

**Rediscovering**  
**Purpose, Value, and Faith**  
**in our schools**

AMCSS/JMB  
36th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Reports 2023

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Tolerance

Equality

# General Secretary's Report

Justice

Respect

Justice

# General Secretary's Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

It is intended that the General Secretary's Report, taken in conjunction with the reports from our units which follow, will capture the key issues that have emerged for the organisation in the past year.

### State Examinations 2022

The State Examinations 2022 saw 131,431 students sitting the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied examinations.

After the contingency measures and the adjustments of the previous two years, June 2022 saw the full return of externally delivered examinations as well as the first full year of exams under the revised Junior Cycle Framework.

There was also a deferred sitting of the Leaving Certificate examinations starting on 30 June for any student who contracted COVID-19 or could not attend an exam due to COVID-19 symptoms as well as for close family bereavement or serious injury or illness.

The 58,056 Leaving Certificate candidates and 3,051 Leaving Certificate Applied candidates who sat the examination received their results on September 2.

The 67,130 Junior Cycle examination candidates who sat the Junior Cycle examination received their results on November 23.

The late issue of results for both sets of candidates is a concern. The decision taken

that the overall set of results for Leaving Certificate students in 2022 would be no lower than in 2021, ensuring that the class of 2022 would not be disadvantaged in comparison to the previous cohort of students, was a factor in the delay of the Leaving Certificate results, but a critical factor in the delay for both sets of candidates was the difficulty the State Examinations Commission encountered in sourcing examiners. This is a matter that all of the education partners will have to address in the coming years to ensure that both the integrity of the examination system and the appropriate timelines for the issuing of results are maintained.

### State Examinations 2023

On the day of the results, the Minister for Education announced that adjustments would be made to the assessment arrangements for students due to sit State examinations in 2023, to take account of the disruption to their learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The level of adjustment was the same as that announced in August 2021 but updated as relevant. It was intended that these adjustments would play to student strengths by leaving intact the familiar overall structure of



the examinations, while incorporating additional choice for students in the examinations. In some cases, the adjustment measures provided more time for tuition by, for example, reducing preparatory work for practical examinations.

A document detailing the adjusted assessment arrangements for every subject/ module descriptor in the Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Junior Cycle programmes issued to schools in September. These adjustments were arrived at through discussions between the Department of Education, the State Examinations Commission, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and key stakeholders, including JMB.

The changes were made with due regard for the principles of equity, fairness and integrity, in relation to student-to-student, subject-to-subject, and year-to-year comparisons.

The changes were also intended to reflect and recognise in a fair manner the loss of learning time students experienced, with some contingency for future learning loss that might have occurred during the 2022/23 school year also built in.

The 67,130 Junior Cycle examination candidates who sat the Junior Cycle examination received their results on November 23.

With regard to the Oral Tests in Irish and Modern Foreign Languages, it was decided that the arrangements that applied in 2022 would be extended for a further year and that the examinations would be conducted during the first week of the Easter holidays. Schools and SEC examiners were asked to be cognisant of the demands on individual candidates and to avoid scheduling multiple examinations on one day to the greatest degree possible.

Conducting the oral examinations at Easter was contingent on the SEC receiving sufficient applications from teachers for roles on the examining teams. If all candidates could not be examined in the initial six-day period, two contingency days were set aside on Wednesday 19 and Thursday 20 April. In the event that it was not possible to examine all candidates between the initial schedule and the two contingency days, all remaining tests were to be rescheduled to the late orals window, which was scheduled to begin on Monday 15 May.

This year, following representations from some quarters, including from JMB, it was decided that the Leaving Certificate Music Practical Performance test would be held during term time, before the Easter holidays. Junior Cycle Music Practical Performance tests were to commence after the Easter holidays.

Following the completion of the 2022 oral examinations and Music Practical Performance Tests at Easter, the SEC carried out a preliminary review of the process to assess the impact of the timing of the examinations on candidates and on the second-level system, noting that Covid-19 created particular challenges in the delivery of these tests at Easter 2022.

The SEC indicated that a more extensive evaluation involving engagement with all stakeholders would be required to fully assess the impact of holding the oral examinations at Easter in future years. This evaluation, which would be undertaken as part of a more comprehensive review of the overall issue of examiner supply for the State examinations, would be completed in order to advise the Minister on the timing of the oral examinations in 2024 and beyond.

## Senior Cycle Reform

In March 2022, the Minister announced the Department's plans for the reform of Senior Cycle. The three tenets of Senior Cycle reform are to:

- empower students to meet the challenges of the 21st century
- enrich the student experience and build on what's strong in our current system
- embed wellbeing and reduce student stress levels

It is intended that the redeveloped Senior Cycle will include the development of new subjects and revised curricula for all existing subjects, which will be informed by the views of students and teachers in a collaborative process. These will include a significant emphasis on additional assessment components outside of the traditional final written exams.

Details of the planned reform are outlined in last year's General Secretary's report. AMCSS/JMB very much welcomed the Minister's publication of the NCCA's Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report and her roadmap of action points on Leaving Certificate assessment reform and school leaders across our 380 voluntary secondary school network had extensive engagement in the consultations carried out by JMB and NCCA in recent years.

During the course of the past year we have had ongoing engagement with the Department as to how aspects of the reform would transact and on the necessity to communicate with schools on all aspects of what was envisaged in a timely manner.

In June JMB held two group discussions with voluntary secondary school leaders, exploring the implications of the Minister's March 2022 announcement on the place of Transition Year within a reconfigured senior cycle. These

online conversations were conducted with the JMB National Curriculum and DEIS Advisory Groups. The discussions were framed under three domains:

- Social Equity
- Additional Educational Needs
- Resourcing and CPD

The feedback to the Department comprised extracts from these discussions and, while the overall sense was that schools were positively disposed to the Minister's position, it was considered important not to rush a 'TY for All' agenda without adequate resourcing, communication and professional development.

In February, the Minister decided that the interim plan to have the first of two papers in Leaving Certificate English and Irish examinations taken in Fifth Year would be deferred. In her announcement in March 2022, the Minister noted that having to rely on a single written examination can be very stressful for students. In order to spread the assessment load, the Minister intended that as an interim measure one of the papers in Leaving Certificate English and Irish would be taken at the end of Fifth Year, starting with students beginning Fifth Year in September 2023. Following significant engagement by JMB and other stakeholders, raising serious concerns about the implementation of the proposed changes, the Minister decided to defer this measure. Given the issues relating to the ambitious timeline and the detail of what was envisaged, it was a prudent decision. Students beginning Fifth Year in September 2023 will sit these exams at the end of Sixth Year, as in previous years.

At this time, the Minister also announced the establishment of a Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board and a Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum. The Senior

Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board will have responsibility for overseeing the Senior Cycle redevelopment work and it will report regularly to the Minister on its progress. Dr Harold Hislop, former Chief Inspector of the Department of Education, was appointed as the independent Chair of the Delivery Board, and the membership also includes John Curtis, post his role as General Secretary of JMB. The Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum is a representative stakeholder engagement group that will underpin the collaboration necessary to support implementation and, where appropriate, further developments under the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme. The Partners' Forum will include representatives of students, parents, teachers, school leadership and management bodies, the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the NCCA, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and other relevant organisations.

JMB has always been committed to Senior Cycle reform and looks forward to representing the views of its stakeholders and engaging with the Minister and Department and NCCA officials on this most crucial issue in the coming months and years.

## Covid and schools

The new academic year commenced on a positive note when the Department of Education informed schools that the Department of Health and the Chief Medical Officer had advised that there were no new requirements in respect of managing Covid-19, although we were asked to reinforce the key messages:

- Stay at home if feeling unwell and until symptoms have substantially resolved for 48 hours

- Maintain a good standard of hand hygiene
- Adhere to good respiratory etiquette
- Ensure good ventilation arrangements
- Continue to maintain good levels of cleaning.

There was no requirement to wear masks, but masks were to be provided to any staff member or student who wished to wear them.

There was positive news when it was announced that Covid-19 grants to cover enhanced cleaning and PPE would continue to be paid to schools, an issue that JMB had advocated on through the summer. The rate of payment in respect of these grants was to remain the same as the previous year, and the cleaning and PPE grants were combined into one grant to allow for greater flexibility at school level.

As we move to a post-pandemic era the education partners can move from the emergency mode that characterised so much of planning and policy in the last number of years and there is now a recalibration as we look at the systemic issues that concern us and require resolution.

## Supports for schools

As we move to a post-pandemic era the education partners can move from the emergency mode that characterised so much of planning and policy in the last number of years and there is now a recalibration as we look at the systemic issues that concern us and require resolution.

The Chief Inspector's Report to 2020 identified challenges to the effectiveness of the governance structure in schools as transacted through our boards of management which, we have contended, can be addressed by investing in an enhanced range of sector-specific supports

as currently provided by this organisation. We have communicated with the Department to this effect. Our boards and our schools do need more support, we can assist in providing that, but the voluntary engagement of those in our local communities who give so much in serving on our boards is integral to our system and can be nurtured and maintained.

Our school leaders do need more support. Our contention is that this might be best addressed by allocating extra resources to our schools at deputy principal level and we have collaborated with the other second-level bodies in submitting a position paper to the Department to this effect. This does not obviate the need for more assistant principal and guidance counsellor posts in particular and a planned reduction, as teacher supply issues allow, in the pupil-teacher ratio, but management in our schools inform us that where extra deputy principal allocation is afforded the effect can be transformational.

We have advocated that the board of management allowance removed for new principals as part of the FEMPI cuts be restored, and a matter that warrants consideration and which we are engaging with the Department on is the extra responsibility that falls on management in schools, given the welcome incremental rise in the number of Special Needs Assistants that we now have in the system.

A tangible means by which we are trying to support principals has been the development of the Balint groups in our regions, and, indeed, our Mindfulness Programme. This programme is designed primarily for principals, deputy principals, and chairpersons, though other school personnel, such as school secretaries, have been very welcome to attend. We have found that the *Building Positive Working Relationships* seminars delivered by Mary Rafferty have also been very beneficial in this regard and we will

continue to explore means by which the leaders in our schools can be further supported. We are also engaged in reaching out to newly appointed principals in a structured way by ensuring that they are all visited in their schools by a member of our team from Emmet House.

## Teacher Supply

The most pressing issue we face in our schools at present is teacher supply. The figures we have available to us from the Teaching Council would indicate that there should be sufficient teachers in the system to meet demand, but a drift to other occupations and to teach abroad, as well as the ongoing difficulties we have had in recruitment in certain subject areas that were never properly addressed, has led to acute difficulties, especially in Dublin and some other urban areas. Suggestions such as a Dublin allowance or a radical overhaul of teacher training models have been advanced, and obviously salary is always an issue but, while all solutions may be considered, there is no simple or immediate solution to the situation in which we find ourselves. There is intense and ongoing engagement among the education partners on the issue and the suite of measures that have been, or are being, undertaken, as outlined below, has been of some assistance to us. We need to continue to work collectively to address the issue. One of the implications of our current predicament is that it is difficult, given the current supply difficulties, to lower the pupil teacher ratio in post-primary schools, which is something we have always consistently advocated for.

- Job sharing teachers may be employed to work in a substitute capacity in their own or other schools
- The limit on substitute work applying

to teachers on career break has been suspended.

- Scheme for post primary teachers to teach additional hours in their subject over the usual 22-hour weekly limit, up to a maximum of 20 additional hours per term, a limit which was later extended to 30 hours
- Waiver of pension abatement for retired teachers for up to 50 days in each of the three calendar years, 2021 to 2023.
- 3rd and 4th year student teachers can register with the Teaching Council (2,100 student teachers had applied for registration by November)
- New 4-year ITE undergraduate programmes since 2019 in post-primary priority subject areas including Irish, mathematics, computer science and modern foreign languages.
- Upskilling programmes for post-primary teachers in mathematics, physics, and Spanish are funded by the Department
- 170 teachers are expected to complete these programmes in 2022 and over 300 in 2023.
- A further intake to these programmes will be funded in 2023.
- Upskilling programme in Irish planned for 2023
- Sharing teachers scheme for post-primary schools
- New educationposts.ie recruitment portal
- National Consultative Forum on Teacher Supply

## Response to Invasion of Ukraine

In response to the invasion of Ukraine in March 2022, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, T.D. announced the establishment of Regional

Education and Language Teams (REALT) on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Local REALTs were established to support the needs of Ukrainian children arriving in Ireland. The teams are staffed by regionally-based education support personnel working closely together to ensure good coordination and alignment of supports for Ukrainian children and their families. The Department of Education liaises with the teams to ensure that all necessary supports for the Ukrainian children are provided as quickly as possible.

A REALT Steering Committee was established and is chaired by an Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Education. JMB is represented on this committee. The steering committee initially met weekly. It now meets on a fortnightly basis.

Each REALT (16 in all) is comprised of nominees from each of the education stakeholders and JMB is particularly grateful for the support of their sixteen volunteers who offer their time, insight, and local knowledge to support the work of their regional team. The JMB Team is comprised of:

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Angela McGarvey      | Cavan & Monaghan       |
| 2. Pat Curran           | Cork                   |
| 3. Gerry Cullen         | Dublin City            |
| 4. Rosaleen Grant       | Donegal                |
| 5. Nuala Mannion        | Dublin & Dún Laoghaire |
| 6. John Kelly           | Galway & Roscommon     |
| 7. John O'Roarke        | Kerry                  |
| 8. Pat O'Leary          | Kildare & Wicklow      |
| 9. Colm Keher           | Kilkenny & Carlow      |
| 10. Tadhg O'Sullivan    | Laois & Offaly         |
| 11. Mona Hynes          | Limerick & Clare       |
| 12. Josephine Donohue   | Longford & Westmeath   |
| 13. Geraldine Mulvihill | Louth & Meath          |
| 14. Leo Golden          | Mayo & Sligo & Leitrim |
| 15. Mary O'Keeffe       | Tipperary              |
| 16. Mary Meade          | Waterford & Wexford    |

The primary role of the REALT is to assist children in finding school places, to support schools in the area to meet the needs of these children as they emerge, and to advise and support the Department of Education in developing new capacity where required. Each team coordinates the provision of education services to children and families across its defined area. The teams ensure that clear, accessible information-flows are in place between schools, local education support services and national support structures in relation to Ukrainian arrivals.

REALT support existing services and coordinate the following work areas:

- Align current school capacity with the placement of Ukrainian families, as much as possible.
- Identify additional capacity within their geographic areas to prepare for situations where demand may exceed available school capacity, and work with the Department and other organisations as necessary with a view to making this additional capacity available.
- Assist schools and families with accessing information on school places for Ukrainian children and young people who have moved into the area.
- Assist schools and families with accessing resources and supports for additional capacity, wellbeing, language, and educational needs.
- Assist with work in staff supply, including, where required, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutors who assist with the English language needs of Ukrainian children, young people and their parents / guardians.
- Liaison with other local coordinating structures that may be established to

coordinate the delivery of public services for Ukrainian families.

The regional teams lead a network of other key agencies, including Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), NEPS regional personnel, NCSE regional personnel and management body local nominees working together with local schools. All the key agencies work together in a holistic manner to bring added value and efficiencies to the process of supporting the Ukrainian children.

In March 2022, Minister Foley stated “We are committed to providing every support possible to all those fleeing war in Ukraine and seeking protection in Ireland. These teams will provide critical support in aligning current school capacity with the placement of Ukrainian families, as much as possible.”

Unfortunately, at the time of this report, the situation has not improved for those fleeing Ukraine, but the various Government agencies and education stakeholders work together to do their very best for students and their families, as they present.

As of 31 January 2023, 14,482 Ukrainian pupils have been enrolled in schools across Ireland.

- 9,334 of these pupils have been accommodated in primary schools.
- 5,148 pupils have enrolled in post-primary schools.

Current data indicates an enrolment rate of 92% among Ukrainian children aged 5-18.

Monthly stakeholder briefings are hosted by the Department of Education and following each stakeholder briefing a press statement is released.

While significant challenges have been experienced throughout, schools and local communities have worked tirelessly to ensure that students, many of whom are suffering

from severe trauma, are looked after in every possible way.

This includes the generosity of the boards of management and senior leadership teams in voluntary secondary schools that have worked hard to donate part of their schools' facilities to accommodate immigrants seeking shelter over both the 2022 summer and Christmas holidays.

## Secretaries and Caretakers

In February 2022, the Department committed to a scheme for improved terms and conditions for grant-funded secretaries.

The first phase of implementation involved secretaries being offered an option to accept these new terms and conditions and to receive new pay rates and leave entitlements from September 2022. Since then, work to implement the agreement has been ongoing in the Department. This work required a complex process of assimilating information to capture accurate data in respect of each individual secretary.

The next phases of implementation from March to June 2023 include:

- The calculation of back pay to September 2021
- The incorporation of national pay increases and increments into pay rates
- The annualisation of pay rates for secretaries who do not wish to apply for social protection benefits during school closures
- Payment of back-pay to individuals

We support any measures that improve the conditions of secretaries in our schools and will continue to engage with the Department on practical issues relating to the roll-out of the scheme and everything that this will entail.

The Department has also indicated that the intention is to ensure that school caretakers will be afforded the opportunity to avail of a similar deal, but there remains a deficit of data on the working terms and conditions of caretakers. In that context, it will be necessary to undertake a separate, similar school survey in respect of caretakers so that the Department has the necessary data to develop a proposal for caretakers. This will be progressed as soon as practicable.

## Additional / Special Education Needs

The Department of Education issued Circular 0075/2022 in November 2022. This circular explained recent legislative changes to the EPSEN Act, 2004 and the Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018. It also set out the need for additional special classes in post-primary schools.

Enrolment data has been gathered by the Department of Education across all geographical locations and has identified the availability of school accommodation to meet the immediate needs of students with a requirement for Special Education in a mainstream setting.

While an additional 600 special classes are needed at post-primary level over the next three years, 200 special classes will be needed by September 2023.

The Department of Education and the NCSE are currently working with 200 initially identified schools. Any school that is approached should be capable of sanctioning the opening of a special class, unless extraordinary conditions apply and all developments in the provision of special classes will be undertaken in collaboration with both the schools' boards of management and their patrons/ trustees.

Project management teams appointed by the Department of Education will assist schools where reconfiguration of existing school accommodation is needed, and modular accommodation will be provided in some instances. The NCSE will work with the schools through their SENOs to offer professional guidance, advice and support. Schools will also be supported by the Inspectorate and by ESCI.

The JMB Education Conference on Friday 15th September 2023 at Croke Park will have a specific focus on special class provision.

## Review of the EPSEN Act, 2004

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 provides for the education of children aged under 18 years with special educational needs and is currently undergoing a review by government.

The purpose of this review is to provide assurance that the law that governs the provision of education for children with special educational needs is adequate.

A Steering Group, Working Group, and Advisory Group are overseeing this review process, and JMB is represented and fully participating in this work.

## Child Safeguarding and Child Protection in schools with boarding facilities

The Department of Education has a comprehensive system in place to support the implementation, in primary and post-primary schools, of child safeguarding requirements under the *Children First Act 2015*.

The Department requires all schools to implement its *Child Protection Procedures for*

*Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017* and, through its Inspectorate, it ensures compliance with the key aspects of the 2017 Procedures during all school inspections.

Pursuant to the *Children First Act 2015*, the Department is putting in place new procedures to provide assurances to the Minister for Education that clear and consistent child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place in boarding facilities associated with recognised schools. Initially the new procedures will address those schools with on-site boarding facilities. Schools with arrangements such as where children are boarded-out will be addressed subsequently.

The aim of these procedures is to inform the management of all boarding facilities of what is required of them in their implementation of the *Children First Act 2015* and to ensure that arrangements for the oversight of the requirements of the *Children First Act 2015*, including *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*, are in place across all boarding facilities.

Further to engagement with the JMB, the Department set up an expert group to develop templates for schools which will address the particular needs of schools with boarding facilities. A new Guide to Inspection in Boarding Facilities has also been developed. We thank the schools in our sector who have boarding facilities and who cooperated greatly with the Department in this initiative. The schools in question have been very positive about the development and their expertise in the management of boarding facilities has been invaluable in the process. It is expected that the documentation will be published before Easter, if at all possible.

## Strategic Development Plan 2022- 2025

Significant progress has been made in the delivery of the five goals identified in the Strategic Development Plan 2022 – 2025. Some of the key areas where progress has been made include:

- Extensive engagement with the Department of Education to secure funding for voluntary secondary schools (COVID-19 and Once-off Cost of Living Measure funding)
- The commissioning of ESRI to conduct research on “The Value of the Voluntary Secondary Sector in Irish Education”.
- The provision of Balint Groups in all AMCSS regions
- The establishment of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- The creation of an in-house Training Planning Group
- The Centre for School Leadership which supports the design, development and delivery of quality professional learning for school leaders endorsed the JMB training programme for newly appointed principals in February 2023. The CSL website will host information about the programme and we can use the CSL logo on our related materials
- Attendance by senior leaders at regional meetings to consult with principals and chairpersons.
- Focused consultation with the Councils of AMCSS/JMB
- Provision of on-site support visits for newly appointed principals
- Implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement between SSS, APTCS and CEP. APTCS and JMB are working together, under the auspices of the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP), to disseminate the findings

of the Genesis Research and to explore with stakeholders what it means to be a Catholic school in 2023

- Provision of effective corporate and human resources services

As part of the process for delivery on the goals of the Strategic Plan, our senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprising John Curtis (General Secretary) Dr Michael Redmond (Assistant General Secretary), Christine West (Assistant General Secretary) and Patricia Higgins (Assistant General Secretary) has been meeting regularly on this matter in the past six months. As part of this work, it was decided that further consultation with Council would be useful and would augment the data collected at regional meetings. A consultation meeting with Council took place in February where Council members were invited to share their views in relation to how best JMB can deliver on specific goals identified in the Strategic Development Plan 2022 - 2025. Three distinct areas were considered at the meeting, namely communication, research and building capacity. The feedback received will guide the organisation in further implementation of the goals of the Strategic Plan.

The development of the AMCSS regional structure is a key objective identified in the Strategic Development Plan 2022 – 2025. In her role as Assistant General Secretary, Patricia Higgins is the liaison person for the Councils of JMB/AMCSS and the regions and as such attended AMCSS regional meetings to engage with principals and chairpersons on the issue of regional development.

Strengthening of the regional structure is an ongoing priority for AMCSS and the suggestions provided by principals and chairpersons will be implemented in so far as possible without delay. It is essential that our regions are supported in their operation and to this end a development

session is planned for the autumn to upskill steering committee members and those interested in carrying out the important work of the region when the new Council commences in January 2024.

Support for newly appointed principals has also been identified as an issue for the organisation. Forty-three principals were appointed in the voluntary secondary sector since the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023. Cross-team collaboration allowed JMB to provide an on-site support visit for all newly appointed principals. An information pamphlet was provided, and newly appointed principals were invited to engage with the AMCSS regional structure. A review of the initiative will be conducted, and any required modifications will be implemented.

