that all correspondence must be brought to the Board's attention via the Chairperson, who is correspondent to the Board. If a member of the Board is approached to bring an issue or correspondence to the Board, they should explain to the person approaching them the protocol for making the request. If a letter from a solicitor is received, it is advisable to contact your insurer to seek authorisation for legal advice, before responding to the letter. If you have any concerns in relation to responding to any item of correspondence, please contact CPSMA for advice.

Finance - The Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report should be presented at every Board meeting. Section 12 of the *Governance Manual 2019 – 2023* sets out the role and responsibilities of the Treasurer.

To assist Boards of Management in fulfilling their statutory obligations in relation to school accounts, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) established by the Department of Education and Skills in 2005 was expanded to include primary schools in September 2017. Circular 0060/2017¹⁶ was published to inform Boards of Management of the roll out and operation of the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) at Primary Level.

The FSSU website (www.fssu.ie) has a number of templates which have been specifically created for primary schools. The most relevant templates relate to the accounts year end, as these templates are now mandatory. If you or the Treasurer require any assistance in the use of these templates, please contact the FSSU.¹⁷

The Principal's Report

This is where the Principal reports on the day-to-day life and functioning of the school. It also enables the Principal Teacher to avail of the collective wisdom and advice of the Board members. The Principal Teacher and members of the Board should be familiar with the terms of *Circular 16/73* with regard to the role of the Principal Teacher. The Principal Teacher reports to the Board on a wide range of issues that may vary according to the time of the year.

See Appendix 7 for a non-exhaustive list of items to be included in the Principal's report. Mandatory items for inclusion are marked with an asterisk.

¹⁶See DES Circular 0060/2017

¹⁷Financial Support Services Unit, New House, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
Tel: 01 910 4020; Email: primary@fssu.ie website: www.fssu.ie

Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report (C.P.O.R.)

At each Board of Management meeting, the Principal's report to the Board must include a Child Protection Oversight Report as required under Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

A template *Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR)* can be accessed on www.education.gov.ie

For all cases noted in the CPOR, the Board has to be satisfied that the reporting procedures set out in the D.E.S. Child Protection Procedures 2017 were followed. Depending on the type of Child Protection reports contained in the CPOR, supporting records are reviewed by the Board to fulfil its obligation in this regard.

The Chairperson should remind Board members that:

- Records provided under the CPOR are to be reviewed **solely** for the purposes of oversight of the reporting requirements set out in the procedures.
- Under no circumstances shall the board members enter into any discussion or investigation in relation to the substance or credibility or otherwise of the allegation or concern in question when undertaking this oversight role.
- The purpose of this review is solely to review whether, based on the information available to the DLP and any Tusla advice available, the relevant reporting requirements were followed.

The Agreed Report

Whilst the minutes of a Board meeting are a record of Agenda items discussed and decisions reached at the meeting in question, the "Agreed Report" is a summary of items of a non-confidential nature that the Board decides to share with members of the school community. Under the terms of the Rule for Confidentiality (see *Governance Manual 2019 – 2023* S.8 & S.9) the Board should decide at the end of each meeting what information may be disclosed, to whom and how. **Section 9.3 Governance Manual 2019 – 2023** provides for the Board to put in place an agreed report to support good communications to parents, staff and the school community. The agreed report shall not include details of any issues which must remain confidential to Board members, and it may be included in a school newsletter or other communication to parents. Schools may also choose to publish the agreed report on the school website. A sample "Agreed Report" can be found in Appendix 6.

Date of next meeting

A Board must hold a minimum of one meeting per school term and should hold not less than five meetings in any school year. If the schedule of meetings for the year has been agreed, the Chairperson reminds Board members of the date and checks that the date arranged is still suitable for the members. Dates should not be changed unless there is very good reason for doing so, and then with the maximum advance notice possible.

If the schedule of meetings for the year has not been agreed, then, at the end of each meeting the Board members will decide the date and time of the next meeting.

The meeting should finish on time, with any outstanding issues tabled for discussion at the next meeting, and should be closed with a prayer.

11 Where to access advice and support

The *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023* sets out the various rules regarding the composition and operation of Boards. All Boards of Management of Primary schools assuming office from 1 December 2019 onwards are required to adhere to the provisions of this Manual. As such, it is your “go to” document for guidance and direction on governance issues.

The *CPSMA Handbook* (www.cpsma.ie) is intended as a guide for Boards of Management, to be used in conjunction with:

- *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 - 2023*, (Department of Education and Skills, 2019)
- Department of Education and Skills Circular Letters
- Regulations issued by other relevant departments
- Patron requirements

CPSMA is on hand to advise you on any governance issue, including those listed hereunder.

• Recruitment of Staff

The Board of Management is the employer of all teaching staff and ancillary staff, and is the paymaster of some of its employees (Note: Department of Education and Skills is the paymaster of Teachers and Special Needs Assistants).

As Chairperson of the Board of Management, you will chair all interview boards. It is only in exceptional circumstances and for valid reasons that you can apply to the Patron to be excluded from the process. Where the Patron decides to allow the exclusion, the Patron will arrange for a replacement appointment of a Chairperson to the Interview Board, for the purposes of the recruitment process only. Under no circumstances should the Chairperson of the Board of Management appoint another Board member to act as Chairperson of an interview board in his/her place. The Chairperson must contact the Diocesan Secretary, who will arrange for the appointment of a replacement Chairperson.

Whilst the procedures are clear and self-explanatory, here are some important points to remember when it comes to recruitment:

- As there is a redeployment panel in operation for Teachers and a Supplementary Assignment Panel in operation for Special Needs Assistants, it is important to check any responsibility that the Board might have in relation to these panels, before a recruitment process begins. Please contact CPSMA for advice if you are unsure of the status of the recruitment procedure.
- When recruiting Teachers and SNAs – and when conducting Leadership and Management promotion procedures – you **must** contact your Diocesan Secretary to ascertain a) what the procedure is in relation to appointing an Independent Assessor, approved by the Patron, to the interview board, and b) what the procedure is in relation to having an appointment approved by the Patron.
- When recruiting teachers, you should ensure that the successful candidate has completed the *Certificate in Religious Education*, and this qualification requirement can be stipulated in your advertisement. (See: “*Recognition of Qualifications to Teach Catholic Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools on the Island of Ireland*”).
- Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process.

