

# Press Release

**29<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

## **JMB/AMCSS Annual Conference calls on the State to ensure that Catholic Secondary Schools are available to parents throughout the country.**

Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary, at the Annual Conference of the JMB/AMCSS, the management body for Voluntary Secondary schools, urged the Government and Irish society at large “ to recognise the key role of Catholic secondary schools in providing a quality educational experience for young people based on gospel values.”

Mr Kelly made these comments in a response to the current debate at primary school level in relation to the divesting of Catholic schools and the handing over of some primary schools to other patrons.

“The numbers of schools of different types at second level is very different to the circumstances in the primary sector. 50% of second level schools are under the trusteeship of either Catholic or other denominational trustees. The remaining 50% are under the trusteeship of either Vocational Education Committees or are multi-denominational community schools,” explained Ferdia Kelly.

“ It is a fact that there has been a decline of 109 in the number of Catholic secondary schools over the past twenty years. This has mainly been the result of rationalisation leading to the establishment of either community colleges, under VEC trusteeship, or community schools. No green field Catholic secondary school has been opened in Ireland in that time. This has led to parts of rural Ireland and areas of major population growth on the edge of large urban centres where there is no Catholic secondary school,” states Ferdia Kelly.

“ The JMB/AMCSS welcomes the setting up of the Second Level Patronage Advisory Group last July by the former Minister. It is time not just for the State, but also the Catholic community in Ireland to recognise the situation that is emerging in relation to Catholic secondary schools. Now is the time to take stock and to plan for the future provision of second level education in this country. What we’re are planning today is the provision of second level schools in twenty years time, “ implores Ferdia Kelly.

In welcoming the Minister Quinn’s commitment to pluralism, Ferdia Kelly believes that “ developments such as the emergence of the Catholic Schools Partnership and the commitment of the new Catholic Trust Boards to opening new secondary schools are signs of very positive leadership within the Catholic community. ”

“Catholic schools in Ireland are a living expression of a long and varied tradition of education inspired by the life of Christ. The JMB/AMCSS strongly supports the view that Catholic secondary education will be available to all parents who desire it for

their children in the future. Unless a radical approach is adopted now this will not be the case in many parts of the country,” states Ferdia Kelly.

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*29<sup>th</sup> March 2011*

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