See Appendix 1 *Strategic Development Plan 2022 – 2025*

## Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research

Following preliminary discussions with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) during the course of the past year and further to a commitment in our Strategic Plan that we would engage in such research, in September it was decided that JMB would commission the ESRI to undertake a study in our schools entitled *Exploring the Value of the Voluntary Secondary Sector in Irish Education*. At present the study is underway and sample schools across the JMB spectrum are being contacted to engage with the project. As well as providing valuable information in itself, the study should complement the work we have already undertaken in a number of areas. These include our engagement with the public relations firm Genesis on *Articulating a new positioning for Catholic education in Ireland*, which is framing

the process we are currently undertaking in our regions in collaboration with the Catholic Education Partnership and the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Secondary Schools (APTCS) and which is referenced elsewhere in this report. We have also been preparing a position paper on *Equitable Resourcing of Fee-Charging Secondary Schools* and it is envisaged that components of the ESRI research might assist us in this regard.

We would anticipate also that this ESRI project will provide focus for future research and assist the organisation in engaging with the Department of Education and government on the issues most pertinent to us.

## Centre for School Leadership (CSL) Endorsement of JMB Training for Newly Appointed Principals

In keeping with our Strategic Plan, JMB applied to the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) for Endorsement of our Newly Appointed Principals' Training Programme.

The CSL endorsement process aims:

- To support those involved in programme design and facilitation, and to assist them in ensuring that their provision is consistently and contextually relevant, and of high quality
- To build an understanding of and foster engagement with professional learning amongst the profession
- To foster a culture of engagement with CPD among school leaders consistent with the DE Quality Framework for Schools LAOS, 2016 (Leadership and Management) and the Teaching Council's CPD Framework (Cosán)

After preparatory work from all of those involved in delivering the programme, a JMB



team met with the CSL Endorsement Panel in February. In their report on this engagement, the panel members recorded that they were very impressed with the professional conversation that took place during the meeting and acknowledged the amount of work that JMB personnel had undertaken in preparing the submission. CSL endorsed the programme. Endorsement is for four years and is renewable after the four-year period.

### **Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) and Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Secondary Schools (APTCS)**

Throughout the year, AMCSS/JMB has continued to work closely with the other bodies involved in the delivery of Catholic second-level education, and Alan Hynes has now taken on the role of CEO of CEP. Regular meetings have been scheduled between the CEOs and the Presidents of the respective organisations at which issues of mutual concern are discussed, and work is ongoing on the implementation of the *Memorandum of Agreement* that has been developed by the three organisations.

An example of how the organisations can work together is the process that is currently taking place on *Exploring the findings of the Genesis Report, 2019 and reflection on '10 Statements for Conversations on the Catholic School'*.

In 2019, The Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP), and the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS), contracted a consulting firm called Genesis to undertake research on their behalf on the theme: *Articulating a new positioning for Catholic education in Ireland*.

The purpose of the study was to develop a deeper understanding of how best the 'Catholic School' can develop and how it can support parents in the education of their children in a modern, evolving, and pluralist Irish society.

Key questions of the research project included:

- What "being Catholic" means in contemporary Ireland.
- What "Catholic" might mean in our contemporary and pluralist Irish education system.
- What is the public perception of the 'Catholic School' brand?
- What factors determine parents' choice of a Catholic school for their daughter / son?

While parts of the Genesis 2019 research are currently being updated to take account of circumstances between 2019 and the present, it is important that the research at hand is used to extend the conversation at this point, within our Catholic voluntary secondary schools around 'What it means to be a 'Catholic School in 2023'.

To this end, APTCS and JMB have come together, under the auspices of the CEP, to explore the 2019 research and meet with chairpersons and principals who have agreed to act as facilitators in furthering the conversation at local level.

Two sets of meetings were arranged between November 2022 and February 2023.

Forty chairpersons and principals from across our 10 regions met in November 2022. We were joined on the day by representatives from each of our trust bodies together with colleagues from the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA). The purpose of our discussion, on the day, was to explore the findings of the Genesis Report,

2019 and to reflect on '10 Statements for Conversations on the Catholic School'.

In February 2023, our region facilitators and post-primary trust body colleagues held a second meeting with Mr Rory O'Rourke from the Genesis Research Team. Rory presented and explained a set of resources that had been prepared to assist our facilitators in their engagement at AMCSS region level.

In March 2023 JMB and APTCS, with the secretaries of each of our AMCSS regions, arranged a series of dedicated meetings, where the Genesis Research and the '10 Statements for Conversation' can be presented and explored with all principals and chairpersons, at local level. These meetings will be held before the end of this school year.

Following discussion at region level, principals and chairpersons will 'bring back the learning' from the region meeting to their respective schools, and will initiate discussion with their boards of management, among staff, and with students and their parents. It is intended that school-level consideration will begin in September 2023. To facilitate the process, the Genesis team will prepare supporting resources and documentation for use with each of the stakeholders.

## Teaching Council

Catherine Moynihan, formerly Principal of Cross and Passion College Secondary School, Kilcullen, Co. Kildare, currently chairperson of St. Anne's Special School, The Curragh, Co. Kildare and chairperson of St Laurence College, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin, Vice President of AMCSS/JMB between 2015 and 2017 and currently working in the Research, Development and Training unit of the Secretariat, has commenced her second term

representing the second-level management bodies on the Teaching Council. Attached as an appendix to this report is Catherine's account of the current activities of the Teaching Council.

See Appendix 2 *2023 Annual Report Teaching Council*

## Conference motions adopted 2022

Motion: *That every school be provided with a full-size PE hall and the necessary outdoor PE facilities.*

Further to this motion, in last year's *JMB Pre-Budget Submission* we drew attention to the then recently published *Chief Inspector's Report September 2016-December 2020* which noted that:

*There are plans in place for the continued development of teaching and learning facilities for PE. The government is committed to a PE hall build and modernisation programme, starting in the second half of the National Development Plan (2021 – 2030) period. This will support an increased focus on the upgrade and refurbishment of the existing school stock to ensure that students in all post-primary schools have access to appropriate facilities to support PE learning experiences.*

Our commentary on this in our *Submission* was that:

*JMB welcomes the commitment to deliver a programme to build and modernise P.E. and school sport facilities, as our research indicates that just 50% of schools have a full-sized P.E. hall. In addition, where they exist, 72% of PE halls were either fully funded or partially funded by the schools themselves. Schools also require funding for replacement sports equipment which is becoming old*

*and obsolete. Such equipment can be very specialised and costly but there is no scheme in place unless a new sports hall is being built – a very rare occurrence. JMB believes that such funding should be available on an ongoing basis in a similar way to funding for replacement furniture, fittings, and fixtures.*

Motion: *That the JMB would advocate for the option of a panel system, established following post of responsibility interviews, from which acting posts of responsibility for that school year could be filled.*

Currently, discussions are underway among the education partners on updating Circular 003/2018 on *Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools* and the JMB position on this issue, as comprehended by the motion, is part of these discussions.

## Pre-Budget Submission 2023

Our Pre-Budget Submission, as crafted by Dr Michael Redmond, is a compendium of the issues that concern our organisation at a given time. The following is an extract from our communication to Department officials and Oireachtas members that accompanied the submission this year, and see link to *JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023* below:

*On 23rd March 2022, the Chief Inspector presented his report on findings from inspection, advisory, and research activities between September 2016 and December 2020. Five key post-primary domains were reported-on and these act as a framework for this submission:*

- Leadership and Management in Schools
- The Quality of Education Provision
- Inclusion
- Partnerships with Parents and Young People
- Looking Forward

Within this framework, we set out the key concerns of our voluntary secondary school principals and management - a unique and vital sector of our public service, as we have seen in recent times.

*The last number of years has shown the resilience of our school sector in coping with the challenges that the pandemic has presented us with, and indeed the value that is placed on the education system in this country. As we emerge from the pandemic we now have an opportunity to re-focus our efforts on making certain that the students in our schools are given every opportunity to develop and flourish and to be prepared for the promise and challenge of the modern world. We have to ensure as a society that we equip our school leaders and resource our schools adequately to enable this to happen, and it is with this in mind that we present this submission for your attention and we would urge that you look favourably on our requests for support in a number of key areas.*

See Appendix 3 *JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023*

## Other Issues 2022/2023

Together with our colleagues in the other post-primary school management bodies, we are engaged with the Department in seeking a meaningful enhancement of provision for emotional counselling and therapeutic interventions for students in our schools. We feel that we now have a generation of students with unprecedented needs in terms of trauma recovery, metacognitive skills loss, behavioural challenges, career plan damage and a raft of other crises attributable in part to the Covid pandemic. In addition, the new challenges of traumatised refugee children and an emerging framework for senior cycle will demand significant counselling supports in terms of

students' capacity to access the curriculum, cope with school life and be successful in their assessment outcomes. In this respect, we have presented a case for the expansion into the post-primary sector of a pilot programme planned for September on introducing student emotional counselling and therapeutic supports at primary level.

We were very concerned at recent communications to some schools to the effect that funding for school building projects planned to go to tender and construction this year might not now be available and that projects would be put on hold. We were especially concerned given the capacity issue that we already have in the post-primary sector and the difficulty that parents have in securing a school place for their child in certain areas. We were also worried that a delay in progressing those projects now at tender or construction stage would cause further delays for the many essential projects that are currently at design stage. Furthermore, delays would seriously disadvantage schools that wish to expand their curricula but cannot do so until additional accommodation is in place. We have been in contact with the Department on this issue, and while we acknowledge current inflationary pressures and the absolute need to provide for our students with Special Educational Needs and those who are newly arrived in our country, we did draw attention to the fact that many of our students and teachers are currently working in completely inadequate and outdated facilities that need immediate attention.

We welcome the fact that a Short Course curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) has now been developed but are acutely aware that adequate training, resources and guidance need to be provided to ensure proper delivery and implementation at local level. Work is ongoing

in this regard, including the development of support material appropriate to our schools.

As announced in Budget 2022, voluntary secondary schools in the free education scheme have seen capitation funding increased as a result of the complete elimination of the school salary grant deduction from the capitation payable to schools in this sector and this has been very welcome. Likewise, retention of the cleaning grants we were allocated because of the pandemic and the extra finance we received to offset utility costs have helped our schools, but it is imperative that we now try to retain some of this extra funding to help bridge the financial shortfall that requires that our schools have to rely so heavily on the generosity of parents to finance day-to-day running costs. Furthermore, although we have had some success in our advocacy, it continues to be a source of frustration that our fee-charging schools are not comprehended in all of these supports.

## JMB Training and Events 2022/23

We are delighted this year that so many of our events have returned to an in-person format, although our collective experience of the pandemic has highlighted how efficient online engagement can be and as such some of our training has been, and will continue to be, delivered in an online format.

The range of activities reflects the complexity involved in running secondary schools at this time. A glance at the variety of topics covered gives some indication of the supports required to run a modern educational establishment:

- Allocations information seminars
- Middle Leadership and Management training
- GDPR issues



- Interview competencies training
- DEIS information and planning seminars
- Further Education training
- Budget workshops
- Training for newly appointed principals and deputy principals
- Education Law Day
- Health and Safety
- Vetting process for schools
- School administration personnel training
- Training for members of boards of management
- Building Better Relationships – Conflict Coaching
- Mindfulness sessions
- Education Conference
- Annual Conference

All of the above supports are provided by staff members in the Secretariat of Secondary Schools, ably assisted by relevant experts. The events and training programme is expertly co-ordinated by Elizabeth O'Connor, with the assistance of Cathy Glavey and the administration team in Emmet House. All member schools are encouraged to participate in the wide range of supports and we welcome suggestions in relation to further supports that you believe are required.

## Reports from Units

The Secretariat of AMCSS/JMB consists of component units and reports from each unit are included as part of *Reports 2022/23*. These are:

- Education Report
- HR/IR and Legal Services Report
- Corporate Governance
- Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) Report
- School Building Projects Advisory Report

- Schools Procurement Unit Report (SPU)
- Vetting Report
- Data Protection Advisory Report
- Training & Events Report
- Communications Report

## Council

All of us in this organisation are indebted to those who sit on Council and direct the work of AMCSS/JMB. The present Council has been in place since 2021 and its term will finish at the end of this calendar year. It has led us as we responded to the challenges of the pandemic, as we engaged in an internal reorganisation of the Secretariat, as we created our Strategic Plan 2022-2025 in keeping with the recently revised constitution and newly created internal regulations, and as we have developed the role of our Board of Directors and worked on establishing appropriate and mutually supportive relationships with the Catholic Education Partnership and the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools. We thank all of our Council members for their advocacy as the voice of our schools and the wisdom they bring to all of our discussions and to all of our various committees.

As our President since 2018, Deirdre Matthews has made a remarkable contribution to the ongoing efficacy and development of our organisation. It has been my privilege to work with Deirdre during this time. She has brought extraordinary energy to the role and given selflessly of her time, and as our incoming General Secretary she will continue in that vein and will so ably represent and advance the aims of AMCSS/JMB. Patricia Higgins, now our Assistant General Secretary for Corporate Affairs, worked closely with Deirdre when she was our Deputy President and also gave so generously of her time and expertise,

# General Secretary's Report

and I know that with the rest of our team in the Secretariat they will ensure that our organisation will admirably serve the needs of our affiliate schools.

John Barry in his time on Council has consistently apprised us of the realities that school management face on the ground, works tirelessly to represent his fellow principals and has been a constant advocate for DEIS

schools especially. We congratulate him on his election as our President and thank him for the work he is already undertaking in overseeing the transition to our new General Secretary. As I finish in the role, I would also like to thank Fr Paul Connell and Catherine Moynihan who, as President and Deputy President respectively, gave so much and were so supportive of me in my earlier years as General Secretary.

## Council 2021-2023

Deirdre Matthews	Principal	St. Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk, Co Louth
Fr Paul Connell	Former President	JMB
Fr Tomás Surlis		Irish Episcopal Conference
Patricia Bourdon		Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland
Angela Cahill	Principal	Scoil Mhuire, Thurles, Co Tipperary
Ann Marie Brosnan	Principal	Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty, Co Cork
Caroline O'Reilly	Principal	Eureka Secondary Schools, Kells, Co Meath
Colm Keher	Principal	Loreto Secondary School, Co Kilkenny
Fr Dermot Ryan	Chairperson	St. Kieran's College, Co Kilkenny
Donal Cronin	Chairperson	Ursuline Secondary School, Blackrock, Co Cork
Eileen O'Donnell	Principal	St. Raphaela's Secondary School, Stillorgan, Dublin
Helen O'Donnell	Principal	Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
Jerry Cronin	Chairperson	Laurel Hill Secondary School, Co Limerick
Jill Storey	Principal	Villiers School, North Circular Road, Limerick
John Barry	Principal	St. Michael's Secondary School, Finglas, Dublin 11
John Kelly	Principal	St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, Co Galway
John O'Donovan	Principal	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Ballybunion, Co Kerry
Jonathan Graham	Principal	Dundalk Grammar School, Dundalk, Co Louth
John Mangan	Principal	Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Co Mayo
Marie O'Neill	Chairperson	Cross & Passion College, Kilcullen, Co Kildare
Martin Duggan	Chairperson	Ardscoil Ris, Griffith Ave, Dublin
Mary Caffrey	Chairperson	Eureka Secondary School, Kells, Co. Meath
Br Matthew Hayes	Chairperson	Patrician Presentation Secondary, Co Tipperary
Michael Denny	Chairperson	Loreto Secondary School, Bray, Co Wicklow
Niamh McShane	Principal	Wilson's Hospital School, Multyfarnham, Westmeath
		*****
Patsy Sweeney	Chairperson	Scoil Muire agus Pádraig, Swinford, Co Mayo
Siobhan Quinn	Chairperson	St. Brigid's Secondary School, Tuam, Co Galway



## Region Meetings

I started to attend meetings in my own region in 1995 when I was first appointed as a principal and I know how important they are, for new principals especially, in forging links with colleagues and being able to discuss the pertinent issues of the day, and, crucially acting as the forum through which views, opinions and concerns are relayed to Council.

We are especially grateful to all of those who act as officers and representatives in our regions, serve on steering groups and organise elections. They are key to how AMCSS/JMB functions and to the success and cohesive nature of our organisation. We are very aware of the importance of our regional structure and, as pointed to in our Strategic Plan, in the course of this academic year our Assistant General Secretary, Patricia Higgins, has been systematically visiting the regions and engaging with officers and steering committees on the implications of our Internal Regulations guidelines, and to garner views and opinions on how our organisation operates. These views will inform our strategic planning and point us to ways in which we can improve and augment the service we offer our schools.

The pandemic and all it entailed inevitably strained aspects of how we communicate within the organisation, but we all want to ensure that that sense of collegiality and belonging that so typifies our organisation is maintained and strengthened in the years ahead. A key challenge that still remains is how we can more readily comprehend the attendance of chairpersons at our meetings, and this is an issue that will warrant further consideration.

## Secretariat Staff

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues in Emmet House and our other offices, past and present, who have assisted and supported me in my time as General Secretary. There is a complexity to the work we do, and a necessary collegiality in the manner in which we engage with each other, to ensure that the needs of our schools are constantly to the fore in everything we do.

Our organisation has grown as we attend to the needs of schools, post-primary and primary in so many areas. My thanks to Christine, Gerry, Siobhan, Bríd and Ray on our School Management Advisory team, to Michael, Catherine and Elizabeth in the Research, Development and Training area, to Patricia, Cathy, Jennifer, Ewa, Teresa and Therese in the Corporate Affairs Office and Finance arena, to Louise and all of the team in the Financial Support Services Unit, Joe, Lorraine, Eileen, Breda, Liz, Yvonne, Eilish, Ann, Rosarie, Cathleen, Martha and Kiara, to Ronan, Matthew and Danielle in the School Procurement Unit, to Cyril as our Data Protection Advisor, to our School Buildings Project team Noel, Michael and Tom, to our Vetting and Child Protection Advisor Jack and to Zilma, who assists with our vetting forms, and indeed to everyone else who assists us in a part-time or voluntary basis on so many projects.

I would also like to thank our auditor, Ann Nugent, for the help and support she always afforded me, and Jim Egan, who, when I commenced in this role, was an invaluable help on various matters and gave so generously of his time and expertise.

Currently, with Department assistance, we are working on increasing staff in our School Procurement Unit and recruiting in the School Management Advisory field, and we are

engaged in dialogue with the Department on what other services we might provide to our schools.

As part of our recently constructed Senior Leadership Team, the General Secretary works with our Assistant General Secretaries, Christine West, Michael Redmond and Patricia Higgins in running our organisation and implementing our Strategic Plan, and integral to everything we do is that commitment to assist the personnel in our schools in every way that we can.

## Conclusion

It has been my privilege to have endeavoured to serve AMCSS/JMB as General Secretary for over seven years. For me, it has been the continuation of a journey of attempted service in education that commenced when I started out as a teacher in Knockbeg College, Carlow over forty years ago, where I subsequently became principal before taking up the same position at St Kieran's College, Kilkenny. I feel honoured to have worked in these schools and I was blessed in that in the schools I attended as a child and as a student I was witness to a sense of care and volunteerism that typified the best of the Catholic message, and in many respects impelled me to at least try to emulate the good, kind and gifted teachers who influenced me.

It has been my privilege, also, to have seen at first hand the extraordinary commitment of our school communities, especially our principals and chairpersons, to strive at all times for what is best for the young people in our care. My time in my current role has been bookended by a quite intense and difficult industrial dispute which tried and tested us over a number of years, and the pandemic

which forced us to innovate and adapt in such unique and challenging circumstances and through which, I admit, those of us charged with giving direction often felt just one page ahead of the class, if at times even that. We would like to think that the manner in which this organisation led and advised our schools during these times, and was integral to the determination of policy and outcome on the national stage, typifies the importance of AMCSS/JMB and speaks of our key place in the education landscape.

Finally, I know that Deirdre Matthews with her skill set, vision and extraordinary work ethic will be a tremendous asset to our organisation as General Secretary, as we look to the promise of the future and I, and all of the Secretariat team, wish Deirdre every success in her new role.

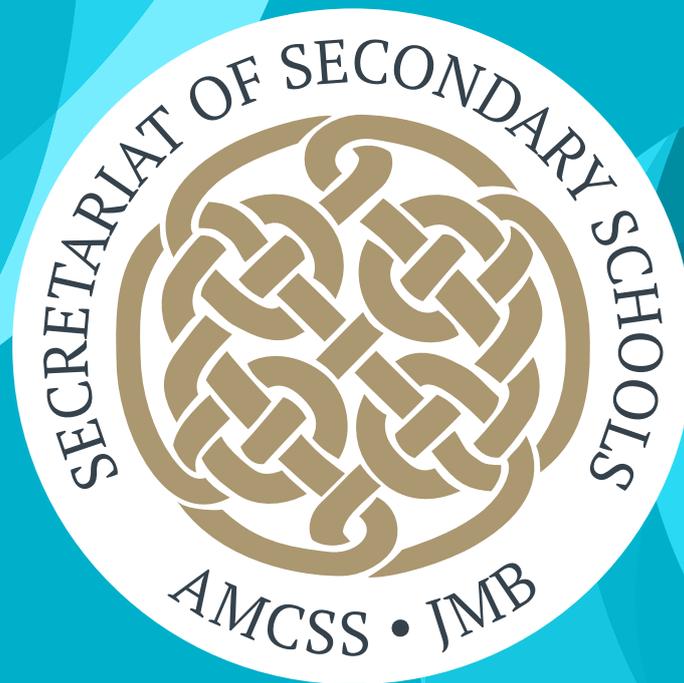
Thank you, and God bless.

**John Curtis,**  
March 2023

## Appendix 1

# Strategic Development Plan 2022 – 2025

# Strategic Development Plan 2022 – 2025



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## Section 1: Foreword



On behalf of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools (SSS), I am delighted to present our strategic development plan 2022-2025.

The process of developing a new plan at the Secretariat has given rise to important conversations among our stakeholders. These have enabled us to determine our vision and strategic goals considering the challenges ahead and in light of the extraordinary challenges posed by a global pandemic. In setting out our strategic goals for the work of the Secretariat over the next three years we seek to energise our organisation around a shared set of values as well as to guide and prioritise decisions in the years leading up to 2025.

While the plan sets out our direction over the next three years, it should be understood as part of an overall trajectory, beginning in the origins of the Secretariat, building on the work of the staff and councils of the organisation since then, and the more recent work to revise the company's constitution and internal regulations. The plan is true to our essential character as an organisation, as we have refined our understanding of how we will most effectively achieve our vision.

The five strategic goals demonstrate our commitment to excellence through the core functions of a recognised school management body, our commitment to the value of denominational education, our commitment to promoting educational research in support of the development aims of the voluntary secondary sector, as well as our duty to engage stakeholders. Through this engagement and the development of strategic relationships with the partners in education we will articulate an identity consistent with our mission, vision, and values in order to facilitate the education community in understanding our goals and in recognising our achievements.