- Disclosure of Interest: Interview Board members are required to make a disclosure not only in the case of a family relationship but in respect of any relationship which could be regarded as prejudicial to ensuring absolute impartiality in the selection process. See Section 15 of the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023*.
- Discrimination: Care must be taken to ensure that no element of the process, from advertisement to interview, would lead to discrimination on the grounds set out in Section 6(2) of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2008 i.e., gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and member of the Travelling Community.
- When inviting a candidate for interview, you should include a request for the applicant to notify the Interview Board if he/she requires any additional assistance in relation to a special need. The interview venue should be fully accessible and in compliance with all Disability and Health and Safety legislation. It should also be an appropriate setting for a professional recruitment process.
- The interview board should be mindful of the fact that a candidate can request marks and notes from the interview. Any notes taken should serve as an aide-memoire to inform the marks that are to be awarded.
- Ensure that a formal report is prepared for the Board meeting to sanction the appointment. The Board is required to sanction the appointment unless it has good and sufficient reason not to do so and such reason was not known to the Interview Board. If this situation arises, the matter will be referred to the Patron, who will make the final decision.
- Ensure that the sanction of the Patron is secured before the successful candidate is offered the position. Again, your Diocesan Secretary will advise you in this regard.
- Ensure that the appropriate contract is put in place and complete the Chairperson's declaration on the official D.E.S. appointment form to confirm that the school authority has fulfilled its statutory and non-statutory obligations in relation to the appointment.

An Appointment Checklist is available on www.cpsma.ie to assist the Interview Board in fulfilling each stage of the process:

- Advertising
- Shortlisting
- Interview
- Post-Interview Administration

Procedure for the Recruitment of Teachers

Circular 0044/2019 Recruitment/Promotion and Leadership for Registered Teachers in recognised Primary Schools.

Procedure for the Recruitment of Special Need Assistants

Circular 0051/2019 Recruitment and Appointment Procedures for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). The procedures outlined in this circular complement Circular 0030/2019 (or update thereof) which details the recruitment procedures and supplementary assignment arrangements for SNAs for the 2019/2020 school year.

It is important to note that these recruitment procedures have a statutory basis (Section 24 Education Act 1998) and must be adhered to when recruiting staff who are to be paid from monies provided by the Oireachtas.

Procedure for the Recruitment of Ancillary Staff

There are no agreed procedures for the recruitment of Caretakers, Secretaries, Bus Escorts, Cleaners etc. However, CPSMA recommends that Boards of Management use the recruitment procedure for SNAs (as set out in *Circular 0051/2019*), as a model of good practice, when recruiting ancillary staff.

CPSMA has compiled a series of appointment/promotion checklists to support Boards of Management in adhering to the relevant procedures. These include:

- Template letter of invitation to interview
- Template letters of offer
- Template letter advising that candidate was unsuccessful
- Template report to the Board of Management
- Appointment checklists
- Contracts

The Board of Management (as employer) authorises the Chairperson to act on behalf of the Board in entering into an agreement with each new staff member appointed to the staff of the school. CPSMA has a range of template contracts on the Appointments section of www.cpsma.ie. If you are unsure of the type of contract to offer, please contact our advice line for guidance.

• Child Protection

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* should be brought to the attention of all Board Member at the first meeting. Whilst it is essential that all Board Members are familiar with the provision of the D.E.S Procedures, the Board has two main areas of responsibility in relation to Child Protection and Safeguarding.

Child Safeguarding Statement

Firstly, the main statutory obligations on a Board of Management under the Children First Act, 2015 are to:

- ensure, as far as practicable that children are safe from harm while availing of the school's services (i.e. while attending the school or while participating in school activities)
- carry out an assessment of any potential for harm to children while they are attending the school or while they are participating in school activities (this is known as a risk assessment)
- prepare and display a written Child Safeguarding Statement in accordance with the requirements of the Act.
- appoint a "relevant person" as the first point of contact in respect of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement. Chapter 3 of the D.E.S. procedures requires that the DLP shall be appointed in this role.
- provide a copy of its Child Safeguarding Statement to members of school personnel and, where requested to parents, members of the public and to Tusla.

Note: Under the provisions of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* the Child Safeguarding Statement should be reviewed on an annual basis.

The second area of responsibility that the Board is required to oversee is compliance with the Reporting Procedures.

The D.E.S. procedures for schools have put in place some important new oversight measures to help ensure and demonstrate that the new statutory obligations of the Children First Act, 2015 and the best practice obligations of the *Children First National Guidance 2017* are being adhered to by both school personnel and by school authorities.

In order that Board members are in a position to discharge their responsibility in this regard, they need to be sufficiently familiar with the reporting procedures, as set out in the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* – hence the importance of appropriate training for Board of Management members.

• Data Protection

Data Protection is, just like the area of Health & Safety, a whole-school responsibility that is shared amongst every member of the school community. An important first step is to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

A “Data Protection in Schools” website www.dataprotectionschools.ie was launched by the primary and post primary management bodies in September 2014 which provides an overview of data protection legislation and how it applies to schools. A further resource www.gdpr4schools.ie was established to assist schools prepare for and implement GDPR requirements.

CPSMA has published a Draft Data Protection Policy for schools, which can be accessed on www.cpsma.ie.

The Data Protection Commission (DPC) www.dataprotection.ie also provides advice for organisations, including schools.

• School Self Evaluation/Whole School Evaluation

Under *Circular 0039/2016* and *Circular 0016/2018* schools are required to engage in School Self Evaluation (SSE). This is also provided for in the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023*, section 1.10, “Self-Evaluation/Teaching and Learning”. This is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review which results in the drafting and implementation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP). The purpose of SSE and SIP is to improve teaching and learning outcomes for the pupils attending the school.

Whilst teaching and learning may be viewed as the reserve of the Principal and teaching staff, the Board of Management has an important oversight role to fulfil its statutory function to ensure that an appropriate education is provided to all of the school’s pupils.¹⁸

To ensure that the Board plays an active role in improving standards in the school from an oversight and governance perspective, it is recommended that School Self-Evaluation is included as an agenda item at all board meetings.