To achieve these goals, we need to ensure that the Secretariat is appropriately developed and resourced as an organisation, with the capacity and flexibility to meet unknown challenges which may lie ahead. The strategic context in which the Secretariat operates has been profoundly affected by a sustained period of austerity and underfunding of education followed by the extraordinary challenge of maintaining an education system during a global pandemic and a critical lack of teachers in most, if not all, subjects. In recognition of the as yet unknown challenges ahead, our response requires this to be a flexible strategy, a living document to be reviewed and updated as circumstances change.

This plan represents the efforts of all members of the organisation whose valuable input in the consultation phase gave those charged with its development much food for thought. I would like to thank everyone who took part in the consultation phase and in particular, the members of the strategy committee, the risk committee, and the board for their work in bringing this plan to fruition. I am confident that the extensive consultation process undertaken in the development of the plan, and the deep commitment it demonstrates to providing strategic leadership, service and support to schools will secure the support and advocacy of our staff, schools' boards of management, senior leadership and management teams, and our external partners.

**Mrs Deirdre Matthews,**  
President AMCSS/JMB

## Section 2: About the Secretariat of Secondary Schools

### 2.1 History and Origins of the Secretariat

Up to the 1960s, Catholic voluntary secondary schools were established and run by the bishops (Diocesan schools) and by religious orders of priests, brothers, and nuns. In addition, a small number of Catholic schools were owned and run by lay people.

The interests of Catholic school management were upheld by a number of organisations: the Catholic Headmasters Association (CHA) representing priests; the Conference of Convent Secondary Schools (CCSS) representing nuns; the Teaching Brothers Association (TBA) representing teaching brothers' institutes, and the Federation of Lay Catholic Secondary Schools (FCLS) representing the lay owners of schools. With the exception of FCLS, the organisations were subject to either episcopal or religious authorities.

There were two education commissions for Catholic schools: the Episcopal Commission for Education (Bishops) and the Education Commission of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS).

In 1968, the Council of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (CMCSS) was established by the Episcopal Conference and CMRS. CMCSS comprised representatives from CHA (2), CCSS (3), TBA (2), FCLS (1), Episcopal Commission (1) and CMRS (1).



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In 1964, religious and lay Catholic managerial groups and the Protestant groups came together informally as the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) to conduct negotiations with, and make representations to, the Department of Education and the ASTI. This cooperation was particularly important in presenting a united front to respond to industrial relations issues and the consequences of the introduction of free education in 1968.

The Secretariat of Secondary Schools (SSS) was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1973 under the Companies Act 1963 to look after the interests of voluntary secondary schools. SSS provided a small administrative staff to support the work of the CMCSS and the JMB.

In 1987, CMCSS was restructured to take account of the declining numbers of religious in schools and the advent of boards of management. Part of this restructuring led to the establishment of the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) comprising ten geographic regions. The principal and chairperson of the board of management of each school in the region attended meetings of the region. Each region elected one principal and one chairperson to represent the region on CMCSS, giving twenty regional representatives. One representative from the Episcopal Commission and one representative from the Conference of Religious in Ireland, brought the total membership of CMCSS to twenty-two.

The CMCSS, together with three representatives of the ISA, came together in 1987 to form the Council of the JMB. Administrative and support services continued to be provided for both Catholic and Protestant secondary schools by the SSS General Secretary and the Secretariat.

In 2018, the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC) and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) approved a new structure for the management and trusteeship of post-primary Catholic schools. As part of this restructuring SSS drew up a revised constitution comprising a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. In conjunction with the constitution, Internal Regulations were drawn up and approved. These regulations replace the Manual on Procedures first drawn up in 1987 and revised in 1993 and 2000.

From small beginnings, SSS through its AMCSS and JMB divisions, has firmly established an excellent reputation as a recognised school management body and key stakeholder in the field of Irish education. Through cooperation with the Department of Education, the inspectorate and other education partners, SSS has contributed significantly to the improvement of teaching and learning and the educational experience of students.

## 2.2 Secretariat of Secondary Schools Mission, Vision, and Values

The Secretariat of Secondary Schools (SSS) is a company limited by guarantee. It is managed by its directors and governed by its constitution composed of a memorandum of association and articles of association.



### Mission

The mission of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools is to promote and represent the interests of Catholic voluntary secondary schools and voluntary secondary schools under the aegis of the Irish Schoolheads' Association, and to carry out the role of a recognised school management organisation on behalf of all voluntary secondary schools.



### Vision

The Secretariat of Secondary Schools is a professional school management organisation representing the interests of all voluntary secondary schools, promoting the advancement of education, providing support, training, and advisory services, and carrying out educational research and development.

SSS fulfils its mission and vision by

- › Offering professional development, support, and advice to all voluntary secondary schools
- › Negotiating with the Department of Education and education partners on behalf of all voluntary secondary schools
- › Collaborating with relevant partners in education
- › Undertaking quality research and development and the sharing of best practice



### Values

The SSS vision is underpinned by values which seek to reflect a vision of life and a corresponding philosophy of education based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. SSS promotes the value of denominational education in schools both with a Catholic ethos and those under the aegis of the Irish Schoolheads' Association. SSS engages with all stakeholders in a spirit of partnership and support, and offers a distinctive leadership based on our shared values.

## 2.3 Governance

The objects and powers of SSS are laid out in its constitution in compliance with the Governance Code of the Charities Regulator.

In legal terms, the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) is the sole member and owner of SSS and appoints its board of directors. The business of SSS is managed by the board of directors in accordance with the provisions of its constitution.

The board of directors of SSS comprises:

- › The president of the Council of the AMCSS, who is chairperson of the board
- › The deputy president of the Council of the AMCSS
- › The outgoing president of the Council of the AMCSS
- › The treasurer of the Council of the AMCSS
- › Two persons appointed by the ISA, who must be members of the Council of JMB
- › One person nominated by AMRI
- › One person nominated by the IEC
- › Two persons nominated by the Council of the AMCSS who are serving members of that council
- › Two persons nominated by APTCS who are serving directors of APTCS
- › Three persons nominated by the board of directors who have been recommended by the Nominations Committee having regard for the balance of skills and expertise required

At least three of the directors appointed will be serving school principals in voluntary secondary schools and at least two will be chairpersons of boards of management in voluntary secondary schools.

The SSS company is organised in two divisions, the AMCSS and the JMB. Each has a distinct role and function which are governed by the board of directors.

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The AMCSS promotes the interests and welfare of Catholic voluntary secondary schools in Ireland. The principal and chairperson of each Catholic voluntary secondary school in each AMCSS Region form the membership of each AMCSS Region.

Certain of the Company's activities are operated by its JMB division, including engaging in discussion and negotiation, and specific supports and services. The JMB Council is constituted as a committee of the Board of Directors and is comprised of all members of the Council of the AMCSS from time to time and three persons appointed by the Irish Schoolheads' Association.

The board has overall responsibility for SSS, its divisions, committees, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU), the Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) and all employees. The FSSU and SPU are hosted in the offices of SSS under mandate from the Department of Education, and it is recognised that the FSSU and SPU engage in planning processes in accordance with those mandates agreed between the Department and SSS.

SSS represents and provides services and advice to the boards of management and principals of voluntary secondary schools in areas such as school management, finance, procurement, governance, good practice, and compliance. These services and advice are delivered through its AMCSS and JMB divisions.

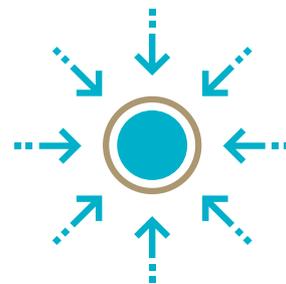
The company's activities at local level are organised by the AMCSS which operates on a regional basis comprising ten AMCSS regions. The principal and chairperson of each Catholic voluntary secondary school in each region form the membership of the region.



## 2.4 Key Objectives

Under its constitution as a company limited by guarantee, the SSS key objectives are:

- › Promoting the advancement of education in accordance with Catholic ethos in Catholic voluntary secondary schools
- › Promoting the advancement of education in accordance with the ethos of each of the Irish Schoolheads' Association schools in Ireland
- › Carrying out the role of a recognised school management organisation, recognised by the Minister for Education and Skills for the purposes of the Education Act 1998 [S.7.(4)(b)]
- › Providing an information, advice, and support service for all such schools, and, at the discretion of the Board of Directors, any other voluntary secondary schools, such as Gaelscoileanna and Educate Together schools, which may wish to avail of SSS services and advice in areas such as school management, finance, governance, good practice, and compliance
- › Promoting educational research and development
- › Working with APTCS and CEP to promote cooperation and cohesion between SSS and these bodies
- › Providing training and guidance to promote best practice in the provision of education
- › Working to influence education policy



## 2.5 Strategic Context

In the second decade of the current century, the Secretariat and its almost 400 schools operated in a period of financial austerity. Now, as the third decade emerges, we must meet the extraordinary challenges of a global pandemic.

The overarching aims of the Secretariat's work as set out in its objectives nonetheless remain constant.

The strategic context in which the Secretariat operates is shaped by a number of key factors:

- › The priorities of the school communities we serve
- › The challenges arising from the Covid19 pandemic in terms of its impacts on voluntary secondary school leaders and boards of management
- › The need to seize the opportunity provided by the Secretariat's new governance and regulatory structures to renew and invigorate the organisation at operational and regional levels
- › The imperative to enhance our effectiveness and align our business planning with the overarching aims of this strategic plan
- › Responding, through a continued and intensive focus on staff development and resourcing, to meet the needs of our schools
- › The recognition that contemporary societal and policy pressures on denominational education will place significant demands on our sector
- › Increasing resource implications and the need to achieve a sustainable future funding model
- › The need to enhance our level of ambition for research and innovation with the aim of establishing a stronger base for our negotiating, advocacy, and representational roles
- › The need to mitigate educational disadvantage and to support inclusion across our school network
- › The development of an executive structure enabling the key features of distributed leadership and community of practice
- › Awareness of the principles of sustainability as they apply to people and resources

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## Section 3: Planning for 2022 – 2025

### 3.1 About this Plan

The Board of the Secretariat, under S.11 of its Regulations, constituted a Strategy Committee, with a mandate to 'establish and carry out an effective strategic planning process'. This process was formally initiated in early 2021 with the operational support of a member of the executive.

The systematic process underpinning the development of the plan aimed at establishing an ambition for our organisation's future and determining how best to achieve it. Specifically, the strategic development planning process set out to:

- › Agree actions that will contribute to the development of the Secretariat and its sub-divisions
- › Align resources for optimal results
- › Build a distinctive and purposeful identity
- › Professionally develop and resource our staff
- › Comply with our governance and other statutory requirements
- › Underpin the development of an annual corporate plan which will help provide clarity of role expectation for each staff member and clearly chart the tasks and functions required to meet our strategic objectives

Another significant purpose of strategic planning has been to help us manage and reduce risk, and to:

- › Analyse potential risks
- › Manage uncertainty
- › Implement risk control measures
- › Consider how to minimise the impact of risks, should they occur

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The board's Risk Committee carries the function of assessing, reviewing, and reporting on risk. A detailed schedule of phases, actions, approvers, and timelines was drawn up and the following stages undertaken:

1	Defining mandates, roles, and responsibilities
2	Communication on the purpose of strategic development planning
3	Consultation with the strategy committee, the board and with staff
4	Consultation with schools, AMCSS Regions, the ISA, and with other stakeholder groups
5	Research
6	Analysis
7	Drafting
8	Final limited consultation
9	Final drafting
10	Approval by the board of directors

## 3.2 Strategic Goals

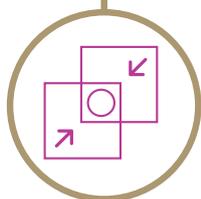
The five Strategic Goals identified by the Secretariat of Secondary Schools for the 2022 to 2025 planning timeframe are:

- 1 Promoting Denominational Education in Voluntary Secondary Schools**  
To advance education in accordance with Catholic ethos and the ethos of schools within the Irish Schoolheads Association
- 2 Carrying out the Role of a Recognised School Management Body**  
To negotiate on behalf of all schools in the voluntary secondary sector and to develop strategic relationships in influencing education policy
- 3 Providing Management, Compliance and Advisory Services**  
To provide information, advice, support, professional development, and training to all our schools
- 4 Promoting Educational Research and Development**  
To generate, use, and share knowledge and research in support of the educational development aims of the voluntary secondary sector
- 5 Organisational Effectiveness and Governance**  
To develop the Secretariat's governance and organisation structures, processes, skills, and competences, and to communicate the work and achievements of the Secretariat

# Section 4. Achieving the Strategic Goals

## Goal 1 : Promoting Denominational Education in Voluntary Secondary Schools

To advance education in accordance with Catholic ethos and the ethos of schools within the Irish Schoolheads Association

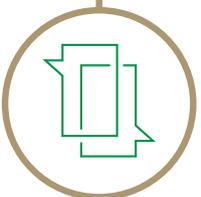


We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes

Outcomes	Enabling Measures	Timeframe
<b>1.1 Living-Out our Constitution</b> The SSS aligns all its planning and activities to the principles set out in its Constitution and its operational framework as set out in its Internal Regulations	The SSS Constitution and Internal Regulations are made accessible, shared, and comprehended by all key stakeholders within the organisation  The current Memorandum of Agreement between SSS, APTCS and CEP is implemented in light of the evolution of each company and the needs of schools with a Catholic ethos	Ongoing
<b>1.2 Advancing Catholic Education</b> The SSS works cohesively with the APTCS and CEP in the advancement of Catholic education and the continuing development of excellence in schools with a Catholic ethos	The current Memorandum of Agreement between SSS, APTCS and CEP is implemented in light of the evolution of each company and the needs of schools with a Catholic ethos	Ongoing
<b>1.3 Advancing ISA Schools</b> The SSS works cohesively with the Irish Schoolheads Association in the advancement of school ethos and the continuing development of excellence in schools comprehended by the ISA	A structured communication plan is developed to provide regular contact between the leadership of ISA and the JMB	Ongoing Planning: Year 1
<b>1.4 Development of the AMCSS Regional Structure</b> AMCSS Regions are supported in their operation and development by the sharing of good practice	The SSS produces a development plan, supporting the good management, leadership, and operation of our AMCSS Regions	Ongoing Draft Plan: Year 1
<b>1.5 Developing Prospective Faith School Leaders</b> The SSS actively supports the professional and faith development of a cohort of prospective school leaders	The SSS collaborates with APTCS and CEP in the creation of a pool of advocates for Catholic education, and in the development of prospective leaders who have an ongoing commitment to denominational education	Ongoing

## Goal 2: Carrying out the Role of a Recognised School Management Body

To negotiate on behalf of all schools in the voluntary secondary sector and to develop strategic relationships in influencing education policy

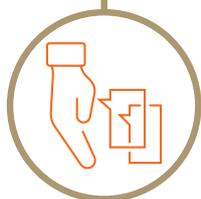


We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes

Outcomes	Enabling Measures	Timeframe
<b>2.1</b> <b>Establishing Clarity of Role and Service</b> Clarity is established and shared on the role of a management body, the service-level arrangements provided by the SSS, and its policy positions in key areas	A statement of the scope, roles, and responsibilities of SSS as an approved school management body, the SSS agreed service-level arrangements, and SSS key policy positions, is developed and communicated to stakeholders	Year 1
<b>2.2</b> <b>Advocating for All Voluntary Secondary Schools</b> The SSS is active in its advocacy for all voluntary secondary schools, including promoting greater equity of funding for schools in the sector	The SSS commissions research on the funding of schools in the voluntary secondary sector, which carries sections devoted to fee-charging schools of all faith denominations, DEIS schools, new and developing schools, and schools serving the wide variety of communities across Ireland	Ongoing Research: Commissioned, Year 1 Completed, Year 2
<b>2.3</b> <b>A Dedicated Professional Development Permit</b> The SSS works to support the professional development of school leaders, relevant school personnel, and Board of Management chairpersons and members	A mandate for the SSS in respect of relevant and appropriate professional development within the sector is established, resourced, and implemented, and opportunities for external collaboration are explored	Medium-term
<b>2.4</b> <b>Developing Purposeful Relationships</b> Liaison and collaborative relationships with a range of organisations and government departments are improving the awareness of school management concerns in policy implementation	SSS has a clearly framed mandate based on its mission, vision, and values, and which underpins all its relationships with government and other stakeholders	Ongoing Mandate Development: Initiated in Year 1
<b>2.5</b> <b>Growing Relationships Internationally</b> The SSS establishes formal and informal links with equivalent education bodies in UK and European jurisdictions	SSS identifies the potential for engagement with international bodies engaged in the promotion and support of education in second-level schools	Ongoing

### Goal 3: Providing Management, Compliance and Advisory Services

To provide information, advice, support, professional development, and training to all voluntary secondary schools

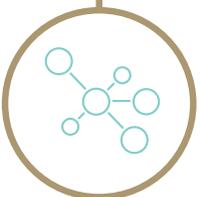


We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes

Outcomes	Enabling Measures	Timeframe
<p><b>3.1 Providing a Comprehensive Range of Relevant Services</b> SSS provides a comprehensive and high calibre range of information, advice, support, professional development, and training services to all voluntary secondary schools</p>	SSS engages regularly with its schools to identify needs in relation to services currently provided-for, (e.g., in legal/HR/IR, in building, in vetting support services and in schools' professional development requirements), and expands and enhances its services in response to such needs	Ongoing Consultation during Year 2
<p><b>3.2 Aligning Human Resources to Service Plan</b> The human resource capacity of the SSS is developed to meet the needs of our schools</p>	The Board reviews staffing capacity, deployment, and internal operational structures to provide for alignment with the strategic objectives of the organisation over the term of this plan, and supports the development of a community of practice across its operations	Ongoing Review Initiated in Year 1
<p><b>3.3 Further Developing an SSS Training Service</b> SSS engages periodically with its schools to identify their training needs and appropriate professional development opportunities are developed and provided</p>	The Secretariat consults annually with its schools to determine their current training requirements, to inform decisions around such provision, and to develop a calendar schedule of such professional development	Annually
<p><b>3.4 Enhancing the SSS Management Advisory Service</b> SSS regularly reviews and aligns its management advisory services to identified school priorities and to current and impending demands on school management</p>	SSS engages periodically with its schools to identify expansion or enhancement needs in relation to advisory services currently provided-for, and configures its human and other resources to provide for such requirements	Ongoing
<p><b>3.5 Supporting the Agency of Volunteers</b> SSS recognises, affirms, and supports the significant contribution of volunteer activity across both the organisation and within its schools</p>	SSS comprehends the scope and scale of volunteer agency across the organisation, identifies and provides for support and development opportunities, particularly in relation to board of management chairpersons and region leadership teams	Initiated in Year 2
<p><b>3.6 Monitoring of Service Recipient Satisfaction</b> SSS periodically seeks feedback from schools on the suitability, efficiency, and effectiveness of its services, and responds appropriately and within its resources to such feedback</p>	SSS periodically conducts research on school management satisfaction levels with its roles and services, and reports to the board of directors on the findings	Annually

## Goal 4: Promoting Educational Research and Development

To generate, use and share knowledge and research in support of the educational development aims of the voluntary secondary sector



We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes

Outcomes	Enabling Measures	Timeframe
<p><b>4.1 Purposeful Research Activity</b> The SSS carries out, commissions, and collaborates with other relevant bodies in the generation of, high quality research which supports the strategic aims of the organisation</p>	<p>Print and digital media are used to effectively disseminate SSS research findings, discussion papers, submissions etc.</p>	As determined
<p><b>4.2 Prioritising Principal and Deputy Principal Wellbeing</b> The SSS researches the issue of school leaders' workload and wellbeing</p>	<p>SSS commissions, or carries out, high calibre research on the extent of workload pressures and their consequences on principals and deputy principals</p>	Medium-term
<p><b>4.3 Researching Faith Education and Policy</b> The SSS carries out research on the value of Catholic education and assesses the impact of government policy on denominational education generally</p>	<p>The SSS commissions research on the value of faith schooling to contemporary Irish society and assesses how government policy supports or erodes such provision</p>	Current and Ongoing
<p><b>4.4 An Evidence Base for Funding Equalisation</b> The SSS researches and reports on the inequitable state funding arrangements relating to schools in the voluntary secondary sector</p>	<p>SSS commissions high level research to provide evidence of the discrepancies in state funding of schools in our sector vis-à-vis schools in the ETB and G&amp;C sectors</p>	Short-term
<p><b>4.5 Supporting Leader-Practitioner Research</b> SSS encourages and supports the research activities of voluntary secondary principals and deputy principals, and works to disseminate relevant outcomes from such activity</p>	<p>SSS welcomes, affirms, and supports relevant research activity carried out by voluntary secondary school leaders and collaborates where feasible with such investigations and in the sharing of findings, recommendations, and pertinent publications</p>	Ongoing



## Goal 5: Organisational Effectiveness and Governance

To develop the Secretariat’s governance and organisation structures and processes, and to communicate its work and achievements

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes

	Outcomes	Enabling Measures	Timeframe
5.1	<b>Operational Structure Meets Service Function</b> Internal operational structure is aligned with an efficient and effective service model and key strategic objectives	Engage in an internal review of the operational structure across the Secretariat’s functioning, with a view to achieving greater cohesion and coherence of activity	Ongoing Initiated in Year 1
5.2	<b>Providing for Effective Corporate Functioning</b> Corporate and Human Resource services are fully provided for	Identify a set of functions to be assigned to a corporate services role, and introduce a performance management and development system	Initiated in Year 1
5.3	<b>Monitoring our Governance</b> The work and functioning of the organisation’s governance structures are regularly evaluated	Compliance with CRA obligations as a registered charity, and other legislative requirements, will be monitored, and gaps or discrepancies identified for remediation	As determined
5.4	<b>A Contemporary Communications Strategy</b> Using an effective media strategy and process, key messages relating to the work of SSS are shared internally and externally	A Communications Strategy is developed with the aim of building communications awareness into all areas of the Secretariat’s work	Ongoing Strategy Development in Year 2

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## Section 5: Implementing, Monitoring and Reporting

This strategic plan sets out the strategic goals, outcomes and enabling measures that will direct the work of the Secretariat of Secondary Schools over the period January 2022 to December 2025.

Ongoing progress will be monitored by the strategy and risk committees and reported through general updates to the board of directors and through published reports to annual conference.

The preparation and implementation of an annual corporate plan and the operation of a performance management and development system are central to guiding and monitoring progress at organisational and individual level.

Progress reports and presentations on the various areas of work will be presented to the board over the course of the strategy.

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# Appendix

## Secretariat of Secondary Schools

### General Secretaries

1972 – 1975 : Fr John Hughes SJ  
1975 – 1977 : Unfilled  
1977 – 1996 : Br Declan Duffy  
1997 – 2005 : Mr George O’Callaghan  
2006 – 2015 : Mr Ferdia Kelly  
2016 – : Mr John Curtis

### Presidents

1987 – 1990 : Br Adrian McGrath  
1990 – 1997 : Mr Liam Murphy  
1997 – 2000 : Sr Marie Celine Clegg  
2000 – 2003 : Mgr Jim Cassin  
2003 – 2006 : Mr Paul Meany  
2006 – 2012 : Mr Noel Merrick  
2012 – 2018 : Fr Paul Connell  
2018 – : Mrs Deirdre Matthews

## Appendix 2

# 2023 Annual Report Teaching Council

## The Teaching Council Report – December 2022 / February 2023

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006. It is the professional standards body for the teaching profession, which promotes and regulates professional standards in teaching. It acts in the interests of the public good while upholding and enhancing standards in the teaching profession.

The Council consists of 37 members in total.

The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Council.

The Director works closely with the Council Members and has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Strategic Goals of the Council.

The Director is supported by a Senior Management Team and Council Staff.

### **Appointment of Dr. Lynn Ramsey as Director of the Teaching Council:**

Dr. Lynn Ramsey assumed office on 1st February 2023.

Dr. Ramsey holds a PhD in EU law from the University of Glasgow, a Masters of Education in Leadership and Management from Trinity College Dublin and has held academic and leadership positions in universities in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Dr. Ramsey previously served as Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Programme Manager for the West/Northwest Higher Education Cluster.

Dr. Ramsey succeeds former Director, Tomás Ó Ruairc who was appointed to the role of Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Education in January 2022.

Deep gratitude is extended to Ms. Phil Fox, who served as Acting Director of the Teaching Council from January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

**Teaching Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027:** [Teaching Council Strategic Plan 2022 to 2027.](#)



## Structure of the Teaching Council:

The Council comprises 37 members:

- 11 primary teachers, nine of whom are elected and two of whom are teacher union nominees.
- 11 post-primary teachers, seven of whom are elected and four of whom are teacher union nominees.
- 2 nominated by colleges of education.
- 2 nominated by specified third level bodies.
- 4 nominated by school management (two primary and two post-primary)
- 2 nominated by parents' associations (one primary and one post-primary)
- 5 nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills, including one representing each of IBEC and ICTU.

## Council Committees:

To facilitate its work, the Teaching Council has established several committees, groups and panels. These include the following:

- Executive Committee
- Investigation Committee
- Disciplinary Committee
- Registration Committee
- Education Committee
- Finance Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Evidence of Character Panel
- Qualifications Panel
- Registration Panel

## The Register of Teachers:

Registration with the Teaching Council is a requirement for a teacher to receive a State funded salary. The registration renewal fee remains at €65 and is claimable for tax relief.

A total of 109,196 teachers were registered with the Teaching Council on 27 March 2021, an increase of 5,673 teachers on the previous year.

	Primary	Post-Primary	Further Education	Other
2019	47,852	44,484	13,336	1,215
2020	49,407	45,410	13,872	1,243
2021	50,935	46,478	15,914	1,279

Please note: Teachers may be registered under more than one route / heading.

Over the period of this report 84 teachers lapsed from the Register for not addressing their conditions, of which 7 subsequently reregistered.

A total of 1,881 teachers lapsed for non-payment of renewal fee, with 60 teachers re-registering. A further 203 teachers voluntarily removed themselves from the Register during the period.

#### **Accessing information on the Register:**

The Register of Teachers is available to the public for inspection through an online “Search the Register” facility on the Council’s website. This facility was used 119,779 times during 2020-2021. Teachers logged into their personal records via the My Registration login on 238,711 occasions.

The Council also provides registration information to the Paymasters for the payment of teachers under Section 30 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 and under Section 24(7) of the Education Act 1998 as amended. During this timeframe 44,945 paymaster logins occurred.

#### **PME Verification Project:**

The Teaching Council supports student teachers undertaking a Professional Masters in Education (PME) in post-primary to verify that their undergraduate subjects meet the Council’s requirements for teaching at least one post-primary subject, in advance of applying for registration. While the HEIs assess students’ overall qualifications for access onto the PME programme in line with broad criteria, the Council offers an additional subject specific verification service. This checks that the subject taken at undergraduate level meets the specific requirements as set down by the Council for registration with that post-primary subject.

This confirms the PME student teacher’s eligibility to register with the Council on completion of their Masters studies and speeds up the summer registration process. A total of 75% of the PME student teachers (post-primary) who commenced their two-year programme in 2021 availed of this free process.

#### **Droichead:**

Droichead, the Council’s integrated induction framework for newly qualified teachers, entered the final year of its growth phase during the reporting year.

From September 2020, Droichead was the only route of induction for all primary and post-primary newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

Interim measures were put in place in the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years to offer additional flexibility to NQTs whose Droichead process was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the reporting year a total of 5,817 teachers engaged in the Droichead process across two academic years. Of the 3,122 NQTs across 1,479 schools who participated in 2019/2020, 751 NQTs completed the process in advance of the reporting year, 88 banked elements of the process for completion at a later date and the remaining 2,283 teachers completed the process.

In the academic year 2020/2021, 3,446 NQTs commenced the process in 1,682 schools across the country.

#### **Garda Vetting:**

The Teaching Council administers the vetting of teachers.

A total of 22,109 teachers were vetted by the Council in the period of this report:

- ◇ 8,708 teachers were vetted for initial registration or employment purposes.

- ◇ 13,401 were vetted as part of the re-vetting of registered teachers.

The Council's 'Evidence of Character Panel' met on 11 occasions and considered 38 vetting disclosures in respect of applicants for registration or renewal of registration. A further 148 cases were presented for ratification to the panel during the year. The Panel was provided with an update on 18 teachers who had been approved for registration / re-registration with conditions as imposed by the Panel. The Panel also considered 10 submissions made by teachers as part of the re-vetting project.

## **School Placement:**

Minister for Education Norma Foley TD and the Teaching Council announced the publication of the Report and Action Plan of the School Placement Working Group on Friday, 19 March 2021.

The School Placement Working Group (SPWG) was convened by the Teaching Council in November 2018 to review the implementation of school placement guidelines and the recommendations of Teaching Council commissioned research on school placement.

The Group was also requested to convey recommendations, including a costed action plan, to the Department of Education's Teacher Supply Implementation Group.

The Group identified a number of key challenges with regard to school placement, including the sourcing and administration of school placement, the financial cost of school placement, and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (with a particular focus on supporting teachers who host student teachers).

These challenges formed the basis of an Action Plan on School Placement, and the final report outlines three priority action areas:

1. the creation of a national central school placement system and integrated online portal
2. the launching of a demonstration model to include piloting of the placement system and professional learning programme to support Treoraithe (previously called co-operating teachers)
3. Support for the development of school-HEI partnerships in the area of research and recognition for the work of all those involved in school placement.

The SPWG recommended that a number of working groups be established to progress actions in each of these areas.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 on system resources and work practices, the working groups were established in 2021.

On publication of the report in March 2021, the Council also confirmed revised timelines which focus on priority actions 1 and 2 and include the establishment of the following:

- School Placement Project Team (Teaching Council, DE, Inspectorate) (Q1 2021)
- Placement System Working Group ( Q2 2021)
- Treoraithe Professional Learning Working Group (Q4 2021)

## **Teachers' Learning:**

### **FÉILTE:**

FÉILTE is the Teaching Council's annual Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence. At FÉILTE, teachers share teaching methodologies, resources, ideas, and innovations in teaching, learning and assessment.

FÉILTE has grown from an audience of 150 people in 2012, to one of the largest gatherings of teachers in Ireland, across primary, post-primary and further education.

FÉILTE 2022 took place on Saturday, 1 October 2022 in The Helix, Dublin and online, and marked 10 years of FÉILTE. The theme of the festival was Respect, Remembering, Reflecting and

Reimagining. The event celebrated the innovation and creative work of teachers and school leaders across the whole school community.

**BEACONS - Bringing Education Alive for our Communities on a National Scale:**

Through BEACONS, the Teaching Council leads a diverse group of stakeholders and people to explore new ways for supporting more and better conversations between teachers, parents, and students at the local community level. The goal is to develop a suite of models that any school could choose from and adapt to their own needs, based on the emerging core principles of BEACONS. The intention is that this work would facilitate enhanced engagement between local communities and national consultative processes on issues of common interest and importance.

**Cosán:**

As part of the Cosán Development Process, a programme of workshops for schools was facilitated during the reporting year in collaboration with the Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI). The workshops are designed for primary, post-primary and further education teachers to attend with colleagues from their school, to collaboratively explore the Cosán framework and how it can be used in their particular context.

The programme consists of three workshops and a number of collaborative school-based activities. Schools were invited to nominate three teachers (including a senior or middle leader) to attend the workshop programme. At the workshops, participants engaged in small group discussion in relation to their learning and were introduced to various models and practical tools to support them in reflecting on their learning.

In March 2020 due to Covid-19, the workshops remaining in Series 1 were postponed until June 2020. The final of the three workshops was re-designed and provided in an online format due to the public health advice and government guidelines in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following the completion of Series 1, the workshop facilitators completed an online survey and participated in an online shared learning session, both of which provided valuable feedback regarding their experience of the programme to help support the rollout of Series 2.

Planning for Series 2 of the Cosán Workshop Programme began in October 2020. Council invited an additional 6 Education Centres to host the Cosán Workshop Programme as part of their programmes of local courses.

In November 2020, the Teaching Council, in collaboration with the Education Support Centres of Ireland (ESCI) hosted a webinar on the topic of Supporting Teachers' Learning, in the context of Cosán.

By the end of the reporting year, 22 workshops had taken place in 12 Education Centres throughout the country.

The Cosán Working Group met during the reporting year and considered feedback from workshops and stakeholder engagement to inform their ongoing work in relation to the Cosán Development Process.

It also considered a number of iterations of a draft Cosán Action Plan which had been developed by the Department of Education in consultation with Teaching Council staff.

**CROÍ Research Series:** A new 'Using Research in Our School' feature on the Teaching Council website was launched in September 2020. This groups resources thematically to make it easier for schools to find relevant research in a format that suits them. The resources include webinars, ezines, eBooks and journal articles, and schools are encouraged to choose a particular theme and explore the resources with colleagues as part of a staff meeting. During the reporting year, resources on the themes of Reflection and Wellbeing were published.

**John Coolahan Research Support Framework:** The John Coolahan Research Support Framework aims to support teachers to adopt an innovative and evidence-informed approach to their professional practice. Applications were invited for the fourth round of the John Coolahan Research Support Framework in June 2020.

52 applications were received and considered by the appointed review panel. An online awards event took place in December 2020, at which 12 individual and 13 collaborative projects were awarded funding, with more than €68,750 awarded in total.

A review of the Research Support Framework took place ahead of the launch of Round 5. At the end of the reporting year, an updated framework was being considered by Council.

**Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX):**

T-REX (Teachers' Research Exchange) is an online platform to support engagement in and with research by teachers and other educational researchers. It offers support in accessing and sharing the latest insights from cutting-edge research. It also facilitates and supports conversations, collaborations and stronger connections between research, policy, practice and between schools and HEIs. The platform is funded jointly by the Teaching Council, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Centre for Effective Services and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. As a co-funder, the Council is represented on the T-REX Steering Committee which met five times during the reporting year.

**DEEPEN** (Droichead: Exploring and Eliciting Perspectives Experiences and Narratives) research project, which was commissioned by the Teaching Council is being carried out by the Marino Institute of Education and Trinity College.

This research is exploring teachers' experiences of the Droichead professional induction framework, with particular reference to the roles and responsibilities of those engaging in and supporting the Droichead process.

It has a particular focus on small schools, Gaelscoileanna, DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools and special education settings.

**The Research Engagement Group (REG)** is comprised of registered teachers and others with experience of, and interest in, research in the areas of teaching, learning and/or assessment. The group represents a broad spectrum of teaching contexts and research interests, and endeavours to support the Council's research work. It does this by promoting engagement by teachers in, and with, research and by promoting engagement between teachers and other educational researchers. During the year, members of the Group participated on the John Coolahan Research Support Framework review panel, reviewed content for the Using Research in Our School resource and provided feedback to inform the review of the John Coolahan Research Support Framework.

**Online Library:**

The Teaching Council provides all registered teachers with free access to an online library of journals and eBooks under the CROÍ research series. To access the library, registered teachers must log in by using their Teaching Council Registration Number. Instructional videos on how to access and search the online library are also published on the Teaching Council's website.

**Ensuring High Standards of Professional Conduct and Practice:**

The Teaching Council is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching in Ireland by promoting and ensuring high standards in the profession. This is achieved through the publication and promotion of a '*Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*', and the investigation of complaints against registered teachers.

The second edition of the Code of Professional Conduct (updated in 2016) sets out the standards of professional knowledge, skill, competence and conduct that are expected of registered teachers. The Code is a statement of what good teaching should look and feel like. It is a statutory document that acts as a reference point during Fitness to Teach inquiries.

**The Investigation of Complaints:**

The Council's Fitness to Teach functions (Part 5 of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015) were commenced on 25 July 2016. Thus, the Council can investigate complaints made against registered teachers on serious matters. Once a complaint is made, the Council will initiate an investigation and decide if it should be dealt with through the Council's formal disciplinary procedures.

**The Investigating Committee:**

The Investigating Committee is a *screening committee* that considers and investigates complaints received by the Teaching Council in relation to registered teachers.

This Committee met nine times during the reporting period 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021. It decided whether action was required or whether all or part of a complaint should be referred to the Disciplinary Committee for an inquiry.

**Grounds of complaint include:**

- ◇ Professional misconduct
- ◇ Poor professional performance
- ◇ Engaging in conduct contrary to the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers
- ◇ being medically unfit to teach
- ◇ A court conviction for certain offences
- ◇ Failing to comply with, or contravening a provision of the Teaching Council Acts, 2001-2015; the Education Act, 1998; the Education Welfare Act, 2000; the Education and Training Boards Act, 2013, and any regulations, rules or orders made under those Acts.
- ◇ Failing to comply with an undertaking or to take any action specified in a consent given to a panel of the Council's Disciplinary Committee at an inquiry and
- ◇ Erroneous registration due to a false or fraudulent declaration or misrepresentation

**Complaints before the Committee:**

24	new complaints were received during this reporting period.
0	complaint related to two teachers or more.
2	refused as they were deemed frivolous.
7	related to post-primary teachers
15	related to primary teachers
2	related to teachers in Further Education

**Source of complaint:**

12	Parents
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6	Via Executive Committee, having come to their attention through media etc.
6	Other parties
0	School management authorities

**Categories of Complaint during the reporting year:**

12	Conduct/behaviour*
4	Competence/performance/practice
2	Medical concerns
1	Criminal convictions
7	Dishonesty/professional integrity
5	Breach of Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

\* Complaints related to conduct/behaviour include physical abuse/assault, verbal assault, sexual/intimate contact with a student, inappropriate personal relationship with a student (non-sexual), inappropriate communications (of a sexual and non-sexual nature), bullying, discriminatory behaviour, and inappropriate social media usage.

**Disciplinary Committee:**

The Investigating Committee of the Council may refer a complaint to the Disciplinary Committee for inquiry. In most cases, an inquiry will take the form of an oral hearing before a panel of the Disciplinary Committee. It is similar to a hearing before a court or tribunal. Witnesses give evidence under oath, however, the panel may, at the request of, or with the consent of, the teacher who is the subject of the complaint, decide to hold an inquiry by an examination of documents and written submissions, rather than conduct the inquiry in the form of an oral hearing. There were no inquiries conducted by examination of documents during the reporting year.

At the beginning of the reporting year, six inquiries were at planning stage, having been referred and carried forward from previous reporting periods. Preparations to hold inquiries were underway in these six matters. A further seven complaints were referred to the Disciplinary Committee for inquiry in the 2020/2021 reporting year.

The issues central to these complaints ranged from conviction cases to cases relating to alleged incidents of professional misconduct, poor professional performance, and a breach of the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

Despite the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the work of inquiry panels continued throughout the reporting year with proceedings moving to a secure online platform. Four preliminary hearings, relating to three separate complaints and a two-day private inquiry, were held online.

Two applications for confirmation of sanction were made to the High Court. These related to inquiries concluded in the previous reporting period, and in both cases, the relevant sanction was confirmed.

- In one of these cases the teacher was removed from the Register.
- In the second case, the teacher was retained on the Register subject to a fitness to teach condition.

Website notices are published from time to time by Council in relation to concluded inquiries and these can be seen on the Fitness to Teach area of the Teaching Council website.

In accordance with Statutory Instrument S. I. No 8 of 2017 European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2017, The Teaching Council, as a Competent Authority under EU Directive 2013/55/EU, is obliged to notify the competent authorities in all other EU Member States, where the practice of a registered person is prohibited or restricted by a national authority or court.

During the reporting year, The Teaching Council issued alerts in relation to five registered teachers.

Section 47 of The Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 provides that the Council, if it is satisfied that it is in the public interest, may apply to the High Court for an Order to suspend the registration of a registered teacher for a specified period.

The Executive Committee considered one such application in the reporting year and decided to apply to the High Court for a section 47 Order.

This application was granted by the High Court. Section 42(1) of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 provides that the Council may make a complaint to the Investigating Committee.

This can arise where a registered teacher comes to the Council's attention via the media or where a member of the public or a board of management notify Council of a concern relating to a registered teacher but do not wish to become a formal complainant.

The Executive Committee (having been delegated this function by Council), decided that Council should become the complainant with regard to six complaints during the reporting year.

### **Other Relevant Updates:**

#### **Tailored Registration Process for Qualified Ukrainian Teachers:**

The Teaching Council has engaged with the Ukrainian Embassy, The National Vetting Bureau, The Department of Education, and other State bodies in relation to the registration and vetting of qualified Ukrainian teachers who have been granted Temporary Protection under the [EU Temporary Protection Directive](#).

A tailored process to support the registration and vetting of qualified Ukrainian teachers was finalised in 2022 and a guidance document to support the process is available in both English and Ukrainian.

Registration as a teacher is a statutory process governed by Irish and EU legislation. Where teachers from Ukraine have evidence of qualified teacher status, they can apply to be admitted to the Register of Teachers in Ireland to teach in State-recognised schools. Each application for registration is assessed on a case-by-case basis under the [Teaching Council \(Registration\) Regulations 2016](#).

Teachers who do not meet all the registration requirements may be registered subject to conditions. A range of conditions may be attached to a teacher's registration in line with any identified shortfalls. The teacher will be given three years to address these conditions during which time the Council will continue to engage with the teacher, as necessary.

Once registered, Ukrainian teachers, irrespective of conditional registration status, are eligible to receive a State-funded salary and teach in recognised schools. It should be noted the employment and deployment of teachers within the school system falls outside the remit of the Teaching Council.

Further information will be published on the Council's website in the coming days. Any qualified Ukrainian teacher interested in applying for registration should

email [ukrainianteachers@teachingcouncil.ie](mailto:ukrainianteachers@teachingcouncil.ie) and will be provided with the necessary documentation once available.

**Teachers, qualified abroad may apply for registration and complete their induction in Ireland on a time-bound basis:**

To assist with teacher supply challenges in the context of the public health situation, primary and post-primary teachers who have qualified outside of Ireland are eligible to apply for registration and complete their induction here in Ireland, on a time-bound basis.

Teachers must apply no later than 1 February 2024, to be eligible. A regulatory amendment order, was signed into law on 26 January by the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD, together with Chairperson of the Teaching Council and the Acting Director of the Teaching Council. This is a similar measure to the previous regulatory orders implemented during the pandemic and its re-establishment forms part of wider ongoing initiatives to alleviate teacher supply issues.

This measure is particularly relevant for primary and post-primary teachers who have studied and qualified abroad and who may wish to return to the Irish education sector.

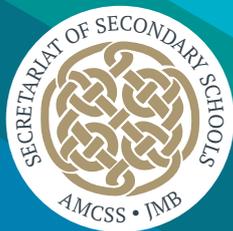
[Further information](#) on how to apply for registration under this regulation is available on the Teaching Council website.

The measures being implemented by the Teaching Council are focused on increasing the supply of registered teachers who are available to fill vacancies, including supervision and substitution roles.

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## Appendix 3

# JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023



# JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023



*For further information contact:*

JMB General Secretary  
Tel: 01 283 8255  
E-mail: [info@jmb.ie](mailto:info@jmb.ie)

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Five key post-primary domains from the Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2020 will act as a framework for this submission:



## 1. Leadership and Management in Schools



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision



## 3. Inclusion



## 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People



## 5. Looking Forward

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# Summary of Recommendations

## 1. Leadership and Management in Schools

### 1.1 Sustainable School Leadership for Renewal

In light of the growing demands on school leaders, it is essential that the Department commits to the elimination of the practice of allocating a fraction of a deputy principal to any school, regardless of enrolment. Incredibly, schools with enrolments near 400 students do not have a full deputy principal post. In schools with a fraction of a deputy post, savings could be made by prioritising such senior leadership roles over other elements of a school's allocation and we are happy to explore this possibility further, but we strongly urge the Department to begin with a commitment to end this unacceptable model of allocation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › JMB strongly urges the Department to immediately end the practice of allocating a fraction of a deputy principal to any school
- › The JMB/ETBI/ACCS submission to the Minister, outlining our prioritising of deputy principal positions across schools of all capacities, should receive serious consideration in respect of staffing allocations in 2023
- › In line with the School Self-Evaluation framework's encouragement of reflection on practice, the JMB strongly recommends that the Department considers the ongoing enormous pressure on school principals before initiating any further significant policy agendas impacting on their workload



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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

## 2. The Quality of Education Provision

### 2.1 Renewing the Curriculum

#### 1. Junior Cycle

Two outstanding policy-level issues relating to junior cycle reform remain to be addressed by the Department. The first relates to the inadequacy of the replacement hours to be provided for the 22 hours per year, pro-rata, professional time for teachers. It is regrettable that the Department is providing less than the number of hours lost to allow for this.

Secondly, the continuing failure to achieve a re-negotiation or an agreed re-interpretation of the agreement on scheduling SLAR meetings, is leaving school management and teachers in an impossible position.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › Staffing resources lost in the reduction of the class-contact week to 21:20 hours, pro-rata, must be replaced in full each year
- › Agreement on a framework for scheduling SLAR meetings that protects tuition time must be achieved as a matter of priority

#### 2. Towards a Framework for Senior Cycle

Policy change of the magnitude announced in March 2022 by the Minister will demand an equivalent response in terms of the resources required to implement it. Clarity and cohesion of policy is required, and not developed 'on the hoof' as occurred with junior cycle. JMB will ensure our members continue to have the school management voice heard while continuing to contribute to the national discourse around the emerging Senior Cycle renewal process.