A dedicated website www.schoolself-evaluation.ie also provides up-to-date information about school self-evaluation and contains materials and resources to support schools as they engage in the process.

This School Self Evaluation process (which is a self-auditing process), operates side by side with the external auditing and review process of the inspectorate (W.S.E. – Whole School Evaluation).

A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools (D.E.S.) is a useful source of information in this regard.

The principles of evaluation and improvement underpin both processes. A useful starting point for any board is the *Legislative and Regulatory checklist*. See *Appendix 8*. This document will serve as an audit tool for identifying school planning priorities.

Should you have any queries in relation to the Board’s role in School Self Evaluation, or indeed, if you receive notification of a Whole School Evaluation, please contact CPSMA for advice.

¹⁸ Section 15, Education Act 1998

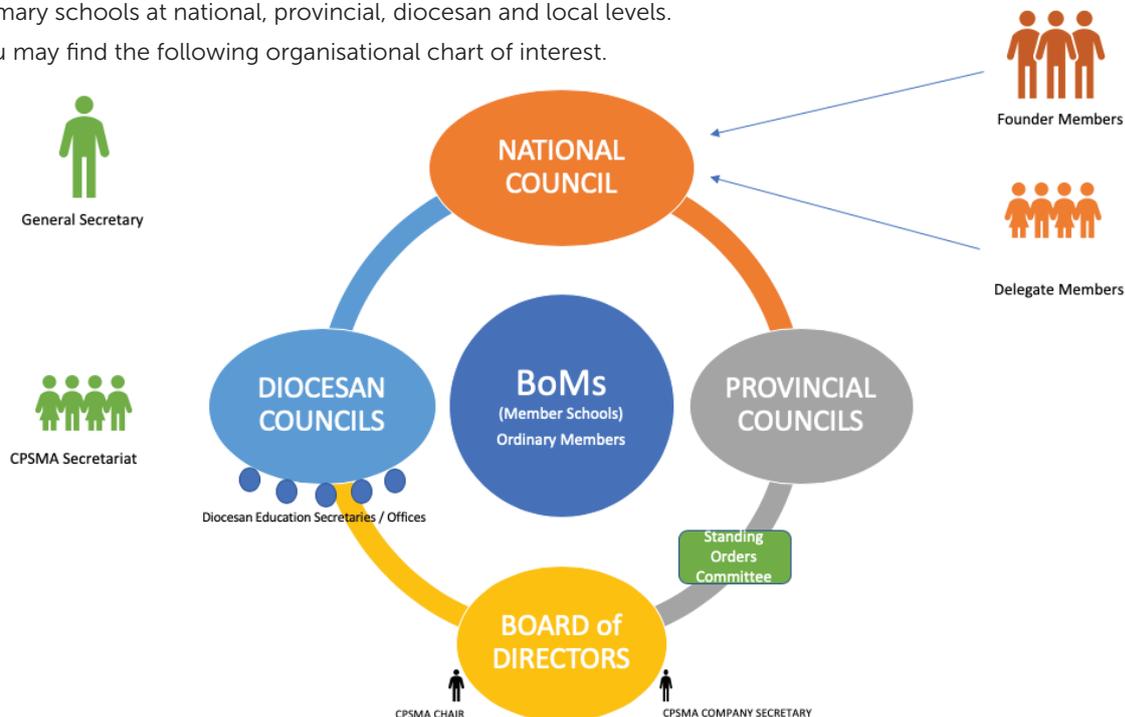
Appendix 1 - December 2019

A few words about CPSMA

What is CPSMA?

The Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) is an association of Boards of Management for Catholic primary schools in Ireland. It has over 2,800 member schools. It actively promotes the work of Catholic primary schools at national, provincial, diocesan and local levels.

You may find the following organisational chart of interest.



The patron of a Catholic primary school is the local bishop and therefore CPSMA is organised on a Diocesan basis. A Diocesan Council meets a number of times a year and organises various meetings for Boards of Management in the Diocese. (Boards should inquire from the Diocesan Education Secretary about the local organisation).

Each Diocese sends delegates to an annual Provincial Council meeting and to the Annual General Meeting of the National Council.

The National Council of CPSMA consists of delegate members representing the individual Dioceses and founder members (some of the bishops) who meet once a year at an AGM to transact the ordinary business of the Association as a limited company and to set its direction by agreeing motions on matters of importance. The motions to be considered are finalised in advance of the AGM by a representative Standing Orders Committee.

The CPSMA Board of Directors oversees the running of the association and its functioning as both a limited company and a registered charity. It is made up of elected delegate members, representatives of the four Provincial Councils and co-opted members. The Board elects the CPSMA Chair and Company Secretary from among its number.

The day-to-day running of the Association is the responsibility of its chief officer – the General Secretary – assisted by an Assistant General Secretary and the staff of the CPSMA Secretariat.

Membership of CPSMA

All Boards of Management of Catholic primary schools are eligible to become members of CPSMA on payment of an annual subscription. The amount of the subscription is modest and is determined by the size of the school. In addition membership is also available to the Boards of Management of other primary schools in the Republic of Ireland that can support the educational vision of CPSMA. CPSMA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is a registered charity. One third of membership fees are allocated to the relevant diocese to provide support for Boards of Management at local level. The remaining membership fees are centrally allocated to the work of the Secretariat.

Central Membership Services The CPSMA Advice Line 01 6292462

Our Education Advisors deal with over 9,000 calls annually. The advice line, which is available to all Board of Management Chairpersons and Principals, connects schools to an education advisor for advice relating to all aspects of primary education management, including Board of Management responsibilities, school admissions, buildings, child protection, data protection, school finance, discipline, family law, pupil education, employment of school personnel, leadership and management, special educational needs, handling complaints, training, and vetting. In addition all Board members can seek advice about child protection issues.

The CPSMA Newsletter

Our newsletter is published on a regular basis during the school year and is emailed directly to Chairpersons and Principals. It contains up-to-date information and advice on the most recent and relevant developments in primary education, as well as reminders and checklists on frequently occurring topics. Articles from other relevant education related organisations are also included. Onceoff newsletters on particular issues or topics are also published from time to time.

Board of Management Training

CPSMA is at heart a training organisation and is cognisant of the fact that Boards of Management need to be properly informed and trained to run primary schools. We plan and deliver a broad range of training events and resources for Board of Management members specially designed to respond to current needs and reflect the needs of adult professional learning.

Training modules include topics such as child protection, staff appointment procedures, the role of the Board of Management, board finance, legal issues, anti-bullying and data protection. Details of upcoming training are circulated to Boards of Management in advance and places are confirmed on a first come, first served basis.

The CPSMA Board of Management Handbook

In conjunction with the publication of the Department of Education and Skills' Governance Manual, CPSMA publishes a Board of Management Handbook for CPSMA member schools. This handbook provides further information on areas such as finance, insurance, health and safety, the Church, employment, special education and buildings.

Advocacy and Representation

CPSMA represents the interests of our member schools by providing a management voice on education committees such as the Primary Education Forum, the Teaching Council, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Teacher Conciliation Council (TCC), and other committees and fora which arise. CPSMA is also in contact, discussion and negotiation with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and a range of other education related bodies, including the National Parents Council (NPC), the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), the Irish Primary Principal Network (IPPN), Fórsa, the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU), Túsla, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and Allianz.

Annual General Meeting of the National Council

CPSMA holds its Annual General Meeting each spring. The meeting is held over two days and rotates between the four provinces. On the first day, delegates transact the formal business of the association. On the second day (which is open to all Chairs and Principals) guest contributors speak on a range of current issues and themes and workshops are offered.

Representation on the Media

CPSMA deals with media enquiries on a range of current education related matters.

The CPSMA Logo



The use of the CPSMA name at the centre of the logo is a reminder that CPSMA is an association of members. The Cross is a reminder that CPSMA is an association with a Catholic ethos, and the Dots symbolise the members whom CPSMA serve.

Further Information

You may wish to look at the CPSMA website – www.cpsma.ie

The 'public-side' of the website is accessible to anyone. The 'member-side' of the website is restricted to CPSMA members. Each affiliated school's Board of Management is provided with login details.

Appendix 2 - December 2019

Diocesan Contact Details

Name and address of School

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School Roll Number

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Name of Diocese

Name of Patron

Diocesan Education Secretary

Name

Contact Details

.....

.....

Diocesan Advisor for Primary Religious Education

Name

Contact Details

.....

.....

Vetting of non-Teaching Staff

Name

Contact Details

.....

.....

Other Diocesan Services and Supports

Appendix 3 - December 2019

Schedule of a Catholic School

A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people.

The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

Appendix 4 - December 2019

Sample Agenda for Board of Management Meeting

- **Opening - prayer/reflection**
 - Bereavements etc. noted here
- **Attendance and apologies**
- **Minutes**
 - Drawn up by Secretary
 - Confidential to those entitled to be at the particular meeting/s
 - Patron & DES can have access
 - Decisions recorded and read aloud
 - Agreed and signed by chairperson
- **Matters arising from minutes**
 - Follow up on decisions...
- **Correspondence**
 - Relevant correspondence to Chairperson should be brought to Board's attention
 - Circulars, newsletters etc.
 - Letters of complaint etc. dealt with in accordance with procedures
 - Legal advice
- **Ethos** (as a separate Agenda item or included in Principal's Report)
 - Religious events/Liturgical Calendar/Assemblies
 - Sacramental preparation/celebration
 - "Grow in Love"/ Religious Education Policy
 - Catholic Schools Week
- **Finance**
 - Treasurer's report at every meeting
- **Principal Teacher's Report** (See sample, Appendix 7)
- **Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report**
- **AoB** (if included – see Section 10 of this publication)
- **Agreed report to be noted**
 - Confidentiality - What information? To whom? By whom? How?
- **Suggestion**
 - Section of Handbook/policy for review at each meeting...
- **Next meeting**
 - Date/time

Appendix 5 - December 2019

Sample Board of Management Meeting Minutes

Minutes from (Name of School) Board of Management Meeting on DD/MM/YYYY @ xx:xx a.m./p.m.

Venue	
Attendees	Names in full
Apologies	Names in full

Agenda item	DECISION / ACTION	by
Opening Prayer/ Reflection		Chairperson
Minutes of previous meeting	Minutes proposed by: (Initials) Minutes seconded by: (Initials) Minutes adopted and signed	Chairperson
Matters arising	Brief description to be included. If there are no matters arising, record "none"	
Correspondence	List of Correspondence attached. [Note: Any item of correspondence that requires discussion will be listed separately as an Agenda item – see samples * below]	Chairperson
Finance	Treasurer's Report presented and adopted Copy attached. Confirmation that the Annual Accounts for 2018/2019 have been submitted to FSSU. Note any Financial Guidelines that have been issued by the FSSU.	Treasurer
Principal's Report	Principal's Report presented and adopted. Copy attached.	Principal
Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report	This report may be appended separately (<i>DES Template E</i> recommended) or the required information can be incorporated into these minutes. Similarly, a list of the required documents may be appended separately (<i>DES Template F</i> recommended), or listed in the body of these minutes. If the templates are appended, the minutes should state that fact. NB: Minutes shall not name any employee, any children or other parties referred to in the documentation but shall record the matter by reference to the unique code or serial number assigned by the DLP to the case/parties concerned.	Principal
Ethos	Board decided that a framed copy of the 'Schedule of the Catholic School' would be prominently hung in the school entrance hall (by the reception office) and would also be added to the school website under the section 'About Our School'.	