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 3. Resourcing SPHE and RSE

Parallel to the production of specifications, teacher professional development and subject recognition by the Teaching Council also remain priorities, as school management consistently report a dearth of teachers personally and professionally prepared and willing to teach SPHE and, in particular, RSE. There exists a need to adequately train and professionally develop RSE teachers in their own right – developing expertise in every aspect of both the course materials and the likely questions necessarily arising in the classroom setting.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › The Department should put in place CPD and post-graduate development opportunities for contemporary teachers in SPHE and in RSE, a vital aspect of our education provision
- › In terms of supporting schools' engagement with transgender students, JMB urges the Minister to positively consider resourcing a service-delivery proposal with TENI which has the support of the management bodies and teacher unions

## 2.2 Making Realistic Provision for Guidance Counselling Services

JMB is seeking a meaningful increase in provision for guidance counselling in the face of a generation of students with unprecedented needs in terms of trauma recovery, metacognitive skills loss, career plan damage and a raft of other crises attributable in part to the Covid pandemic, as well as the new challenges of traumatised refugee children and an emerging senior cycle demanding significant guidance counselling in terms of expanded course choices and progression routes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › JMB is seeking a meaningful increase in provision for guidance counselling, as well as therapeutic counselling interventions, in the face of a generation of students with unprecedented needs
- › The adverse treatment of fee-charging schools in terms of their reduced guidance and counselling allocation (based, as it is on a higher PTR), should be discontinued
- › JMB urges the Department to support the training of new guidance counsellors, particularly in light of (a) the cost to individual teachers and (b) substituted release for training, supervision, and work-shadowing

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 2.3 Realising the Goals of the *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027*

The revised *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027* sets out three ambitious strands of activity, presenting challenges to system and schools alike. The core tasks, however, remain unchanged from the previous strategy:

1. Invest: Put relevant and adequate technologies in place. This must be centrally funded but spending locally determined
2. Facilitate: Provide every school with an ICT Coordinator with time for duties
3. Motivate: Empower teachers. This must also be resourced in terms of digital champions and teacher-release
4. Plan: Locate the school on a continuum of digital maturity and set jointly developed, achievable targets for progression
5. Focus: Reflect on developments at junior cycle and during the school closures and begin to consider how technologies can be part of the forthcoming national conversation around the emergence of the new Framework for Senior Cycle
6. Monitor and Evaluate: Celebrate successes and address deficiencies

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To underpin the three pillars of the new Digital Strategy for Schools, adequate annualised funding must provide for school-wide remote device purchase, up-to-date teacher CPD in digitally supported teaching and assessment, on-site technical and administrative support, and enhanced Wi-Fi infrastructure
- DEIS school communities continue to require significant infrastructural investment in light of their particular challenges around inclusion
- Adverse treatment of schools in the fee-charging sector, in which grants such as those for ICT are reduced by 50%, must be discontinued
- Grant aid must be restored for the purchasing, maintenance, and support of school administration packages

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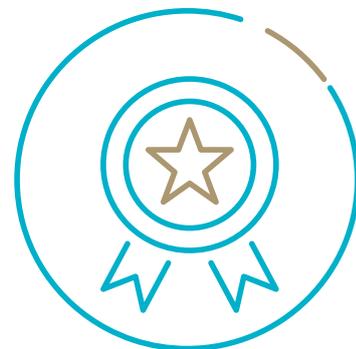
## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 2.4 Teacher Supply

Arising from significant reported challenges in the area, the JMB supported and strongly promoted our schools' participation in the Department's survey of unmet subject teacher demand in 2021/22. The findings fully aligned with the JMB's own annual data-gathering exercise on recruitment challenges, particularly in Irish, home economics, and guidance counselling. We urge the Department and the Inspectorate to set out the range of acceptable, if temporary, options schools may employ to ensure subject provision, and compliance with capitation funding requirements in particular.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › Strategic and binding proposals to address the issue of inadequate teacher supply must emerge from the national conversation on this issue – self regulation by ITE providers and granular qualification recognition criteria must be addressed as a matter of urgency
- › While current, high-level approaches will have long-term effects, JMB urges the Department to implement immediate, short term alleviation strategies to assist recruitment for the forthcoming school year
- › The Department and Inspectorate should prepare guidelines for schools on how to make provision for Gaelge, Home Economics and Guidance Counselling in light of the current severe teacher supply crisis in these subjects



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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 3. Inclusion

#### 3.1 Supporting Students with Special and Additional Educational Needs

The overall policy objective of the Department of Education is to promote inclusive education for children and young people with SEN in mainstream settings. Such a policy, of course, carries resourcing implications and, along with demographic growth across the school-going population, the state's investment in terms of special education teachers and special needs assistants will need to meet this growing need.

In light of such a national commitment, JMB reminds government that we still have not made any distinct provision for an expanded range of SEN coordination responsibilities which inevitably inflated as our students with additional needs continue to re-engage with school life, and as we welcome a diverse range of non-English speaking students from Ukraine over the coming year. As a matter of urgency, the government must make distinct provision for SEN Coordination.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › The landscape of SEN provision was radically worsened by the Covid pandemic and schools must now face the challenges of supporting students from Ukraine. JMB urges that the adequacy of the SET and EAL allocation to schools be reviewed in light of these challenges and that adequate provision be made to ensure the levels of provision such vulnerable students deserve
- › A special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) must be appointed to all post-primary schools with a weekly allocation of at least 10% of a school's 'profile hours' (with a baseline threshold of 2 hours per week) to be flexibly deployed by management but ring-fenced to the SENCO and their team
- › The proposed implementation of a profile-based model of SNA allocation and deployment must be accompanied by appropriate capacity-building measures at school level
- › JMB strongly recommends the establishment of a dedicated ASD and special class advisory team within the new integrated teacher education support service, to support the expanding network of special classes in mainstream settings

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 3.2 Investing in Our DEIS Schools

While the argument that greater emphasis on planning, target setting, and evaluation is fundamental to effective leadership for school improvement, an equivalent argument may be made for liberating the DEIS school principal from the work and worry overwhelm to which they are daily subjected, to provide precisely such leadership.

As an immediate action, we now call on the Department to allocate a full deputy principal in all schools of up to 400 students and to allocate a second deputy principal to schools within the DEIS Programme with enrolments of between 400 and 599 students.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › DEIS school principals worked tirelessly during the pandemic and they must, as a matter of urgency, be provided with acceptable levels of senior leadership support to allow them and their school communities to survive the extreme challenges in the wake of this crisis
- › We seek, as an immediate action, the allocation of a full deputy principal in all schools of up to 400 students and the allocation of a second deputy principal to schools within the DEIS Programme with enrolments of between 400 and 599 students
- › The Department's reconfiguration of the DEIS scheme must go further to provide for a more equitable framework for addressing disadvantage. The all-or-nothing approach to DEIS inclusion must be reviewed to provide schools with high numbers of students experiencing disadvantage with targeted supports

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 3.3 The Challenges of Developing and Implementing Anti-Bullying Strategies

Student bullying, and its impact on mental health, can only be addressed when our anti-bullying policies are properly resourced. We need our year heads and student support teams to have time for duties, ring-fenced and allocated-for; guidance and counselling provision expanded; a full deputy principal in every school, not fractions, and time provided for the necessary in-school group meetings involved, particularly in relation to teachers investigating incidents of bullying.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › In implementing their anti-bullying policies as set out in the Department's 2013 procedures, schools' most pressing needs centre on time and expertise. School management requires devolved authority to free-up relevant staff for the necessary in-school group meetings involved in fact-finding, planning and in consultation, and particularly in relation to teachers investigating incidents of bullying
- › The Inspectorate's engagement with schools on anti-bullying will continue to surface the key challenges to this perennial task and JMB looks forward to working collaboratively on the findings to better support our school communities in this ever-evolving facet of social living



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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People



#### 4.1 The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill

The JMB has long argued for greater coherence in national educational policymaking, and we therefore welcome the bringing-together of a clearly articulated set of principles underpinning the relationship between parents and students on the one hand and schools on the other. We do, however, have concerns around an undermining of the principle of subsidiarity in which decisions are best made at the lowest appropriate level, i.e., by the school community itself, as well as the potential for the emergence of an adversarial culture in the partnership between schools and the families they serve.

#### 4.2 Eliminating the Need for Voluntary Contributions

JMB welcomes the overdue, though significant, abolition of the basic salary payment made by boards of management to their teachers, hitherto a unique feature of the Voluntary Secondary sector. The Minister and government must, however, understand that voluntary secondary school communities are suffering due to long-standing, systemic underfunding and that the capacity of families to replace the monies denied by the state to this post-primary sector alone has now all but gone. As energy costs for families increase and general cost-of-living inflation spirals, it is becoming increasingly difficult on every level, including moral, for schools to seek voluntary subscriptions from hard-pressed families to make up a deficit unnecessarily created by government in its unequal funding of schools by sector.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › A commencement must be made to address the inequitable funding of schools in the Voluntary Secondary sector by initiating the Equalisation process already conceded by government
- › JMB urges the immediate index-linking of all capitation grants to allow schools to pay their bills
- › A government-level commitment must be made to eliminating, over a three-year period, the need for schools to seek voluntary contributions from families

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 5. Looking Forward

#### 5.1 School Buildings: Demographic Growth and Physical Education

Many voluntary secondary schools have been serving their communities for more than 100 years, were built or extended-to with no or limited State assistance and are now in need of major refurbishment and extensions. JMB is concerned that with exponentially increasing building costs, a fall-off in parties responding to calls for tenders, and, in our view, a lack of sufficient personnel in the School Building Unit, even the targets of the current Six Year Plan will not be met.

Meanwhile, JMB welcomes the commitment to deliver a programme to build and modernise P.E. and school sport facilities, as our research indicates that just 50% of schools have a full-sized P.E. Hall.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › A major increase in the Capital Budget for voluntary secondary schools is required:
- › To allow for additional schools not on the Six Year Plan but in serious need of refurbishment and extensions to be added to the List
- › To meet a greater number of demands under the Additional Accommodation scheme
- › To allow for a greater number of categories to be approved under the Summer Works Scheme
- › To allow for a greater number of Emergency Works to be approved
- › To eliminate prefabricated classrooms
- › JMB urges that as many forms of delivery be put in place so that major projects be progressed through the Department's stages in an efficient and speedy manner
- › A special five-year plan is required to provide a full-sized P.E. Hall facility in every school with an interim scheme to replace obsolete sports equipment

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## Summary of Recommendations [continued]

### 5.2 The Pupil-Teacher Ratio

If the pandemic-related school closures have proved anything, it is the centrality of the teacher-student relationship that makes all the difference in the enterprise of the school. Even the most engaged, resourced, and supported student cannot form an educative relationship with a screen.

It should not be forgotten that the increase of the PTR to 19:1 coupled with the reduction in guidance counselling, EAL, and Traveller support hours from schools (an effective PTR increase), have had a very severe impact on the educational experience being offered in schools. The perception that increasing the PTR in any school by a point means an additional student in a classroom is completely wrong – it means subject and specialist teachers are lost to the school. In particular, forthcoming policy change at senior cycle, for example in relation to broadening participation in Transition Year and LCVP, will carry significant implications for staffing levels if they are to succeed.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › The pupil teacher ratio for schools in the Free Education sector must be restored to 18:1 in order to alleviate the impact of the cutbacks on staffing in schools in recent years and to support a recovery of the teaching time lost in the pandemic-related closures
- › Fee-charging schools, a long-standing and successful example of Public-Private Partnership, are a net contributor to the economy. The pupil-teacher ratio in these schools must be reduced as a first step from 23:1 to 21:1
- › As staffing allocations in areas such as professional time for teachers of junior cycle are based on a PTR model, schools in this sector are doubly discriminated-against – a practice which requires greater equity



# JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023

## Recovery and Renewal



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## Introduction

The Covid pandemic has caused multiple, unanticipated, and layered impacts that have severely affected societies across the world. 'Addressing these impacts in the aftermath of such a complex crisis requires collaborative approaches where the whole-of-society works together to build and strengthen its resilience'<sup>1</sup>. Such approaches, wherein key decisions were made by stakeholders on a shared responsibility basis, became a notable feature of our country's education enterprise response during the crisis, and will hopefully continue as a 'bottom up' complement to the 'top down' architecture of classical policymaking in the public space.

Resilience, however, involves more than an ability to weather adversity and to bounce back. It has also been used to refer to systems that survive being jostled around – whether or not they go back to where they were before, or to any stable state, for that matter. Our almost universal tendency to speak of the 'new normal' perhaps points to a desire to capitalise on some of the few positive outcomes and trends emerging from the flux of societal, workplace, and technological change brought about by the pandemic, while at the same time hankering for a significant degree of re-setting at both system and school levels.

This tension between the 'normal' and the 'new' was echoed in the 2022 JMB Annual Conference theme of 'Recovery and Renewal in Our Faith Schools'. Our schools will need time to recover and will need space to renew. We have barely begun to process what we have been through, at psychological, sociological, or spiritual levels. Rushing to adopt and assimilate what were essentially emergency responses, without allowing sufficient space for considering unintended or longer-term impacts, could lead to a serious erosion of the human spirit in the rush to reform our human capital.

It is into this much needed time and space that the characteristic spirit of our school communities emerges as a key response to our twin tasks of recovery and renewal. Our school leaders have always struggled to liberate themselves from overwhelming administrative burdens to enact their essential leadership for learning role. Now, they must equally foster a healing and recovering, yet forward-looking, school community. This is the true meaning of *Priomhoide* – the one who fosters.

To achieve this, our policymakers and evaluators must trust that if a school community takes time to allow its spirit to catch up with the hurried journey it has been on, that such time is time very well spent. In this respect, we commend the wisdom of the Chief Inspector, Dr Harold Hislop, in allowing for precisely such a reflective possibility in the next phase of the school self-evaluation process.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew G. McClelland, et al, 'Post-Covid recovery and renewal through whole-of-society resilience in cities', Journal of Safety Science and Resilience, 2022,

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, the Chief Inspector presented his report on findings from inspection, advisory, and research activities between September 2016 and December 2020. Five key post-primary domains reported-on will act as a framework for this submission:



## 1. Leadership and Management in Schools



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision



## 3. Inclusion



## 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People



## 5. Looking Forward

This submission sets out the key concerns of our voluntary secondary school principals and management - a unique and vital sector of our public service as we have seen in recent times.



# 1. Leadership and Management in Schools

## Key Messages from the Chief Inspector's Report:

- › Inspection findings show that clear communication practices and strong cultures of collaboration lie at the heart of effective schools
- › Effective leaders and managers communicate well and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of provision for learners
- › The role of school leaders and managers in establishing and maintaining new routines and protocols under their Covid-19 implementation plan resulted in a sense of order, security, and calm for their school communities
- › The Inspectorate research findings indicated that schools reopened successfully thanks to a combination of their very effective preparation and the supports provided by the Department and other partners
- › Those in leadership and management positions in schools need to place a more substantial focus on the leadership of teaching and learning
- › Alternative governance structures for state-funded schools should be pursued actively with the aim of providing schools with more efficient and systematic supports

## Sustainable School Leadership for Renewal

'In summary, our research shows that the work of school leaders was complex and important through these challenging pandemic times and that leaders prioritised compassionate, humanising goals that grounded all other work at this time. They made sense of what was happening and what they needed to do by maintaining this focus and understanding their positions within their communities. They mobilised communication practices that were reassuring as well as open and honest. Promisingly, these leaders optimistically looked to a post-pandemic future that may build upon the disruptions that originally seemed threatening and dangerous but were made sense of in ways that could open new opportunities for schools'.<sup>2</sup>

At this point in mid-2022, there exists a palpable sense of 'optimistically looking to a post-pandemic future' amongst our school leaders and their communities. Having transformed what could have been a catastrophic fracturing of their school communities, into creative, life-affirming, at times dispersed, families of adults and young people caring for and about each other, principals, in particular, are now looking forward to a sustained period of renewal. As is

<sup>2</sup> Longmuir F. Leading in lockdown: Community, communication and compassion in response to the COVID-19 crisis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. July 2021.



## 1. Leadership and Management in Schools [continued]

noted in the CI's report: 'During the period of school closures, schools reported considerable success in engaging with the majority of pupils and students in mainstream schools and demonstrated high levels of adaptability. The reopening of schools was achieved through the extraordinary efforts of school leaders and whole school communities and was supported by an extensive suite of financial and advisory supports provided by the Department of Education'.

JMB wishes to record its appreciation of the extraordinary investment made by the State in mitigating the worst effects of the pandemic on our schools, though the differential treatment of fee-charging schools in the allocation of Covid support funding was very regrettable. We nonetheless recognise both the advocacy of the Minister at the Cabinet table in securing funding, as well as the lengths to which Department officials engaged in a collaborative model of decision-making, all of which supported our communities at school level over two successive years. Equally, the CI's report acknowledged the price paid by school leaders during this crisis: 'The Inspectorate research findings indicated that schools reopened successfully thanks to a combination of their very effective preparation and the supports provided by the Department and other partners. However, this success came at a cost for many school leaders who reported, during discussions with inspectors, that they experienced significant pressure and high stress levels'.

Schools and individuals cannot run on adrenaline forever. Decisions and policies constructed to bridge school and system during an emergency may not be appropriate to a longer-term sustainable future. It is time, in 2022/2023, to begin to process what has transacted in our school communities and to identify opportunities for progress, such as our rapid digital upskilling, as well as identifying where we need to re-set, such as a return to dynamic, relational, and differentiated teaching in our classrooms.

In this context, JMB very much welcomes the Inspectorate's approach to the next phase of School Self-Evaluation, in which precisely such a period of reflection and renewal may be framed within a school's SSE framework over the next four years.

That said, it is crystal clear that the time for empowered, enabled, resourced, and liberated school leadership has come. It is no longer acceptable that a school principal remains overwhelmed by administrative and other non-core workloads to the detriment of her or his key role as the leader of learning. To this end, JMB acknowledges and welcomes the provision of additional deputy principals in larger schools in recent times, which represents a cost-effective model of enhancing the leadership base in our schools. We have relied on a single person at the neck of a responsibility hourglass for far too long. Schools need a unitary apex leader, but to exercise the type of transformational leadership demanded of them, fit-for-purpose second and third tiers are essential. JMB is in no doubt that many of our principals have been running on empty. Witness the term '*the school will ...*' repeated time and again in each and every policy document issued by the Department during the crisis. For '*the school will ...*' or '*schools will ...*', read '*the principal will ...*'. Meanwhile, the teaching and learning mission of the school, and its associated administrative workloads, continue apace.



## 1. Leadership and Management in Schools [continued]

In light of these demands, long-standing and new, it is essential that the Department commits to the elimination of the practice of allocating a fraction of a deputy principal to any school, regardless of enrolment. Incredibly, schools with enrolments near 400 students do not have a full deputy principal post. In schools with a fraction of a deputy post, savings could be made by prioritising such senior leadership roles over other elements of a school's allocation and we are happy to explore this possibility further, but we strongly urge the Department to begin with a commitment to end this unacceptable model of allocation.

In May 2022, JMB, with the support of ACCS and ETBI, made a submission to the Minister and her Department outlining our prioritising of deputy principal positions across schools of all capacities. We look forward to engaging with the Department on this proposal and urge the Minister to give serious consideration to both the rationale for such enhancements, as well as to the cost-effectiveness of the model.

In 2022, JMB very much welcomed the decision by the Inspectorate to reduce its programme of in-school evaluations for the remainder of the academic year. In line with such a reasoned approach, and also the government's commitment 'that schools be given the time to implement required changes', the JMB strongly recommends that the Department considers the ongoing enormous pressure on school principals before initiating any further significant policy agendas impacting on their workload.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › JMB strongly urges the Department to immediately end the practice of allocating a fraction of a deputy principal to any school
- › The JMB/ETBI/ACCS submission to the Minister, outlining our prioritising of deputy principal positions across schools of all capacities, should receive serious consideration in respect of staffing allocations in 2023
- › In line with the School Self-Evaluation framework's encouragement of reflection on practice, the JMB strongly recommends that the Department considers the ongoing enormous pressure on school principals before initiating any further significant policy agendas impacting on their workload



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision

### Key Messages from the Chief Inspector's Report:

- › Irish students continue to perform well in international assessments in reading, Mathematics and Science; there is scope to improve outcomes for students with higher abilities, including exceptionally able students
- › The proportion of students studying subjects at higher level has increased steadily in almost all subjects
- › Schools have made good progress in relation to whole-school literacy; vocabulary development and oral literacy were identified as areas for further development in inspections of English
- › High-quality learning environments, and high levels of student enjoyment and motivation are evident in post-primary schools; collaborative learning practices for students require further development

The remarkable achievements of educators in the Irish school context, as consistently echoed across the CI Report, are all the more extraordinary when set against the backdrop of a level of underfunding almost unique in the developed world.

The findings of the OECD Education at a Glance 2021 report shows that Ireland uniquely spends a mere 3% of its wealth on education, less than virtually any other country comprehended in the report. Post-primary funding, at 1.1%, represents the lowest investment, well below the OECD averages of almost double that figure.

As a key recommendation, JMB seeks that government commits to a three-year phased increase in exchequer funding of education to bring the resourcing of Ireland's system to at least OECD/EU norms in terms of GDP ratios, and that a systematic investment in the ageing infrastructure of voluntary secondary schools becomes a commitment over the next decade.

### 2.1 Renewing the Curriculum

#### 1. Junior Cycle

The CI Report reflects a broadly positive picture of implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle:

- › The *Junior Cycle Framework* is being implemented successfully in many schools; cross-curricular sharing of expertise, focused on inclusive task design and the further alignment of subject department plans with the new subject specifications, are areas for development.



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

- › Challenges remain in relation to how assessment is carried out, how assessment findings are used, and the quality of formative feedback that students receive; Covid-19 led to much new thinking in this area. The implementation of classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in Junior Cycle has meant the use of a wider range of assessment approaches and has given teachers opportunities to engage in collaborative discussions and moderation meetings concerning students' achievements.

The decision to reduce the requirement for Classroom-Based Assessments from two to one and abandon the Assessment Tasks in respect of two successive year groups was a welcome adaptation of the Framework in terms of responsiveness to the Covid crisis, but points to an urgent need to revitalise the reforms at school and system levels.

JMB has been actively engaging with the University of Limerick's research mandate from NCCA to establish a systematic review of the implementation and impact of junior cycle reforms across all stakeholders and sectors. It is expected that the learnings from such an independent study will generate significant opportunities for ongoing policy in the area of curriculum and assessment and JMB encourages the Minister and partners to engage positively with all recommendations as they emerge. In particular, the timing of this research will allow for some much-needed insight into the effect of the changes to assessment and reporting since the initial school closures, as well as adding to our learning-base in relation to remote teaching and learning at lower secondary level.

Meanwhile, two outstanding policy-level issues remain to be addressed by the Department. The first relates to the inadequacy of the replacement hours to be provided for the 22 hours per year, pro-rata, professional time for teachers. It is regrettable that the Department is providing less than the number of hours lost to allow for this. The missing hours must come from somewhere – reducing curricular options, enlarging class size, cutting special needs time – the Department's assertion that 'the quantum of hours provided to replace TPT were never intended to fully compensate for those lost' is not only meaningless, but it also betrays a set of values we have never associated with the Department or its officials. It is time to remedy this issue once and for all and to fully compensate school communities for the loss of hours they must allocate under the junior cycle agreements.

In an equally serious development, the continuing failure to achieve a re-negotiation or an agreed re-interpretation of the DE-union agreement on scheduling SLAR meetings, is leaving school management and teachers in an impossible position; resulting in some schools not being in a position to operate SLAR meetings; is causing friction between staff and principals; is eroding the whole intention of junior cycle reform; is creating a SLAR substitution precedent which will only escalate and from which there will be no return, and will alienate both teachers and management from the junior cycle enterprise.