Sanction of successful SNA candidate	Interview Board report submitted. (Name of candidate)'s appointment approved. Patron approval to be sought by CP prior to offer.	Chairperson
*Application for T/Y work experience	Two applications received. Decision postponed pending clarification of vetting requirements.	Principal to follow up
* Request to rent school for Summer Camp	Decision not taken at meeting. Awaiting outcome of application for Summer Works Scheme.	Principal to relay update on request on behalf of Chairperson
*Application for Job Sharing – two permanent teachers	Provision of Job Sharing Scheme outlined. Requests granted. Decision to be relayed in writing to both teachers.	Principal to respond on behalf of Chairperson
Review of Admissions Policy	Policy amended to reflect the Sections of the Admissions to School Act 2018 that have been commenced. Updated policy ratified by Board.	Chairperson
Parents' Association Activities	Schedule of Parents' Association activities discussed, welcomed and approved by Board.	Parent Nominee to relay to PA
Agreed Report	Items for inclusion agreed. To be drafted by Principal and Chairperson & posted on website.	Teacher nominee to upload
Date of next meeting	DD/MM/YYYY – Venue - Time	

Appendix 6 - December 2019

Sample Agreed Report - Board of Management Meeting

Date: DD/MM/YYYY

- The Board of Management ratified the following policies:
 1. Admissions Policy
 2. School Tours Policy
- Parents are reminded of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment which is available on our website and in hard copy from the office.
- The school calendar for the school year has been approved by the Board of Management and is attached to this report.
- The Board of Management would like to sincerely thank the Parents' Association for their successful fundraising project – The Cube. The funds raised (€xxxxx) will be used, as agreed, to upgrade the playing area for our Infant Pupils. Thanks to all involved – organisers and supporters for their commitment to the school.
- Congratulations to the Green School committee on their success in leading the school to its third Green Flag. Details of the raising the flag ceremony to follow.
- Please check the school website for our recently published School Improvement Plan.
- The Board of Management wishes the very best of luck to the school team in the Cumann na mBunscoil final on
- The school will close on the October 10th for training on the new Language Curriculum.
- The Board of Management is pleased to welcome Ms. Xxxxx to our dedicated team of Special Needs Assistants.
- Safety at Drop off and Pick Up times: In the interests of safety, all members of the school community are reminded of our Parking Protocol, published on the school's website. Please do not park in the Set Down area and follow the direction of our School Warden, Xxxxx. Parents are asked to encourage children to use the pedestrian crossing.
- Parent Teacher Meetings are scheduled for DD/MM/YYYY. Detailed appointments will be issued by the school in advance of the date.

Signed:

Secretary to the Board of Management

Appendix 7 - December 2019

Sample Principal's Report for Board of Management Meeting

Significant issues of concern related to life & function of the school

- Child Protection (separate oversight report) See DES [Circular 0081/2017](#) & [Child Protection Procedures 2017*](#).
- School Self Evaluation Process - Literacy/Numeracy ([Circulars 0039/2016*](#) and [0016/2018](#)) & Policies for ratification.
- Online Claims System Report ([Circular 0024/2013*](#))
- Report on incidents of bullying ([Circular 0045/2013*](#))
- Enrolment/Admissions
- Leadership and Management – roles, responsibilities, appointments etc.
- Pupils absences – Education Welfare Act – Tusla
- Public relations
- Holidays and closures ([Circular 0005/2020](#))
- Repairs/Minor Works
- Health and Safety
- School Tours
- Future planning
- Transition to post-primary
- Class allocation
- Ethos: Religious Events/Liturgical Celebrations/Assemblies etc.
- Religious events/Liturgical Celebrations
- Visitors/ Guest Speakers
- Special needs resources
- Recent circulars
- Issues in relation to staffing allocation
- Supervision
- Parent teacher meetings ([Circular 14/04](#))
- Policy issues
- Legislation
- Training/professional development/in-service
- Resource requirements
- Other...

Appendix 8 - December 2019

School Self-Evaluation Report: Legislative and Regulatory Checklist (Primary)

This is not an exhaustive checklist. It is intended to assist the board of management in carrying out its leadership and management responsibilities and functions, as set out in the Education Act (1998), and within the context of its own school. The completed checklist will contain sensitive information and should be treated as confidential.

Issue	Relevant legislation, rule or circular	Is the school fully meeting the requirements of the relevant legislation, rule or circular?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed
Time in school - Length of school year - minimum of 183 days - Length of school day -4 hours 40 minutes (infants); 5 hour 40 minutes (1 st -6 th classes)	Circular 0011/1995	School year <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No School day <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Standardisation of school year	Circular 0005/2020	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Valid enrolment of pupils	Section 9(1), 15(2) and 23 Education Act 1998 Sections 20 and 21, Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Rules 55, 64, 108 and 123, Rules for National Schools Circular 0024/2002	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Updating and simplifying the manner in which schools can maintain pupil enrolment and attendance records following the introduction of the Primary Online Database (POD)	Primary Online Database - Circular 0025/2015, Update - Circular 0033/2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Pupils repeating a school year	Rule 64 Rules for National Schools Circular 0011/2001 Circular 0032/2003	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Annual returns on Attendance to Tusla: The Child and Family Agency	Education and Welfare Act 2000	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Development of school plan	Section 21, Education Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Engagement with SSE process	Circular 0039/2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Time for literacy and numeracy	Circular 0056/11, Circular 0066/2011, Circular 0018/2012,	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Administration of Standardised Tests and Return of Data	Circulars 0056/2011, 0018/2012, 0045/2014, 0027/2015, 0034/2016 and 0038/2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Primary Language Curriculum (Infants to Second Class)	Circular 0061/2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Exemption from Irish	Circular 0052/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Deployment of Teachers	Staffing arrangements for the 2019/20 school year Circular 0019/19 Special Education Teaching Allocation Model Circular 0013/2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Posts of Responsibilities	Circular 0044/2019 – Leadership and Management in Primary Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Seniority of primary teachers	Circular 0044/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Release Time for Principal Teachers in Primary Schools	Circular 0020/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Implementation of national agreement regarding additional time requirement	Circular 0008/2011 Circular 0052/14	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Digital Strategy and Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure	Circular 0001/2017 and 0011/2018 Digital Learning Plan Use of the Digital Learning Framework	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Implementation of Child Protection Procedures 2017	Circular 0081/2017 Please record the following information in relation to child protection as reported to the board	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Child Protection Oversight Report presented at each board meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Number of reports submitted by the DLP to Tusla and reported to the board		
	Number of cases where the DLP sought advice from Tusla and as a result of this advice, no report was made		
	Number of cases where a mandated person other than the DLP made a report to Tusla and notified the DLP		
Implementation of vetting requirements	National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 Circular 0026/2015 Circular 0031/2016 Circular 0016/2017 (Statutory requirements for retrospective vetting) Child Protection Procedures 2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Implementation of complaints procedure as appropriate	Complaints Procedures, Section 28 Education Act Please record the following in relation to complaints	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Number of formal parental complaints received		
	Number of formal complaints processed		
	Number of formal complaints not fully processed by the end of this school year		
Refusal to enrol	Section 29 Education Act 1998 Please record information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school		

	Number of cases processed at informal stage			
	Number of cases heard			
	Number of appeals upheld			
	Number of appeals dismissed			
Suspension of students	Section 29 Education Act 1998		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Please record information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year			
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school			
	Number of cases processed at informal stage			
	Number of cases heard			
	Number of appeals upheld			
Expulsion of students	Section 29 Education Act 1998		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Please record information in relation to appeals taken in accordance with Section 29 against the school during this school year			
	Number of section 29 cases taken against the school			
	Number of cases processed at informal stage			
	Number of cases heard			
	Number of appeals upheld			
	Number of appeals dismissed			

Appendix to School Self-Evaluation Report: Policy checklist (Primary)

Policy	Source	Has policy been approved by the board of management?	If no, indicate aspects to be developed.
Enrolment policy	Section (15)(2)(d) Education Act 1998 Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Attendance and participation strategy ¹	Section 22 Education Welfare Act 2000 Equal Status Acts 2000-2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Child Safeguarding Statement	Child Protection Procedures 2017 Circular 0081/2017	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Code of behaviour ² including anti-bullying policy Dignity in the Workplace Charter	Circular 20/90 NEWB <i>Guidelines</i> Section 23, Education Welfare Act 2000 <i>Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools</i> 2013, and Circular 45/13 Section 8(2)(b), Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Critical incident management plan	Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Data protection	General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) May 2018: see www.dataprotectionschools.ie www.gdpr4schools.ie	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Health and safety statement	Section 20 Health and Safety Act 2005	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Internet acceptable use policy	National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) Guidelines, 2012 at www.webwise.ie	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Parents as partners	Circular 24/91	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Public service agreement – special needs assistants	Circular 71/11	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) policy	Relationships and Sexuality Education: Policy Guidelines (1997)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Substance use policy	National Drugs Strategy and Department of Education and Skills Guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Special educational needs policy ³	Education Act 1998 Equal Status Acts 2000- 2011 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) ⁴ 2004 Disability Act 2005 Circular RAM –SEN (2017)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
For DEIS schools only: DEIS Action Plan	DEIS Plan 2017 Department of Education and Skills Guidelines on the appropriate use of the DEIS Grant (updated annually)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

1 Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 22), the school's attendance strategy should conform to the provisions stipulated.

2 Under the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (section 23) the school's code of behaviour should conform to the specifications stated.

3 Section 9 of the Education Act (1998) requires a school to "use its available resources" to identify and provide for the educational needs of those "with a disability or other special educational needs."

4 The EPSEN Act requires that schools be inclusive of and provide an appropriate education for pupils with special educational needs.

Appendix 9

Organisations

Primary Management Bodies

CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Management Association, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare Tel: 01 6292462 email: info@cpsma.ie website: www.cpsma.ie
Board of Education	Church of Ireland Board of Education, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6 Tel: 01 4978422
Community National Schools	Education and Training Boards, Ireland (E.T.B.I.) Tel: 045 901070 www.cns.ie
Foras Pátrúnachta	An Foras Pátrúnachta, Bloc K3, Campas Gnó Mhaigh Nuad, Maigh Nuad, Co. Chill Dara Tel :01 629 4410 email: eolas@foras.ie website: www.foras.ie
Educate Together	Educate Together, Equity House, 16/17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 7 email: info@educatetogether.ie website: www.educatetogether.ie
MPEB	Muslim Primary Education Board 163 South Circular Road, Dublin 8 Tel: 087 3693270 info@muslimeducation.ie
NABMSE	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education, Kildare Education Centre, Friary Road, Kildare, Co Kildare. Tel: 045 533 753 email: nabmse1@eircom.net website: www.nabmse.org

Other Organisations and Agencies

CSP	Catholic Schools Partnership Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare Tel: +353 (0)1 505 3164 Email: office@catholicschools.ie
DES	Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough St., Dublin 1 Tel: 01 889 6400 email: info@education.gov.ie website: www.education.ie
FSSU	Financial Support Services Unit New House, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare Tel: 01 910 4020 Email: primary@fssu.ie website: www.fssu.ie

NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2 Tel: 01 661 7177 email: info@ncca.ie website: www.ncca.ie
NCSE	National Council for Special Education, 1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath. Tel: 046 948 6400 email: info@ncse.ie website: www.ncse.ie
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service, Department of Education and Skills, Block 1, Floor 1, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 889 2700 website: www.education.ie
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers, 14 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Nangor Road, Dublin 12 Tel: 01 4358587 email: info@pdst.ie
PDST Technology in Education	National Centre for Technology in Education, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 700 8200 email: technologyineducation@pdst.ie website: www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie
SESS	Special Education Support Service, Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Rd, Cork. Tel: 1850 200 884 email: info@sess.ie website: www.sess.ie
SPU	Schools Procurement Unit, Emmet House, Dundrum Rd, Milltown, Dublin Tel: 01 2035899 Website: www.spu.ie Email: procurementsupport@spu.ie
Teaching Council	The Teaching Council, Block A, Maynooth Business campus, Maynooth, Co. Kildare Tel: LoCall 1890 224 224, 01 651 7900 email: info@teachingcouncil.ie website: www.teachingcouncil.ie
Teacher Education Section (TES)	Teacher Education Section, Department of Education & Skills, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Email: TES@education.gov.ie This unit has a role in all national initiatives
Tusla – Child and Family Agency (formerly NEWB)	Education Welfare Services Tel: 01 7718500 email: ewsinfo@tusla.ie Regional contacts available on www.tusla.ie
DPC	Data Protection Commission: www.dataprotection.ie
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation: www.into.ie
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network: www.ippn.ie
FÓRSA	Trade Union: www.forsa.ie
SIPTU	Trade Union: www.siptu.ie
NPC - Primary	National Parents Council Primary: www.npc.ie