In the absence of a renegotiated or clarified position on the holding of SLAR meetings exclusively outside tuition time, JMB continually warned that classroom-based assessment outcomes which had not been moderated through the SLAR meeting process could not be reported-on in a student's Junior Cycle profile of Achievement (JCPA). The Department's clarification at the end



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

of May 2022 that such was precisely the case may lead to the Department and teacher unions coming closer to an agreed position on the holding of meetings, but we should not have, for seven years, had to prevaricate on an issue that would never have surfaced had the management bodies, i.e. the employer representative, been fully engaged with when the Junior Cycle Framework implementation agreement was being negotiated.

Thus, as the senior cycle review proceeds, the voice of those ultimately responsible for implementing curricular change – school management – must be given due weight as this next and most critical of national projects gets underway.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › Staffing resources lost in the reduction of the class-contact week to 21:20 hours, pro-rata, must be replaced in full each year
- › Agreement on a framework for scheduling SLAR meetings that protects tuition time must be achieved as a matter of priority

### 2. Towards a Framework for Senior Cycle

JMB welcomed the publication by the Minister of the NCCA's Advisory Report on Senior Cycle and the suite of initial provisions supporting its implementation. While commentary from both the profession and the public was focussed on certain assessment provisions, the scope of both the report and the range of reform interventions announced amount to a liberation of key elements of the current curriculum from the constraints of boundaries and siloing no longer fit for purpose in the lives of contemporary students. This programme porosity is the essence of a curricular framework, as opposed to the existing top-down set of ring-fenced syllabuses and options, and will demand both system-level supports, as well as enhanced guidance supports at school level as an immediate priority.

Policy change of this magnitude will demand an equivalent response in terms of the resources required to implement it. In reflecting on a senior cycle reform agenda in advance of the recent announcements, our school leaders paid explicit attention to the logistics of change, the CPD required, the operability or otherwise of implementation demands and their key considerations included:

- › Clarity and cohesion of policy – not developed 'on the hoof' as occurred with junior cycle
- › Leadership for learning prioritised – liberating the principal and senior management team to develop the core function of the school
- › Fit-for-purpose DP, AP, and administrative support for a contemporary, high-demand and high-functioning educational enterprise



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

- › PTR reduced to expand the curriculum and reduce overcrowded classes of young adults. This is the key lever for sustainable change at senior cycle as no number of creative programmes or pathways can continue to be provided on a shoestring
- › Expanded and professionally developed guidance and counselling service
- › Any emerging CPD programme must not disrupt and erode the life of the schools – be courageous around deploying school closure for this vital national enterprise
- › Develop multi-disciplinary teams and approaches in support of students with SEN, as most have complex needs which cannot be met by low-cost single approach methods
- › Junior cycle reform almost completely failed to engage parents – this cannot be allowed to happen for senior cycle
- › The physical environment of the school is not aligned with contemporary needs and a programme of adaptation, refurbishment and additionality will be required to create learning spaces which align with an integrated, holistic, high-wellbeing approach to upper secondary education
- › Voluntary secondary schools spend inordinate amounts of time fundraising. Our schools should be resourced equitably – the current situation is discriminatory
- › Digital technologies will inevitably be embedded in new programmes (as is the case, for example, with LC PE), thus infrastructural and CPD bottlenecks must be removed in advance of any new developments at senior cycle
- › Boards of Management will require dedicated sources of advice and support if they are to be answerable in terms of their statutory leadership for learning role
- › Provide the principal with the authority to make locally contextualised decisions around their school's senior cycle programme, deployment of adequate resources and some degree of liberation from the top-down, externally mandated curricular tramlines we have been shaped into for generations

JMB now looks forward to engaging with the Minister, Department officials and the other stakeholders involved in this important phase of the initiative and will ensure our members continue to have the school management voice heard while continuing to contribute to the national discourse around the emerging Senior Cycle renewal process.

### 3. Resourcing SPHE and RSE

While JMB concurs with the Chief Inspector's statement that 'the ongoing review of SPHE curricula provides an opportunity to strengthen an integrated approach to SPHE from primary through to Senior Cycle', we are concerned at the pace of such reform in light of contemporary challenges facing children and young people across the nation. Parallel to the production of specifications, teacher professional development and subject recognition by the Teaching



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

Council also remain priorities, as school management consistently report a dearth of teachers personally and professionally prepared and willing to teach SPHE and, in particular, RSE.

JMB is nonetheless encouraged by the scope of the RSE review which has been undertaken by the NCCA, and which included:

- › How the RSE curriculum is planned, how it is taught and how parents are involved
- › That the entire curriculum is being taught in schools to a high standard
- › The role of the classroom teacher in teaching the curriculum and the appropriate level of supports which are currently being provided by external providers
- › What time is given to it, what resources are being provided, and what support materials are being used
- › How effective is the continuing professional development opportunities which are currently provided by the Department and other bodies to RSE teachers?

JMB presented a submission and engaged in person with the Oireachtas Joint Committee's review of Relationships and Sexuality Education, and the Committee agreed with us that as a matter of priority the Department should invest in the provision of ongoing training opportunities for teachers to maintain and increase the pool of such educators available for scheduling into RSE classes.

Education cannot be deemed to be holistic in any sense if it ignores either our actions or the spiritual or moral basis of the values that inform such actions. Neither can we be deemed to be fulfilling our school mission statements, the majority of which cite 'development of the whole person', if we ignore the values and the humanity underpinning our sexuality and sexual activity. It is therefore incumbent upon schools to engage fully with parents in the development of high-quality RSE programmes congruent with the ethos of the school and setting out to educate, in the truest sense, the values, understandings and actions of the generation of young people in their care.

There equally exists a need to adequately train and professionally develop RSE teachers in their own right – developing expertise in every aspect of both the course materials and the likely questions necessarily arising in the classroom setting. The development of a post-graduate diploma course in SPHE/RSE and recognition of the subject for registration by the Teaching Council are particularly to be recommended.

### **Transgender Students**

There is an urgent need for a targeted, evidence-based programme to support young transgender people in post-primary schools. A school's response should be holistic and integrated, where the support of the student is the key consideration.

A key partner with JMB in providing professional and effective pastoral support to transgender students, their families and their schools is the advocacy and support organisation, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). TENI is seeking funding to deliver training and create and



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

provide practical tools and resources to schools and staff. JMB urges the Minister to positively consider a service-delivery model from TENI which has the support of the management bodies and teacher unions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › The Department should put in place CPD and post-graduate development opportunities for contemporary teachers in SPHE and in RSE, a vital aspect of our education provision
- › In terms of supporting schools' engagement with transgender students, JMB urges the Minister to positively consider resourcing a service-delivery proposal with TENI which has the support of the management bodies and teacher unions

### 2.2 Making Realistic Provision for Guidance Counselling Services

The CI Report makes repeated reference to the need for system-level supports to enhance provision for guidance counselling in our schools:

- › The additional Guidance and Counselling resources provided in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are a welcome additional support for students; however, further system supports in Guidance and Counselling will be required
- › Continued enhancement of system supports will be required in the area of Guidance and Counselling to address challenges related to recruitment, curriculum and increasing levels of anxiety among students

Such calls for enhancement of the service pre-date both the announcements regarding senior cycle and the arrival of students from Ukraine. As these emerging demands collide with the already inadequate allocation of hours for guidance counselling, not yet fully restored from before the financial crash cuts of over a decade ago, the capacity of schools to cope will be unsustainable and cases relating to young people in crisis will spill over into already overwhelmed child and adolescent mental health services.

Thus, even in crude cost-effectiveness terms, the Chief Inspector's calls for system support enhancement must be responded-to.

At this point, JMB is now seeking a meaningful increase in provision for guidance and counselling in the face of a generation of students with unprecedented needs in terms of trauma recovery, metacognitive skills loss, career plan damage and a raft of other crises attributable in part to the Covid pandemic, as well as the new challenges of traumatised refugee children and an emerging senior cycle demanding significant guidance counselling in terms of expanded course choices and progression routes.



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

What has emerged in the tentative restoration approaches undertaken thus far is a re-modelling of provision which does not restrict the allocation of the full quantum of guidance hours to a single person. Management bodies have supported this flexibility and, by and large, its evolution has been effective in creating a school-wide appreciation of, and a broadening of provision for, these core activities.

In seeking an increase in provision, JMB is cognisant of the difficulties of recruiting fully qualified and experienced guidance and counselling personnel. The model of deployment currently in place, however, facilitates a realignment of role and responsibility on a school-wide basis to ensure each student receives the restorative care, whether personal, psychological, pedagogical, or career-related, they deserve. However, we cannot carry out this critical task on behalf of society on a shoestring. The money spent on such an early, school-level intervention will pay itself back to the exchequer in many multiples over the next five to ten years when it will become the responsibility of our clinics, hospitals, social workers, psychiatric services, employers and, indeed, prisons who will have to bear the burden.

As the challenges facing this generation of young people know no borders, territorial or social, the adverse treatment of fee-charging schools in terms of their reduced guidance and counselling allocation (based, as it is on a higher PTR), should be discontinued.

In terms of supply challenges, we urge the Department to support the training of new guidance counsellors, particularly in light of (a) the cost to individual teachers (b) release for training, now more frequently only offered in school time, and (c) time for shadowing. We need a structure mirroring that provided for special education teachers, and which increases post-graduate opportunities to specialise in this much needed field. Meanwhile, we request a review of current guidance counsellor qualifications recognition policy, and whether there's scope for broadening/expediting this, given the ongoing recruitment crisis. As an immediate measure, the Department should collaborate with existing guidance counselling programme providers to offer extra-mural courses, particularly in the Munster region.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › JMB seeks a meaningful increase in provision for guidance counselling, as well as therapeutic counselling interventions, in the face of a generation of students with unprecedented needs
- › The adverse treatment of fee-charging schools in terms of their reduced guidance and counselling allocation (based, as it is on a higher PTR), should be discontinued
- › JMB urges the Department to support the training of new guidance counsellors, particularly in light of (a) the cost to individual teachers and (b) substituted release for training, supervision, and work-shadowing



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

### 2.3 Realising the Goals of the *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027*

The terms 'digital' and 'technologies' appear over 300 times in the CI Report and point to a clear policy-level prioritisation of ICT in the landscape of education and schooling. Specific references include:

- › In response to Covid-19, there has been a considerable increase in the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning
- › Learning from the Covid-19 pandemic should be built on, particularly with regard to the use of digital technology to support teaching and learning, and in enhancing communication with parents to support their involvement in their child's education
- › Inspection findings revealed considerable variation in the extent to which digital technologies were embedded in teaching and learning
- › The Digital Strategy for Schools provided a rationale and an action plan for integrating digital technologies into teaching and learning

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 offered the first coherent national framework aligning system level expectations and resourcing with the ultimate school-level goal of enhancing the experience and outcomes for contemporary students growing up as 'digital natives'. The revised Strategy to 2027 sets out three ambitious pillars, presenting challenges to system and schools alike:

#### **Pillar 1:**

This is about ensuring that digital technologies are embedded in teaching, learning and assessment. It focuses on how best teachers and school leaders can be supported, and addresses inclusion, school planning, digital skills and competences and the curriculum

#### **Pillar 2:**

This pillar focuses on the technology itself and broadband connectivity in schools and considers how to support schools in purchasing and maintaining digital devices and other technology purchased through procurement frameworks, and other possible solutions around the important area of technical support

#### **Pillar 3:**

This pillar looks at system alignment, online safety, new and emerging issues in the area of digital technologies in education, engagement with parents and the wider school community as well as with industry

Each pillar contains overarching objectives, which will be supported by a more detailed Implementation Plan, the first iteration of which will run from 2022-2024.



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

While JMB welcomes the Department facilitation of the early payment of the first tranche of funding from the overall commitment of €200m over the lifetime of this strategy we express concern at fee-charging schools continuing to receive funding at a 50% rate. That said, JMB also very much welcomed the issuing of €50 million in grant funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan to schools in December 2021, aimed specifically at supporting students who are most at risk of educational disadvantage through the digital divide.

In welcoming such improved resourcing, it remains the case that the digital enhancement of teaching and learning must become a teacher-driven phenomenon. The urgent need for teachers to upskill themselves for remote teaching during the school closures should not be seen by government as a 'job done', emergency-driven, self-led form of opportunistic CPD, transforming the entire profession into fully developed, digital age practitioners. The CI Report's emphasis on the need to embed learnings from the Covid-19 experience demands, in the first instance, a degree of reflection and processing. What occurred during the closures was remediation, not transformation. What motivates large numbers of teachers to change their practice is seeing that something new is better than what they are currently doing and having the wherewithal to try it. Infrastructure and instruction must go hand-in hand. We have now moved considerably in terms of remote engagement, but this does not translate into the core purpose of technology in the classroom – the amplification of engaging and relevant teaching and assessment practices by educators.

The Framework for Junior Cycle has presented a uniquely timed opportunity for teachers to try new methodologies, jointly decide on content with their students, introduce group and dialogic learning, collaborate with peers in subject departments, reconsider assessment modalities, experiment with e-portfolios and a range of other enhancements. The Department and school leaders need to concentrate on removing barriers to innovation, facilitating collaborative approaches, and finding digital champions. Teachers themselves will do the rest.

The core tasks remain unchanged from the previous strategy:

1. **Invest:** Put relevant and adequate technologies in place. This must be centrally funded but spending locally determined
2. **Facilitate:** Provide every school with an ICT Coordinator with time for duties
3. **Motivate:** Empower teachers. This must also be resourced in terms of digital champions and teacher-release
4. **Plan:** Locate the school on a continuum of digital maturity and set jointly developed, achievable targets for progression
5. **Focus:** Reflect on developments at junior cycle and during the school closures and begin to consider how technologies can be part of the forthcoming national conversation around the emergence of the new Framework for Senior Cycle
6. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Celebrate successes and address deficiencies

The core business of a school is not teaching and learning, it is teaching *for* learning. Everything a school does must have a learning focus and this, in the current technological revolution,



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

must begin with the teacher. The spectrum of digital empowerment and motivation amongst teachers is very wide. Teachers will need to be equipped to both structure and populate digital classroom materials customised to their particular students' needs. Capacity already exists to build-in ongoing assessment (including self-assessment) capabilities to such digital teaching frameworks. Students also will generate content – indeed it will be impossible to stop them. School-day, school-calendar and school-wall boundaries will disappear. This is already happening in Irish schools and this new strategy must resource, reinforce and affirm, rather than reiterate a set of expectations and aspirations disconnected from the realities of a school system only now beginning its recovery from trauma.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › To underpin the three pillars of the new Digital Strategy for Schools, adequate annualised funding must provide for school-wide remote device purchase, up-to-date teacher CPD in digitally supported teaching and assessment, on-site technical and administrative support, and enhanced Wi-Fi infrastructure
- › DEIS school communities continue to require significant infrastructural investment in light of their particular challenges around inclusion
- › Adverse treatment of schools in the fee-charging sector, in which grants such as those for ICT are reduced by 50%, must be discontinued
- › Grant aid must be restored for the purchasing, maintenance, and support of school administration packages

### 2.4 Teacher Supply

Arising from significant reported challenges in the area, the JMB supported and strongly promoted our schools' participation in the Department's survey of unmet subject teacher demand in 2021/22. The findings fully aligned with the JMB's own annual data-gathering exercise on recruitment challenges, with the top ten subject teacher shortages emerging as:

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Mathematics               | 6. English              |
| 2. Gaeilge                   | 7. Religious education  |
| 3. Home economics            | 8. Guidance Counselling |
| 4. Learning support          | 9. French               |
| 5. Special educational needs | 10. Physical education  |



## 2. The Quality of Education Provision [continued]

School leaders in our sector recommend that to address this critical issue:

- › A long-term planning strategy by the Department, based on projected future need, is vital if we are to have a guaranteed qualified cohort of young teachers coming through
- › It is impossible to get a Home Economics replacement teacher. Our single training college does not have sufficient capacity to meet anywhere near the national demand, and a second college in the eastern region must be provided as a matter of urgency
- › Students in second year on PME courses should have their employability in schools, while on placement or otherwise, clarified and regularised
- › We need a standing connection between PME Providers, Second Level School Representatives, and the Teacher Supply Section in the Department

JMB appreciates the level of seriousness and urgency with which the Department and its associated agencies have been affording this crisis. We are, however, anxious that approaches relying on self-regulation at initial teacher education provider level, coupled by increasingly onerous recognition pathways for teachers from outside the jurisdiction are adding to the problem.

Our schools are extraordinarily compliant with the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, as well as all other aspects of regulation in this area. In light of the current crisis in Irish, home economics, and guidance counselling however, we urge the Department and the Inspectorate to set out the range of acceptable, if temporary, options schools may employ to ensure subject provision, and compliance with capitation funding requirements in particular.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › Strategic and binding proposals to address the issue of inadequate teacher supply must emerge from the national conversation on this issue – self regulation by ITE providers and granular qualification recognition criteria must be addressed as a matter of urgency
- › While current, high-level approaches will have long-term effects, JMB urges the Department to implement immediate, short term alleviation strategies to assist recruitment for the forthcoming school year
- › The Department and Inspectorate should prepare guidelines for schools on how to make provision for Gaeilge, Home Economics, and Guidance Counselling in light of the current severe teacher supply crisis in these subjects



## 3. Inclusion

### Key Messages from the Chief Inspector's Report:

- › Our education system must strive to achieve full inclusion for all
- › Meaningful inclusion implies that all students are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued, and where their individual needs are addressed
- › While the system of establishing special classes is intended to support learners with different needs on a journey towards full inclusion, there is a risk that these children and young people will be seen as being separate from their mainstream peers, and that partial inclusion may be perceived incorrectly as a successful outcome for the learner
- › Social inclusion is a key priority for the Department of Education
- › The DEIS Plan 2017 aims to promote better educational outcomes for students from the most disadvantaged communities and to maximise the chances of every child and young person getting the best possible opportunity to fulfil their educational potential

### 3.1 Supporting Students with Special and Additional Educational Needs

The Chief Inspector's Report points to a largely positive, though developing, picture of special education provision across our schools:

- › Whole-school evaluation (WSE) inspection findings at primary and post-primary level are reflective of schools' earliest experiences of deploying their resources in line with the special education teacher (SET) model. These indicate that school leaders, on the whole, made good decisions that were informed by the principles of the model, and that they were working to make their schools as inclusive as possible
- › The findings also indicate that the quality of teaching of pupils with SEN was good and that there was greater emphasis on the provision of in-class support
- › However, inspectors identified scope for development in some aspects of leadership, and teachers' collaborative practice. These included the need to ensure that strategies implemented in schools were aligned fully with addressing the students' identified priority learning needs

As the CI Report sets out, 'the overall policy objective of the Department of Education is to promote inclusive education for children and young people with SEN in mainstream settings. Where this is not possible, the policy commitment is to provide for specialised settings through special-class or special-school placements'.

Such a policy, of course, carries resourcing implications and, along with demographic growth across the school-going population, the state's investment in terms of special education teachers and special needs assistants has been growing significantly in recent years.



## 3. Inclusion [continued]

In light of such a national commitment, JMB reminds government that we still have not made any distinct provision for an expanded range of SEN coordination responsibilities which inevitably inflated as our students with additional needs continue to re-engage with school life, and as we welcome a diverse range of non-English speaking students from Ukraine over the coming year.

As a matter of urgency, the government must make distinct provision for SEN Coordination. The JMB has repeatedly asserted the need for a dedicated post of SEN Co-Ordinator (SENCO) in every school. Principals' feedback has emphatically asserted the following points:

1. There is absolute unanimity that every school must have a dedicated SEN Coordinator
2. Continuing to find coordination time from within the resource-hours allocation to students is widely seen as unethical and inefficient
3. There is no clarity or advice on the proportion of hours which should be dedicated for SENCO activities
4. SENCOs continually express their sense of being overwhelmed by their demands of the role
5. Principals report being unable to keep a SENCO in the role for any extended length of time, due to the role expansion, admin overload and lack of time
6. Voluntary secondary schools are given no time for duties in their posts of responsibility
7. Principals agree that SENCO time should be given as a flexible but adequate quantum of hours each year

The current practice of taking resource hours away from students for in-school coordination is flawed, insufficient and widely seen as unethical. The JMB urges that the Department immediately provides for SENCO functions as a post of responsibility with time for duties or as a separate, pro-rata allocation of hours to each school.

The Chief Inspector rightly asserts that 'policymakers and education partners will need to reflect on the effectiveness and inclusiveness of current provision as they plan for Ireland's future response to the obligations arising from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'. In light of this mandate, the current government's commitment to 'make further progress towards a needs-based, responsive set of state supports for students with special educational needs' is welcome. The first phase of this new full-service support model based on the NCSE policy advice of 2017, '*Delivering for Students with Additional Care Needs: The Right Support at the Right Time in Schools*', was postponed in 2020. As the then proposal was to implement solely the profile model of SNA allocation to schools without proper trialling, the JMB welcomed the pause. The capacity of school management to both identify additional, often complex, care needs and make resource allocation decisions (a) is already exceeded in terms of an oppressive workload, (b) has never been fully resourced or supported in terms of training and external advice, and (c) leaves principals exposed to immediate and *post hoc* challenges relating to their deployment decisions and their consequences. Indeed, schools with significant SNA allocations will need a dedicated person to manage this resource. The administration alone virtually constitutes a senior management role in itself, and the current proposals presume the principal will undertake everything from recruitment to identification and re-identification of ever-changing of care-need,



### 3. Inclusion [continued]

to deployment, to HR and IR operations, to training and CPD, to conflict resolution, to professional accountability etc. etc.

It is the position of the JMB that as a profile-based model of SNA allocation is now being considered, the professional development needs of school leaders, SENCOs, SETs and SNAs must be met; sufficient coordination and administration capacity must be provided to operate the model effectively; the industrial relations parameters relating to current SNA terms and conditions must be fully resolved, and the voice of families must be heard and comprehended, particularly in relation to the devaluing of clinical judgements and their consequences.