Acronyms and Definitions

API	Assistant Principal I (Formerly Assistant Principal)
APII	Assistant Principal II (Formerly Special Duties Teacher)
BOM	Board of Management
DP	Deputy Principal
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – an action plan for educational inclusion in disadvantaged communities.
Droichead	An integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers
Early Start	The Early Start Programme is a one-year programme offered to children aged 3-4 years in selected schools in areas of designated disadvantage
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison (part of integrated Educational Welfare Services of Tusla)
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IPLP	Individual Profile and Learning Programme
CT	Mainstream class teacher
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
OLCS	On Line Claim System
PA	Parents' Association
Partners	Parents, Board of Management etc. involved in a school's activities
Patron	Schools operate under a patron body e.g. Catholic Church, Educate Together, Church of Ireland Board of Education, An Foras Pátrúnachta, Muslim Primary Education Board, ETBI.
POD	Primary Online Database
L & M (PoR)	Leadership and Management (Formerly Posts of Responsibility) e.g. Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal I and Assistant Principal II
SENO	Special Education Needs Organiser (NCSE)
SET	Special Education Teacher
Shared teachers	Teachers working in a number of schools to support children with special needs (Special Education Teachers)
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSE	School Self Evaluation
SIP	School Improvement Plan
Trustees	The persons nominated by the Patron as trustees of the school. They are parties to the lease of the school premises. The Trustees undertake that the buildings shall continue to be used as a national school for the term of the lease & guarantee that the premises and contents are insured
VTS	Visiting Teachers Scheme: Teachers working with pupils who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired.

Appendix 10 - December 2019

Recognition to teach Catholic Religious Education in a Catholic Primary School

Introduction

The various programmes in Catholic Religious Education and Religious Studies provided by a number of colleges and universities and recognised by the Irish Episcopal Conference offer pre-service and qualified teachers foundational knowledge and skills for communicating the Catholic faith to children in primary schools. These programmes enable teachers and schools to address the many spiritual, social, moral, personal and religious opportunities and challenges facing pupils in contemporary Ireland. (See *Recognition to Teach Catholic Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools on the island of Ireland*, Irish Bishops' Conference, 2011).

Catholic primary schools should only employ teachers with an approved qualification to teach Religious Education in a Catholic primary school. The requirements set out below are effective from September 2011 forward, without prejudice to those who qualified as primary teachers prior to this date in any of the approved centres. Principals, Boards of Management, selection boards and independent assessors should seek the assistance of their local Diocesan Education Secretary, working with the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), in implementing this important IEC policy document.

Criteria and Guidelines Concerning the Provision of Awards Required to teach Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools

Undergraduate Qualification

For a teacher with an initial teacher education degree to be recognised to teach in a Catholic school they should have one hundred and twenty contact hours in the area of Religious Education, to include an exploration Catholic Religious Education and of Religious or Theological Studies. The specific areas for study in RE and Theology are outlined in detail in the Bishops' Conference document.

B: Postgraduate Qualification

For postgraduate students to be recognised to teach in a Catholic school in Ireland they should have fifty contact hours at postgraduate level in the area of Religious Education, to include exploration of Catholic Religious Education and Religious or Theological Studies. Again the specific areas to be studied are outlined in the Bishops' Conference document.

Approved Qualifications

The Catechetics Council currently recognises the following providers of this programme in Religious Education/Religious Studies, or its equivalent, as outlined above:

DCU Institute of Education (St Patrick's Campus)

- Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS) in conjunction with Catholic Religious Education in the BEd
- Certificate in Religious Studies in conjunction with Catholic Religious Education in the PMEP
- Certificate in Religious Studies (part-time)

Froebel College/St Patrick's College, Maynooth

- Certificate in Catholic Religious Education and Theological Studies as part of Bed
- Post-Graduate Certificate in Catholic Religious Education and Theological Studies as part of PMed



Hibernia College

- Certificate as part of PME

Marino Institute of Education

- The Certificate Course as part of the BEd
- The Certificate Course as part of the PME

Mary Immaculate College

- Certificate in Religious Education in conjunction with the BEd
- Qualification to teach Catholic Religious Education as part of the Professional Masters in Education (PME)
- Certificate in Religious Education (Graduate Programme)

St Angela's College, Sligo

- Certificate in Primary School Religious Education (part-time)

St. Mary's University, Belfast

- Certificate as part of BEd Primary
- Certificate as part of PGCE (Postgraduate qualification)

University of Coleraine

- Certificate in Religious Education

Appendix

Supplementary qualification to enable teachers qualified in England and Wales, who hold a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS), to teach in Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland.

This appendix is intended to outline how teachers qualified in England and Wales, who have undertaken a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) in England or Wales, can be enabled to obtain the supplementary qualification necessary to teach in Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland. For a list of recognised providers of the CCRS, please see <http://www.brs-ccrs.org.uk/index.php>

The Council for Catechetics accepts that the CCRS covers what is required in terms of the theology requirements for those wishing to teach Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools. However, those qualifying to teach Religious Education in Catholic schools on the island of Ireland also need to have the familiarity with the Irish context, methodology, and curriculum. The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (Supplementary) offered through Dublin City University, St Patrick's Campus fulfils this element of the qualification requirement.

Appendix 11 - December 2019

Ethos Reflection Process for Catholic Primary Schools

What is the Ethos Process Developed by the Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP¹) for Catholic Primary Schools?

Today, all schools find themselves in challenging circumstances due to enormous social, cultural and economic changes. In an age dominated by media and information technology, significant new pressures are brought to bear on children, on family structures, on religious practice, on employment and, not least, on behaviour in the school classroom. In this new cultural context every Catholic school needs to be aware of its identity and its relationship to tradition so that it is not just reacting to the latest trend or fashion but can truly articulate its self-understanding. This process is intended to help a school community to do exactly this – to articulate who you are in an age that is dominated by secularism and privatisation.

Why should Catholic Schools Participate in this Process?

This ethos process is not intended to be bureaucratic or mechanical; it is a shared reflection on the part of all members of the school's community on what the characteristic spirit of your school really is, not what it is supposed to be – it is an opportunity for your school to ask where you are in terms of your characteristic spirit, where you are going and what you are going to do to get there. It moves towards facilitating a school in understanding and living its characteristic spirit. Such a process is an important part of the overall development of the school and can contribute in various ways not only to school self-evaluation, but to the school community's self-understanding of the lived reality which each member of the school experiences on a daily basis. Another important and unique aspect of the process is the fact that it is not an exercise undertaken by outside experts. Rather we invite the whole school community to articulate its own identity in light of the vision of the Catholic school as expressed by the CSP. In this way, the process better enables schools in taking ownership of the ethos of their school community. For instance, the process includes Patrons, staff, pupils, parents, members of the board of management and the broader local community of which the school is a part. The key focus of the proposed process is on pupils, their welfare and education, and how these might be improved through reflection on the school's characteristic spirit.

What is the 'Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School'² Document?

In 2012, the CSP launched an ethos process for Catholic primary schools called *A Process for Understanding, Supporting and Taking Ownership of the Characteristic Spirit in a Catholic Primary School*. Since its initial launch, the process has been utilised by many Catholic schools in the Republic of Ireland. However, in 2015, the CSP decided that the ethos process should be revised in light of the experiences of Catholic primary schools that used the process as well as the theological and educational developments that have transpired since its initial launch in 2012. With this in mind, the process was subjected to significant revision as well as to a small-scale pilot in five individual schools each in a different diocese. Finally the process was subjected to a large-scale pilot in the Diocese of Kilmore among its sixty-nine Catholic primary schools. Following the success of both the small-scale and large-scale pilot, as well as the rich consultations that took place between the CSP and various stakeholders in Catholic education, final amendments were made to the process, all of which took account of the real experience of schools that used the process. We invite you to engage with the revised ethos process which aims to better facilitate schools in understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school.

¹ Catholic Schools Partnership www.catholicschools.ie

² *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School - A Process Centred on Conversations*

Steps in the Process

Following the eight steps below will enable your school to participate fully in the process of understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school.

1. Invitation from the Patron

The Patron invites the school to undertake the process of understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school. This process is best understood as a shared responsibility between the Patron and the school community. Patron support includes the establishment of the diocesan liaison team which will provide a point of contact between the Patron and the school, including the attendance of a Patron representative from the diocesan liaison team at some meetings in the school.

2. Board of Management Initiates the Process in the School

The process begins in the school with the board of management completing the 'Ethos Reflection' resource. This could occur as part of the ordinary agenda at a scheduled meeting or as part of a special meeting specifically set aside for a discussion about the school's ethos. It is important that the board of management devotes sufficient time to this process.

3. Identification of a Facilitation Model

The board of management completes the 'Ethos Reflection' resource and then selects one of three suggested facilitation models to best promote this process in your school.

4. Ethos Reflection

Once the board of management has chosen the facilitation model that best suits the particular school, the facilitators/leaders of the process (those individuals outlined in the facilitation model) complete the Ethos Reflection resource.

5. Identification of a Characteristic

The facilitators/leaders consider the outcome of their engagement with the Ethos Reflection resource in conjunction with that of the board of management. Following this review, the facilitators/leaders recommend one of the five characteristics for the school community to work on over the coming year and seek board of management approval.

6. Engage the School Community

Following the board of management's approval of the selected characteristic for the coming year, the facilitators/leaders engage with: a) staff, b) parents, and c) fifth/sixth class pupils on the chosen characteristic by asking each group to complete the section of the Ethos Reflection resource that pertains to the chosen characteristic.

7. Identify a Target

The facilitators/leaders review the input of the various groups to the Ethos Reflection resource and recommend a target from within the chosen characteristic for the school community to focus on for the coming year. The board of management approves the target and the school community groups listed above engage with the target with the assistance of the appropriate suggestions listed in the process manual under 'Concrete Suggestions for Targets'. These are only suggestions; schools are free to work on their chosen target in their own unique and creative way.

8. End of Year Report

At the final meeting of the school year, the board of management considers a report from the facilitators/leaders on their school's progress in using the process. The board of management completes the report form provided in the process manual and files this report in the schools records. The board of management should also provide the Patron with a copy of the report and communicate any progress made in the process 'Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School' to the whole school community (i.e. newsletters, parent teacher meetings, etc.)

Appendix 12 - December 2019

Recruitment and Ethos

The Schedule of a Catholic Schools (see Appendix 3) is always included with any invitation to interview.

Recruitment of teacher

- In accordance with Circular 0044/2019¹ the advertisement will include a request for a copy of a certificate to teach Catholic religious education for schools under Catholic Patronage.
- The Schedule of a Catholic Schools will be included in the invitation to interview.
- It will normally fall to the chairperson to ask a question regarding Ethos in the interview.

Sample questions could include:

- "How would a visitor know that a Catholic Ethos prevailed in your classroom?"
- "How do you ensure that your classroom promotes respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity while maintaining the Catholic Ethos of the school?"
- "What are your impressions of the new "Grow in Love"² religious education programme for Catholic schools?"

Recruitment to Principal/Deputy Principal Open Competition

- In accordance with Circular 0044/2019 the advertisement will include a request for a copy of a certificate to teach Catholic religious education for schools under Catholic Patronage.
- The Schedule for Catholic Schools will be included in the invitation to interview.
- It will normally fall to the chairperson to ask a question regarding ethos in the interview.

The Leadership and Management criteria reflect the four Leadership and Management competencies that are identified in *Looking at our School 2016 A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES)*.³

In line with the new Leadership and Management Criteria of Assessment, Ethos questions can be asked under the "Leading School Development" criterion.

Sample questions could include:

- "How can you maintain and advance the traditions/heritage of this school and its value to the community it serves?"
- "How do you ensure that the school promotes respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity while maintaining its Catholic Ethos?"
- "How would you ensure that the Grow in Love programme is taught effectively in your school?"
- "Please outline how you think you can contribute to the development of the Ethos of the school?"

Note: The sample questions listed in this guidance note are for illustrative purposes only, as the questions should be based on the needs and priorities of the individual school.

Contracts of Employment/Letters of Offer for all employees (available on www.cpsma.ie) should include the following clause: "This School has a Catholic ethos. You will be required to uphold and be accountable to the Board of Management for upholding the ethos, which is determined by the Patron".

¹D.E.S. Circular 0044/2019 Recruitment/Promotion And Leadership For Registered Teachers In Recognised Primary Schools

²"Grow in Love" is the religious education series, specifically written for use in Irish Primary Schools and fully approved by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

³Looking at our School 2016- A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES)