Meanwhile, the CI Report places particular emphasis on the task of making provision for students with autism, stating 'a number of important aspects that relate to provision for children with autism require attention including enrolment practices, review of placements and the integration of learners attending special classes into mainstream provision'. JMB welcomes the highlighting of system and school-level challenges in ASD and other special class provision. We recommend the integration of the special education support service into the forthcoming teacher education support service, and also the establishment of an ASD-specific advisory unit, resourced with appropriately qualified and experienced personnel, and who will visit schools to support the journey in these high-demand areas of provision, from forming, to norming, to performing. High level policy, however worthy and shared, demands accessible and professionalised school-level advice and guidance in realising the Chief Inspector's call that 'classes for pupils/students with autism and other special classes should prioritise places for those with complex needs, and pupils/students with less complex needs should be included in mainstream classes with appropriate support'.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › The landscape of SEN provision was radically worsened by the Covid pandemic and schools must now face the challenges of supporting students from Ukraine. JMB urges that the adequacy of the SET and EAL allocation to schools be reviewed in light of these challenges and that adequate provision be made to ensure the levels of provision such vulnerable students deserve
- › A special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) must be appointed to all post-primary schools with a weekly allocation of at least 10% of a school's 'profile hours' (with a baseline threshold of 2 hours per week) to be flexibly deployed by management but ring-fenced to the SENCO and their team
- › The proposed implementation of a profile-based model of SNA allocation and deployment must be accompanied by appropriate capacity-building measures at school level
- › JMB strongly recommends the establishment of a dedicated ASD and special class advisory team within the new integrated teacher education support service, to support the expanding network of special classes in mainstream settings



## 3. Inclusion [continued]

### 3.2 Investing in Our DEIS Schools

The CI Report's commentary on the quality of DEIS provision points to a need to link effective leadership with outcomes in the key indicator areas set out in the DEIS planning process:

- › The quality of leadership of the DEIS action planning for improvement process in schools requires improvement in a significant minority of schools
- › There is scope to develop DEIS action planning in relation to attendance, particularly in post-primary schools
- › Post-primary schools in the DEIS programme require additional support to assist them in ensuring that data and information available in the schools are used to best effect in the planning process
- › The learning outcomes of pupils in the target group were tracked clearly in only half of the DEIS schools included in the SEN review
- › In DEIS schools, students' attitudes towards Mathematics become more negative as they progress through the school system. Addressing this will require the focused attention of schools and of the teacher support services
- › Support teachers were effective in enhancing educational opportunities for learners with behavioural difficulties, but they need to monitor learners' progress and achievements systematically; their roles and responsibilities also need to be clarified

While the argument that greater emphasis on planning, target setting, and evaluation is fundamental to effective leadership for school improvement, an equivalent argument may be made for liberating the DEIS school principal from the work and worry overwhelm to which they are daily subjected, to provide precisely such leadership.

Principalship of a school within the DEIS programme is a uniquely difficult proposition within the spectrum of school leadership domains in the Irish setting. Indeed, in addressing 'The Leading and Assessment Challenge, the Evaluation and Accountability Challenge and the Sustainability and Growth Challenge' as far back as 2015<sup>3</sup> the Chief Inspector stated 'I readily admit that none of the leadership challenges that I have spoken about is easily addressed and few of the practical tasks arising from them are readily solved', a position pre-dating the waves-without-troughs challenges of unrestored funding and staffing cuts, a global pandemic with severe consequences for disadvantaged communities, successive waves of curricular and other policy change, ever-increasing legislative and regulatory accountability and oversight, spiralling energy costs for schools, and now an influx of refugee children, all most likely preceding another economic recession.

<sup>3</sup> "Reflections on Leadership Challenges in Irish Schools"- Address by Dr Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, to the Annual Conference of European Network for Improving Research and Development in Education Leadership and Management (2015)



### 3. Inclusion [continued]

The lengths to which DEIS school leaders and their communities went to maintain student engagement and inclusivity during the pandemic emergency may perhaps never be known, but of all the stress-points JMB experienced during the school closures, it was across our then 50, and now 70, DEIS school principals that the most worrying levels of anxiety, overwhelm, and distress were evidenced. It is finally time for this inhumane imposition of un-resourced responsibility to change.

The impact of policy and initiative overload on DEIS schools is but one factor. What is far more concerning is the effect of higher levels of student behavioural challenges due to emotional, social, and cognitive-capacity issues which erode the time and energies of the DEIS school leader, particularly in our underfunded and under-staffed voluntary secondary schools.

As an immediate action, we now call on the Department to allocate a full deputy principal in all schools of up to 400 students and to allocate a second deputy principal to schools within the DEIS Programme with enrolments of between 400 and 599 students.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › DEIS school principals worked tirelessly during the pandemic and they must, as a matter of urgency, be provided with acceptable levels of senior leadership support to allow them and their school communities to survive the extreme challenges in the wake of this crisis
- › We seek, as an immediate action, the allocation of a full deputy principal in all schools of up to 400 students and the allocation of a second deputy principal to schools within the DEIS Programme with enrolments of between 400 and 599 students
- › The Department's reconfiguration of the DEIS scheme must go further to provide for a more equitable framework for addressing disadvantage. The all-or-nothing approach to DEIS inclusion must be reviewed to provide schools with high numbers of students experiencing disadvantage with targeted supports

### 3.3 The Challenges of Developing and Implementing Anti-Bullying Strategies

The CI Report presents a broadly positive picture of the effectiveness of anti-bullying awareness and measures within an overall school culture of care and safety for all:

Data from surveys administered during whole-school inspections pointed to high levels of positivity among pupils and parents in relation to key wellbeing indicators such as enjoying school, feeling safe and cared for, and feeling that the pupils are being treated with respect

In their responses to the Inspectorate survey, almost all pupils agreed that there were clear rules



## 3. Inclusion [continued]

in their school in relation to bullying, that they had learned about different kinds of bullying, and that if someone was bullying them, they could get help from a teacher or other adult in the school

Overall findings were generally positive about the provision of information to parents, and in relation to school climate and atmosphere. For example, over 90% of parents reported that they had been informed of the school's anti-bullying policy and that they knew who to approach if their child experienced bullying

The JMB position is that student bullying, and its impact on mental health, can only be addressed when our anti-bullying policies are:

1. School-wide
2. SPHE driven, and,
3. Properly resourced

There is no 'silver bullet' which will resolve the problem of bullying in schools, and we need every single person in the school to attack the problem, from every possible aspect, every single day. The anti-bullying policies and procedures in our schools reflect this approach and JMB welcomes the Inspectorate's attention to schools' compliance with the Department's 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures during their inspections.

Given, however, the low ranking of Ireland (in last place out of 36 countries) for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP, the Department's appropriately high demands on schools in respect of anti-bullying measures must now be met by matching levels of resourcing.

So, what do we need?

- › We need our year heads and student support teams to have time for duties, ring-fenced and allocated-for
- › We need our guidance and counselling provision to be immediately expanded to meet with needs of contemporary students
- › We need a full deputy principal in every school, not fractions
- › We need to invest in team-teaching and greater learning support for students with special educational needs
- › We need teacher training and ongoing expert advice, particularly around empowering students to speak out
- › We need leadership development on school-wide approaches that work, and,
- › We need to free-up time for the necessary in-school group meetings involved, and particularly in relation to teachers investigating incidents of bullying



### 3. Inclusion [continued]

Our schools will always face the challenge of bullying and, among other actions, every school continues to:

1. Review their existing policies in line with the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013)
2. Ensure their SPHE programme is well-developed and well-delivered
3. Provide teacher professional development on anti-bullying strategies, and,
4. Provide for parent and student support in tackling online bullying in particular

The mental health of our young people has never been at greater risk. We must now invest in giving schools the resources they need to support this uniquely challenged generation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › In implementing their anti-bullying policies as set out in the Department's 2013 procedures, schools' most pressing needs centre on time and expertise. School management requires devolved authority to free-up relevant staff for the necessary in-school group meetings involved in fact-finding, planning and in consultation, and particularly in relation to teachers investigating incidents of bullying
- › The Inspectorate's engagement with schools on anti-bullying will continue to surface the key challenges to this perennial task and JMB looks forward to working collaboratively on the findings to better support our school communities in this ever-evolving facet of social living



## 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People

### Key Messages from the Chief Inspector's Report:

- › Partnership in education is a crucial element of an effective education system. Schools, parents and communities working together in a genuinely participative way can benefit the learning and wellbeing of children and young people in our schools
- › Covid-19 has highlighted the role that effective partnership and communication between schools and families can have in supporting wellbeing and learning among children and young people
- › Schools should continue to promote meaningful engagement and the participation of parents in their child's education
- › Student participation and student leadership should continue to be promoted and developed at setting and school level. The views of children and young people should be valued, and they should be enabled to have influence in their education experiences and the work of the school
- › Schools should ensure that parents' views are listened to, and that parents are enabled to have influence on the work of the school, including in the context of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill and the guidelines that will be developed subsequent to the enactment of this legislation

### 4.1 The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill

The JMB has long argued for greater coherence in national educational policymaking, and we therefore welcome the bringing-together of a clearly articulated set of principles underpinning the relationship between parents and students on the one hand and schools on the other. It is in this very framing, however, that three philosophical but very important issues emerge.

Firstly, the very essence of the charter is adversarial in its underpinnings. Schools represent perhaps the greatest example of authentic partnership in the life of our country. The family-school axis is founded on the common moral enterprise of educating young people to live a full and rich life, now and into the future. To polarise school and family is to erode and change the character of this partnership and it would be most regretful if this Bill were to change children into customers, parents into challengers, and schools into defensive and fearful entities.

Secondly, and arising from its underpinning assumptions, the charter essentially sets out a series of rights but ignores the associated responsibilities. We do not for an instant believe that any parents are unaware of their constitutional and, indeed, moral responsibility to act as the primary educator of their children or that they do not take these most seriously. What is needed however, in parallel to the set of parents' expectations framed in any eventual charter is an equivalent set of expectations a school has a right to be afforded.



## 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People [continued]

Finally, any neutral reading of the set of principles underpinning the forthcoming Charter legislation would lead one to the conclusion that none of its fourteen areas are comprehended by legislation, regulation or any other imperative. The exact opposite is the case. Our schools operate under a raft of laws, regulations, guidelines, indicators, expectations, compliance frameworks, accountability measures, external evaluation criteria, codes of conduct, self-evaluation procedures, reporting and feedback demands as well as their foundational mission statements and, most importantly, the essential moral agency of Irish educators. Each and every principle framed in the proposed charter is already fully comprehended by an existing self-developed or externally mandated set of demands and none will come as news to school communities already fully engaged with their partner families.

JMB does not argue against the framing of a set of rights in a Parent and Student Charter. The principles, as framed in the draft Bill, represent an ethical framework for parents founded on democratic civic values and setting-out their appropriate engagement in their children's school.

We do, however, have concerns around:

- › a failure to recognise that each of these provisions is already underpinned by legislation and regulation and all are well established in schools in our sector
- › an undermining of the principle of subsidiarity in which decisions are best made at the lowest appropriate level, i.e., by the school community itself
- › the potential for the emergence of an adversarial culture in the partnership between schools and the families they serve
- › a failure to recognise that while parents have a fully appreciated focus on their own child's situation, the education and safety of the whole cohort of students must remain the overarching focus of school authorities
- › no identification of responsibilities associated with the Charter's set of rights
- › the potential for the emergence of additional layers of bureaucracy in already overwhelmed schools, and, critically,
- › no recognition that schools in the voluntary sector are obliged to seek 30% of their funding from hard-pressed families

### 4.2 Eliminating the Need for Voluntary Contributions

Our final point above represents perhaps the longest-running failure of the state to abide by a core founding intention of the Republic, that of 'cherishing all the children of the nation equally':

*'It is clear that voluntary secondary schools receive a significantly lower proportion of funding from the state and, as a result, are more reliant on voluntary contributions from parents and on general fund-raising. This reliance on discretionary funding is seen to pose challenges given lower levels of resources among some families, especially those with children attending DEIS schools, and means that funding sources are vulnerable to*



## 4. Partnerships with Parents and Young People [continued]

*future changes in family income. Sectoral differences are also evident in the expenditure of schools, with voluntary secondary schools more likely to be required to cover from the capitation grant items paid centrally in case of the other sectors and, in addition, need to engage in substantial fund-raising and request voluntary contributions from parents to fund the basic day-to-day running of the school.'*

*'Governance and Funding of Voluntary Secondary Schools in Ireland'. (2013)  
Merike Darmody and Emer Smyth. ESRI*

JMB welcomes the overdue, though significant, abolition of the basic salary payment made by boards of management to their teachers, hitherto a unique feature of the Voluntary Secondary sector. The Minister and government must, however, understand that voluntary secondary school communities are suffering due to long-standing, systemic underfunding and that the capacity of families to replace the monies denied by the state to this post-primary sector alone has now all but gone. As energy costs for families increase and general cost-of-living inflation spirals, it is becoming increasingly difficult on every level, including moral, for schools to seek voluntary subscriptions from hard-pressed families to make up a deficit unnecessarily created by government in its unequal funding of schools by sector.

**Indeed, current and projected inflationary pressures are already impacting on school budgets and the JMB urges the immediate index-linking of all capitation grants to allow schools to pay their bills.**

The fact is that all voluntary secondary schools operate under severe funding restrictions and are acutely aware that the families they serve are equally not immune to financial pressures. Under a three-year policy to be agreed at government level, the Minister could eliminate the need for schools in our sector to seek voluntary contributions from families, a measure which would immediately and significantly alleviate the pressures on all concerned.

There will, of course, be many competing priorities in each forthcoming government Budget. Equalisation of funding across all school communities and sectors must be one of them. The Primary and Post-Primary section of the current Programme for Government opens with the words *'Education is a cornerstone of society and a driver of social equality'*. It is the JMB position that now is the time to move beyond the rhetoric of social equality to its actualisation and we welcome the Programme's commitment to *'increase the capitation grant with a view to reducing the reliance on voluntary contributions made to schools'*.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A commencement must be made to address the inequitable funding of schools in the Voluntary Secondary sector by initiating the Equalisation process already conceded by government
- JMB urges the immediate index-linking of all capitation grants to allow schools to pay their bills
- A government-level commitment must be made to eliminating, over a three-year period, the need for schools to seek voluntary contributions from families



## 5. Looking Forward

### Key Messages from the Chief Inspector's Report:

- › Covid-19 has undeniably impacted the education system in significant ways and this impact will have medium and long-term consequences for the development of the education system. Covid-19 was not an entirely negative experience for the education system, of course. The most obvious benefit to arise from the crisis was the advances made in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in the education sphere
- › The curriculum experience to be offered to students must seek to emphasise that enabling young people to acquire knowledge remains essential but is insufficient; that education systems serve young people best if they also foster their ability to apply that knowledge creatively, to work collaboratively to solve problems, to think critically, to communicate effectively, to adapt flexibly, and to make healthy and informed choices
- › The challenge now facing us is to reform the curriculum and assessment experience at Senior Cycle. This will be a considerably more challenging task than reform at Junior Cycle
- › Irish children and young people move through different phases of provision during their educational journey. Evidence suggests that each transition point is a time of risk for the learner, when discontinuity in provision can create challenges and at times, even result in regression for the learner. It is important that the needs of learners for coherence and continuity in their educational experience are borne in mind by all responsible for educational administration, teaching, and learning

### 5.1 School Buildings: Demographic Growth and Physical Education

The CI Report sets out the range of capital and remedial investment provisions undertaken by the state in respect of school buildings:

'During the 2016 to 2020 period, there was expenditure of circa €271 million under the Department's Minor Works Scheme, which relates to the provision of grants to schools primarily for the purpose of small-scale improvement works to school buildings and grounds. Furthermore, in this period, progress was made on the provision of support for maintenance and smaller-scale works to existing schools. Funding for these works is made available through the Summer Works Scheme and the Emergency Works Scheme respectively. In addition, a deep energy retrofit programme was piloted. The purpose of the programme was to identify and test retrofit solutions for reducing energy consumption and achieving energy efficiencies in older school buildings.'

With the caveat that expenditure on minor works during this period included €130m additional funding provided in 2020 to help schools to manage and operate in the exceptional circumstances arising from Covid-19, JMB acknowledges and appreciates the focussed and prudent investment made by the state at a particularly challenging time in our history.



## 5. Looking Forward [continued]

That said, many voluntary secondary schools have been serving their communities for more than 100 years. Many were built or extended-to with no or limited State assistance and are now in need of major refurbishment and extensions.

Projections show that we can expect a continuing increase in enrolments at second level up as far as 2026 of at least 84,000 students. The consequences of this increase in the population of post-primary pupils have placed impossible demands on school management at a time of staffing and resource cuts and physical space limitations.

JMB is concerned that with exponentially increasing building costs, a fall-off in parties responding to calls for tenders, and, in our view, a lack of sufficient personnel in the School Building Unit, even the targets of the current Six Year Plan will not be met. In particular, the difficulty in getting phone-calls or emails responded-to by the Planning and Building Unit remains a significant concern for school authorities. So, while welcoming progress, we urge that as many forms of delivery be put in place so that the major projects be progressed through the Department's construction phases in an efficient and speedy manner.

There are many voluntary secondary schools who have recently applied for, or who are preparing applications for, major works but who are not on the Department's schedule of works. These schools and the communities they serve cannot wait to be assessed for capital investment. A mechanism must be found to have these schools added to the current schedule and additional funding made available to meet their needs.

There continues to be an increasing demand under the Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide additional classrooms and practical rooms for our schools, and to replace prefab classrooms. While we welcome the number of schools receiving grants, current demand clearly exceeds the level of finance available. In addition, the Additional Accommodation Scheme needs to be expanded to allow for General Purpose/Dining Areas, staffrooms, and offices for additional Deputy Principals.

Likewise, the budget for Emergency Works is far too low to meet the needs of our schools. As a result, schools are forced into appealing decisions of the Building Unit in order to deal with serious emergency and safety works in their schools. Indeed, with building and materials inflation soaring, the entire planning and building budget will require to be reconsidered as a matter of urgency.

In previous Programmes for Government, the elimination of prefabricated classrooms has been specifically identified as a national priority but is absent in the current Programme. JMB hopes this is an oversight as too many students and teachers continue to inhabit accommodation which is not fit for purpose in any contemporary model of education provision.

Meanwhile, the CI Report notes: 'There are plans in place for the continued development of teaching and learning facilities for PE. The government is committed to a PE Hall build and modernisation programme, starting in the second half of the [National Development Plan \(2021 – 2030\)](#) period. This will support an increased focus on the upgrade and refurbishment of the existing school stock to ensure that students in all post-primary schools have access to appropriate facilities to support PE learning experiences'.



## 5. Looking Forward [continued]

JMB welcomes the commitment to deliver a programme to build and modernise P.E. and school sport facilities, as our research indicates that just 50% of schools have a full-sized P.E. Hall. In addition, where they exist, 72% of PE Halls were either fully funded or partially funded by the schools themselves. Schools also require funding for replacement sports equipment which is becoming old and obsolete. Such equipment can very specialised and costly but there is no scheme in place unless a new sports hall is being built – a very rare occurrence. JMB believes that such funding should be available on an ongoing basis in a similar way to funding for replacement furniture, fittings, and fixtures.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- › A major increase in the Capital Budget for voluntary secondary schools is required:
  - To allow for additional schools not on the Six Year Plan but in serious need of refurbishment and extensions to be added to the List
  - To meet a greater number of demands under the Additional Accommodation scheme
  - To allow for a greater number of categories to be approved under the Summer Works Scheme
  - To allow for a greater number of Emergency Works to be approved
  - To eliminate prefabricated classrooms
- › JMB urges that as many forms of delivery be put in place so that major projects be progressed through the Department's stages in an efficient and speedy manner
- › A special five-year plan is required to provide a full-sized P.E. Hall facility in every school with an interim scheme to replace obsolete sports equipment

### 5.2 The Pupil-Teacher Ratio

From the CI Report: 'The Irish school system was designed for in-person delivery of learning. [Prior to the closures] it had never been intended that ICT would be used to provide remote teaching and learning for all students. This meant that schools, as well as students and parents, faced considerable challenges to maintain teaching and learning'.

If the pandemic-related school closures have proved anything, it is the centrality of the teacher-student relationship that makes all the difference in the enterprise of the school. Even the most engaged, resourced, and supported student cannot form an educative relationship with a screen.

Successive Ministers appear to have forgotten the impact on schools and students of our seriously eroded staffing schedules. Ireland already has a higher ratio of students to teaching



## 5. Looking Forward [continued]

staff at secondary level than the European average, higher compulsory instruction time per student per year as well as significantly higher number of hours teaching time per year per teacher. Ireland nonetheless has one of the highest secondary school completion rates in the world at 89%, while the average school completion rate for OECD countries is 83%.

It should not be forgotten that the increase of the PTR to 19:1 coupled with the reduction in guidance counselling, EAL, and Traveller support hours from schools (an effective PTR increase), have had a very severe impact on the educational experience being offered in schools. The perception that increasing the PTR in any school by a point means an additional student in a classroom is completely wrong – it means subject and specialist teachers are lost to the school.

The current Programme for Government indicates that the State will 'seek to make further progress in reducing pupil teacher ratios in primary schools'. While such investment at primary level is long overdue, the stark absence of any reference to equivalent treatment at post-primary level is hugely concerning. In particular, forthcoming policy change at senior cycle, for example in relation to broadening participation in Transition Year and LCVP, will carry significant implications for staffing levels if they are to succeed.

Meanwhile, the Irish State recognises and supports the right of parents to send their children to the school of their choice [Education Act 1998 Section 6 (e)]. The fee-charging school Pupil-Teacher Ratio has been increased three times in recent years. Fee-charging schools are a long-standing and successful example of Public-Private Partnership and are a net contributor to the economy. There is no such thing as 'free' education – either the State pays, or parents pay. Schools in the fee-charging sector, where parents pay much more, save the State money. An independent study conducted by PWC has shown that the cost to the State on an annual basis for a pupil educated in a fee-charging school is €3,710 compared to €8,900 in a Free Education school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The pupil teacher ratio for schools in the Free Education sector must be restored to 18:1 in order to alleviate the impact of the cutbacks on staffing in schools in recent years and to support a recovery of the teaching time lost in the pandemic-related closures
- Fee-charging schools, a long-standing and successful example of Public-Private Partnership, are a net contributor to the economy. The pupil-teacher ratio in these schools must be reduced as a first step from 23:1 to 21:1
- As staffing allocations in areas such as professional time for teachers of junior cycle are based on a PTR model, schools in this sector are doubly discriminated-against – a practice which requires greater equity

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## Concluding Commentary

One of the most commented-upon elements of the Chief Inspector's Report centred on the sustainability of school governance:

'The Irish school system is extraordinarily fortunate in the calibre of those who lead Irish schools and in the volunteerism evident among those who serve on the boards of management of over 4,000 schools throughout the country. Without the efforts that they make, the administration of the system would simply not be possible. However, the current roles of school leaders and volunteer members of boards of management are unlikely to be sustainable into the future. By relying on voluntary boards of management to be the sole administrative mechanism at local level for the vast majority of schools, we create an unsustainable workload for many, if not most, principals and we erode their ability to lead and improve teaching and learning in schools'.

As mandated under its Strategic Development Plan, the JMB is currently planning a major research project to recognise and affirm the significance of the voluntary secondary school sector in Ireland's educational landscape. Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school, and we anticipate uncovering some resonances with the Chief Inspector's conclusions above. We do, however, disagree with the unsustainability argument. Few countries demonstrate such a democratic, moral, and profoundly child and student-centred model of governance in their school systems. What is not required is unconsidered replacement of this model, or a return to the local education area type proposals first aired in the Green Paper on Education of the 1990's. We need to capitalise on this engagement by civic society in the leadership and management of our schools, primarily by investing in their formation, their continuing development, and the advisory and support services they require.

In recognition of the responsibility which the Education Act has imposed on Boards of Management and the increasingly complex environment in which they must operate, the JMB emphasises the need for the Department to provide a realistic grant for the provision of board of management training to support the training and development of the voluntary members of our boards of management in the discharge of their duties and consistent with national and Departmental priorities. Equally, Boards of Management require a suite of professionally delivered support services, including those relating to building development, vetting, HR, legal, child protection, financial management, and procurement, to list but a few. The JMB would welcome engaging with the Department to negotiate a properly resourced training and support structure for Boards of Management for the boards to meet their functions under the Education Act 1998.

The JMB wishes to record its appreciation for the respectful and collegial working relationships that exist between our organisation, its member schools and the various officers and sections within the Department. The commentary in this submission is set out in a spirit of cooperation in light of our common focus on the quality of our country's educational service. We will be happy to expand on any element of this set of recommendations and look forward to working with the Minister and her officials into the future.

**John Curtis, JMB General Secretary**  
July 2022



# Education Report

# Education Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### Introduction

This AMCSS/JMB Annual Education Report tracks the key high-level goals of *Forbairt*, the Department of Education's Annual Statement of Priorities 2023. The education, training, research and development division within the Secretariat has been active in each of the areas framed under this report and continues to bring the perspective of voluntary secondary school management to policy level in these domains.

*Forbairt* sets out the immediate goals for this year targeted by the Department under its overarching *Statement of Strategy 2021- 2023*.

The three overarching goals are:

#### GOAL 1

Provision and Quality of Education

#### GOAL 2

Special Education and Inclusion

#### GOAL 3

System Supports and Infrastructure

## GOAL 1

Support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students in schools and early years settings

### 1. Supporting STEM Education

In *Forbairt*, the Department has committed to 'publish and commence delivery of the STEM Education Implementation Plan' this year. The current plan, 2017 – 2026, frames its delivery targets under four pillars:

*Pillar 1. Nurture learner engagement and participation*

The success of our students in co-curricular initiative such as the BT Young Scientist Exhibition, Young Social Innovators, School Green Flag, Take Action for Climate Change, and EcoUNESCO, are all the more remarkable given the lack of investment in infrastructure, support staffing, and time afforded to our schools.

We have been delivering STEM education on a shoestring level of supports and urgently require the provision of:

- laboratory assistants
- dedicated time for teachers involved in STEM projects with their students
- annualised equipment replacement and software upgrading grants
- appropriate laboratory-class space and storage areas
- teacher leadership posts to coordinate STEM teaching and activities, including purchasing, and health and safety compliance

In addition, the provision of a fit-for-purpose guidance and counselling service is key

to supporting learner engagement and participation, as well as career progression into STEM programmes and employment. Such guidance is particularly needed in support of improving the gender balance in senior cycle science and technology subject uptake, as well as supporting students with additional learning needs in accessing the entire curriculum.

Section 3.2 of the Department's report '*STEM Education 2020: Reporting on Practice in Early Learning and Care, Primary and Post-Primary Contexts*' forefronts the importance of positive engagement with STEM learning and this requires the early identification of dispositions within young people and tapping into their enthusiasms. Such identification goes beyond the science classroom and requires a school-wide responsiveness to students' innate capacities and excitement in terms of enrichment activities.

*Pillar 2. Enhance teacher and early years practitioner capacity*

The welcome emergence of Oide, the teacher professional learning service, represents an opportunity to develop and deliver a range of CPD interventions which could inform educators about contemporary pedagogies and teaching methods, as well as updating teachers in the ever-changing fields of their STEM-related knowledge bases.

Any eventual STEM education policy must be coherent with the current Digital Learning Strategy, as schools are currently overloaded

with initiatives in all areas of their practice.

In all cases of CPD provision, recognition must be given to the high levels of professional development of our STEM educators, to capitalise on this resource by adopting a social, shared learning approach, to provide ring-fenced time and continuity of learning domains over years, and to offer Teaching Council-recognised out-of-field programmes which will help with current specialist teacher shortages in these areas. JMB recognises the current challenges to schools and system in terms of teacher supply. What is needed, nonetheless, is a planned approach to PTR reduction and to prioritising the supply of qualified STEM educators within this.

#### *Pillar 3. Support STEM education practice*

The reasons underpinning this severe shortage of teachers qualified and registered to teach STEM subjects requires investigation as it provides important indicators of policy-level direction if we are to emerge as a high-capacity education and, ultimately, workforce contributor to the economy. Such indicators that require to be addressed include:

- The high cost of qualifying as a secondary school teacher, and the risk of exclusion of particular social groups, impacting on teaching workforce diversity
- The duration of the teacher qualification and recognition process and the attractiveness of other career pathways than teaching to graduates
- The need to remain in constant touch with accelerating STEM field developments
- The lack of supports in social and ethical education, and their pedagogies, as they relate to STEM areas of learning and life

The good news is that our educators are not short of motivation. What is needed is a

coherent framework under which their innate love of their subject areas, their indisputable agency and innovative capacities, and their student-centred approaches to their vocation, each offer a perfectly aligned set of conditions under which STEM education can be invigorated as a national priority.

#### *Pillar 4. Use evidence to support STEM education*

Policymakers and curriculum developers require to be constantly informed by international developments in education practice, prioritisation, and policy. At school level, the embedding of an evidence-based paradigm of:

- resource deployment
- improvements in teaching, learning, and assessment
- decision-making in terms of the use of precious school time
- engagement with external business, community, FET, and other third-level institutions

all sit perfectly with the School Self-Evaluation model. What is required is a review by the Inspectorate of the 'tools' of SSE to determine their alignment with emerging policy under the Digital and STEM education priorities and to support teachers in their use.

Thus, it remains the position of JMB that a more system-wide approach is taken to educational reform for 21st century Ireland and that the outdated, siloed models currently hampering the achievement of potential are consigned to history by means of immediate, courageous and energised system-wide reform, high-level oversight, and greater coherence across all educational policy areas.

## 2. Supporting Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Learning

### (a) *Enabling parents and communities to support children's literacy and numeracy development*

Parents are the primary educators of their children, and every opportunity should be taken to develop appropriate partnership in this endeavour. Undoubted progress made, for example with the introduction of the HSCL scheme, should be acknowledged and affirmed as it is the envy of schools and systems across the world and should be broadened out to schools beyond the DEIS programme. Individual HSCL teachers working in close liaison with JCSP coordinators have worked wonders with families in such areas as books in the home, parents reading with their children, and challenging the centrality of technology in the lives and bedrooms of teenagers. In this regard, the slow dismantling of the JCSP programme in schools is of serious concern to JMB and should be reversed at policy level as a matter of urgency.

Schools have a responsibility to families and investment in engaging adults and parents more fully in the school enterprise will pay dividends in terms of community support and literacy outcomes across both the student population and their families.

Schools however are busy places and, HSCL initiatives apart, can only do so much with parents and families. 'It takes a village to rear a child' and community supports should be encouraged by encouraging projects such as continuing to make local libraries attractive to parents, children, and teenagers; business and enterprise sponsorship of reading, writing and creative writing competitions; promotion of volunteerism in respect of librarianship, local history, storytelling, and a host of other strategies such as those already identified and framed by JCSP reading and maths initiatives.

### (b) *Improving the curriculum and learning experience*

#### *The NCCA*

The timely development by NCCA of a new curriculum framework for primary education points to the value of much of the Council's work in terms of the present debate, as does their work on senior cycle restructuring and the independent review of the implementation of the framework for junior cycle.

The general acceptance of, and affirmation for, what was then called Project Maths has been a welcome development, particularly in its focus on problem-solving capabilities in young people. Teachers, however, continue to report a need for a block of time in the first term of 1st year to ensure that *all* students are brought to a functional level of skill in numerical functions, basic algebra, and geometry.

Secondary school mathematics teachers should be listened-to, and their advice incorporated into both the new strategy and curriculum provision at both local and national levels.

#### *Need for libraries and librarians*

All schools should have a well-stocked and attractive library, centrally located, and staffed by enthusiastic and skilled promoters of reading and literacy approaches. Though some DEIS schools have received approval for the appointment of JCSP librarians, security of tenure is absent. In this respect *all* schools have students needing library facilities and gifted children have special needs too. In terms of 'putting our money where our vision is', provision should therefore be made for such staffing and facilities in every secondary school.

## *Free Textbook Scheme*

JMB is urgently seeking the expansion to post-primary of the free-books provision currently being implemented at primary level. Such an approach, particularly in light of the current cost-of-living crisis, would represent perhaps the greatest and most cost-effective investment by the state in the educational experience and outcomes of this generation of young people, as well as supporting their hard-pressed families.

### *(c) Supporting diverse learners to achieve their potential*

Three groups of learners, those within the DEIS programme, immigrant students from Ukraine and those for whom English is an additional language, and, though not an educational sub-group, students from the Travelling community, also require specific supports as parental English literacy levels in the latter two categories are frequently below national averages. The original strategy failed to adequately address students with special educational needs. While it is accepted that a regime of supports exists to assist such students, the high levels of retention and 'mainstreaming' of SEN students within the system represents an increasing challenge to literacy and numeracy outcomes on a whole-school level – precisely the approach demanded under all current policy frameworks and, indeed, legislation. Given the expansion in demand for support provision, particularly in light of possible rights-based resourcing changes following the review of the EPSEN Act, JMB would expect that measures to address SEN and Traveller literacy and numeracy needs deserve specific treatment in the new draft plan.

## *Disadvantage and the DEIS experience*

The raft of provisions engaged-with by schools under the DEIS programme have been both efficient and effective in terms of delivery and outcomes. Feedback from the recent Chief Inspector's Report not alone confirms such positive achievements and affirms good practice but helpfully informed future direction in terms of data-informed interventions in literacy and numeracy in particular. Such testing, data-gathering, parent and student consultation, and intra-school communication, all demand additional SEN and DEIS coordination time, currently not separately provided for.

One aspect of the management of schools serving disadvantaged communities, however, is the increased level of planning, evaluation, resource management, administration, and accountability which must be undertaken by the principal and board of management. To date, the Department has never acknowledged the additional demands placed on principals, in particular in DEIS schools, and JMB is concerned that the additional responsibilities inherent in any eventual successor to the current strategy will both increase stress and reduce effectiveness among such principals. The provision of a ring-fenced post of responsibility for either DEIS planning or literacy and numeracy planning in these designated schools would show a return on such an investment in multiples.

## *English as an Additional Language (EAL)*

The profile model of allocating SET resources has widely been reported as leading to reduced overall EAL teaching hours for students at post-primary level. JMB views this as a retrograde step since the needs of such students are highly individualised and extend beyond their

language capacity into areas such as social integration, homework challenges, parental engagement etc.

Yet again the administrative, resource and accountability demands of testing and tracking systems, engagement with online resources and the requirements of 'toolkits' for EAL work place yet more pressure on school principals, with further erosion of teacher hours and no additional support for implementation.

#### *(d) Digital literacy*

At the heart of the educative enterprise lies the quality of engaged learning that takes place within the classroom – everything else is tangential. We have been focused for too long on hardware, software, networks etc. Serious teachers will always maintain a focus on pedagogy. Our investment should concentrate there, with the technologies trustworthy and well-maintained. This new literacy and numeracy strategy must future-proof technological investment in schools and not leave students' life-chances to the lottery of their school's or their family's financial capacity.

In terms of school capacity, the following barriers to successful integration of technologies into our schools have long been identified:

1. Investment: The legacy of historic underinvestment has led to continued significant inequity in the digital capacity of different schools. In particular, system-level bottlenecks emerged during the school closures that require to be seen by government as national priorities and not drawing on the dedicated funding assigned as annual grants to schools. The three infrastructure priorities are:

- a) Immediate roll-out of 200mb broadband to every school
- b) All connections to be via fibre, and removal

of inadequate and unreliable satellite or other wave-based services

- c) Once and for all elimination of socially inequitable digital poverty – an appropriate device for every child as a national project

2. Policy overload: This unaddressed trend has imposed multiple disconnected accountabilities on schools. It is time to call a halt to externally imposed change as both principals and teachers are becoming 'lost' in the plethora of policymakers' imperatives and don't know which to carry-out, by when, for whom, by whom and to what end. Before the pandemic, the school system was exposed to a psychologically damaging one hundred circulars per year. Since the closures of March 2020, this policy tsunami increased exponentially and the new L&N strategy must not introduce yet another raft of demands on a school system that needs some years to recover, reset and, indeed, psychologically heal.

System aside, students also need time and stability to regain their proficiency as active learners, self-directed, self-motivating, and self-organising. Such fundamental skills suffered attrition during the pandemic and have yet to be re-established across our student population. In this regard, allowing schools time and space to restore such capacities will demand a policy pause for school communities not currently evident.

3. Coherence: Technologies are tools – it is the calibre of the human engagement with the tools that determines the outcome. Michael Fullan states that 'effective principals attack incoherence' and thus for digital technologies to become further embedded as the government intends,

- a) a clear rationale for adopting them must be formulated and articulated,

- b) barriers to their adoption must be removed, and
- c) a magnetic draw in the form of a methodological 'better way' must exist to generate motivation

Teachers' innate resistance to externally mandated 'innovation' stems from a protective disposition to shielding their students from the vagaries of often politically driven policy changes. Digital innovation however is different. People enjoy engaging with it as we are all visual learners. One respondent to our

### 3. Re-energising Curricular Reform

#### *(a) Junior Cycle*

The decision to reduce the requirement for Classroom-Based Assessments from two to one and abandon the Assessment Tasks in respect of two successive year groups was a welcome adaptation of the Framework in terms of responsiveness to the Covid crisis, but points to an urgent need to revitalise the reforms at school and system levels.

JMB has been actively engaging with the University of Limerick's research mandate from NCCA to establish a systematic review of the implementation and impact of junior cycle reforms across all stakeholders and sectors. It is expected that the learnings from such an independent study will generate significant opportunities for ongoing policy in the area of curriculum and assessment and JMB hopes the Minister and partners will engage positively with all recommendations as they emerge. In particular, the timing of this research will allow for some much-needed insight into the effect of the changes to assessment and reporting since the initial school closures, as well as adding to our learning base in relation to remote teaching and learning at lower secondary level.

recent consultation said, 'If teachers had an opportunity to engage in real e-learning, they would eat it up'. Economising too strictly on hardware, cloud-based solutions, technological support, and professional development will restrict the potential ICT can offer schools to pockets of activity characterised by social inequity and limited impact. Now is the time to make a coherent argument for universal engagement with ICT in the classroom and for exploiting the adaptive learning software that already exists.

#### *(b) Renewal of Senior Cycle*

JMB is conscious that the NCCA's Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report, published by the Minister, represents a significant milestone in the journey towards an eventual Framework for Senior Cycle. The next phases will also involve significant consultation, but it is expected that the school site will once again emerge as a rich source of feedback as this major national project develops. Once again, voluntary secondary schools will be happy to participate in such development work and will have the support of JMB in any such undertakings. We believe that the perspective of voluntary secondary schools is of particular value in this discourse as the faith-centred characteristic spirit of these communities, affirmed in constitution, legislation and regulation, provides a rich tradition rooted in the fully human spirit, mind and body. Each voluntary secondary school, though part of a cohesive State provision and centred on the common good, nonetheless brings with it a sense of its own autonomy as an educational enterprise. The principle of subsidiarity from which our legislative and moral authority derives

allows a certain degree of freedom in terms of contextualisation and affirms our schools' significant rights and responsibilities in terms of the provision of locally relevant, engaging, holistic, pastorally aware, and high-quality student-centred schooling.

In reflecting on a senior cycle reform agenda, our school leaders paid explicit attention to the logistics of change, the CPD required and the operability or otherwise of implementation demands. Their key considerations included:

- Clarity and cohesion of policy – not developed 'on the hoof' as occurred with junior cycle
- Leadership for learning prioritised – liberating the principal and senior management team to develop the core function of the school
- Fit-for-purpose DP, AP, and administrative support for a contemporary, high-demand and high-functioning educational enterprise
- PTR reduced to expand the curriculum and reduce overcrowded classes of young adults. This is the key lever for sustainable change at senior cycle, as no number of creative programmes or pathways can continue to be provided on a shoestring
- An expanded and professionally developed guidance and counselling service must be provided
- Any emerging CPD programme must not disrupt and erode the life of the schools – the system must be courageous around deploying school closure for this vital national enterprise
- Develop multi-disciplinary teams and approaches in support of students with SEN, as most have complex needs which cannot be met by low-cost single-approach methods
- Junior Cycle reform almost completely failed to engage parents – this cannot be allowed to happen for senior cycle
- The physical environment of the school is not aligned with contemporary needs and a programme of adaptation, refurbishment and additionality will be required to create learning spaces which align with an integrated, holistic, high-wellbeing approach to upper secondary education
- Voluntary secondary schools spend inordinate amounts of time fundraising. Our schools should be resourced equitably – the current situation is discriminatory
- Digital technologies will inevitably be embedded in new programmes (as is the case, for example, with LC PE), thus infrastructural and CPD bottlenecks must be removed in advance of any new developments at senior cycle
- Boards of management will require extensive CPD if they are to be answerable in terms of their statutory leadership for learning role
- Provide the principal with the authority to make locally contextualised decisions around their school's senior cycle programme, deployment of adequate resources and some degree of liberation from the top-down, externally mandated curricular tramlines we have been shaped into for generations

JMB continues to engage with the Department, the NCCA, and the other stakeholders involved in this important phase of the initiative and will ensure that our members continue to have the school management voice heard while continuing to contribute to the national discourse around the emerging Senior Cycle renewal process.

## 4. Guidance & Counselling Services

*From the Statement of Strategy: We will support the mental health and wellbeing of students through implementation of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and ensuring that wellbeing supports recognise the impact of Covid-19 on students. We will also develop a strategy to enhance learning opportunities for exceptionally able students.*

### **(a) Post Primary School Mental Health and Guidance Counselling Provision**

It is important at this time to point out that there exist high levels of damage to mental health in our society due to the isolating and anxiety-inducing effects of the Covid-19 lockdowns and school closures, the impact of technologies on young people in particular, the relentless pace of change, the demise of community supports, the gulf between rich and poor etc. Recent reports of dramatic increases in cases of online bullying – the vast majority of which occur outside school settings, demand urgent action. The social and emotional effects of such anxieties are reflected back into our schools through the attitudes and behaviours of students, and it must be accepted by policymakers that seeking to site both the problem and the solution at the door of our schools represents neither a realistic nor an honest solution to this challenge.

We need coherence in education policymaking and not just another instrumental and accountability-driven approach to reform. In particular, an independent review of the mismatch between guidance counselling allocations and the needs of students must be instituted as a matter of priority.

The JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023 is clear about the challenges facing our schools in terms of their provision for guidance counselling:

The Chief Inspector's Report (2022) makes repeated reference to the need for system-level

supports to enhance provision for guidance and counselling in our schools:

- The additional Guidance and Counselling resources provided in response to the Covid-19 pandemic are a welcome additional support for students; however, further system supports in Guidance and Counselling will be required
- Continued enhancement of system supports will be required in the area of Guidance and Counselling to address challenges related to recruitment, curriculum and increasing levels of anxiety among students

Such calls for enhancement of the service pre-date both the announcements regarding senior cycle and the arrival of students from Ukraine. As these emerging demands collide with the already inadequate allocation of hours for guidance counselling, not yet fully restored from before the financial crash cuts of over a decade ago, the capacity of schools to cope will be unsustainable and cases relating to young people in crisis will spill over into already overwhelmed child and adolescent mental health services.

Thus, even in crude cost-effectiveness terms, the Chief Inspector's calls for system support enhancement must be responded to.

At this point, JMB is now seeking a meaningful increase in provision for guidance and counselling in the face of a generation of students with unprecedented needs in terms of trauma recovery, metacognitive skills loss, career plan damage and a raft of other crises

attributable in part to the Covid pandemic, as well as the new challenges of traumatised refugee children and an emerging senior cycle demanding significant guidance counselling in terms of expanded course choices and progression routes.

In addition, the continuing exclusion of fee-charging schools from a full guidance counselling allocation represents an unacceptable anomaly, as the challenges facing young people know no social or any other boundary.

What has emerged in the tentative restoration approaches undertaken thus far is a re-modelling of provision which does not restrict the allocation of the full quantum of guidance hours to a single person. Management bodies have supported this flexibility and, by and large, its evolution has been effective in creating a school-wide appreciation of, and a broadening of provision for, these core activities.

In seeking an increase in provision, JMB is cognisant of the difficulties of recruiting fully qualified and experienced guidance and counselling personnel. Indeed, the phasing of any allocation restoration must be in tandem with an increase in the qualification rates of new guidance counsellors. The model of in-school deployment currently in place, however, facilitates a realignment of role and responsibility on a school-wide basis to ensure each student receives the restorative care, whether personal, psychological, pedagogical, or career-related, they deserve. However, we cannot carry out this critical task on behalf of society on a shoestring. The money spent on such an early, school-level intervention will pay itself back to the exchequer in many multiples over the next five to ten years when it will become the responsibility of our clinics,

hospitals, social workers, psychiatric services, employers and, indeed, prisons who will have to bear the burden.

#### ***(b) Coordination of Services and establishment of Links between HSE Services and the Education System***

One of the greatest challenges facing school management in making provision for students' mental health support is the discontinuity across the health and education systems in terms of access, availability, tracking, and inter-agency communication.

While each service, NEPS, CAMHS, Social Workers, the HSE, is working intensively to provide relevant and timely services, they suffer not only from capacity challenges and long waiting lists, but also to a lack of coherence of provision from a school's perspective.

JMB recommends that government initiates a high-level review of inter-agency cooperation, connectivity, and communication, and that ultimately a single point of contact be established to relevant, authorised, school personnel through which appropriate and immediate referrals may be made in support of students in need of mental health supports and interventions.

#### ***(c) Teacher Training and Development***

In terms of teacher training and development, it goes without saying that school communities would welcome opportunities for school-wide awareness-raising and CPD interventions that are relevant to this agenda and are professionally designed and delivered.

We must first, however, address the factors that our principals have identified as hindering the implementation of effective positive mental health and anti-bullying strategies in our schools:

- The majority of principals cite lack of time as the greatest restraint
- Lack of substitution provision for the necessary in-school group meetings involved, teacher CPD, and particularly in relation to teachers investigating incidents of bullying
- Lack of coordination time
- Department approval for in-school, all-staff, in-service

The good news about this list of hindrances is that they are soluble and don't include lack of motivation. A Department-supported approach to re-energising schools' anti-bullying and positive mental health programmes would be welcomed and most timely.

In terms of guidance counsellor supply challenges, we urge the Department to support the training of new guidance counsellors, particularly in light of (a) the cost to individual teachers (b) release for training, now more frequently only offered in school time, and (c) time for shadowing. We need a structure mirroring that provided for special education teachers, and which increases post-graduate opportunities to specialise in this much needed field. Meanwhile, we request a review of current guidance counsellor qualifications recognition policy, and whether there's scope for broadening/expediting this, given the ongoing recruitment crisis. As an immediate measure, the Department should collaborate with existing guidance counselling programme providers to offer extra-mural courses, as is currently being provided by DCU in Kilkenny.

## Activities

- Regular and frequent meetings with the DE Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit
- Submissions and meeting contributions on issues of key importance to implementation
- NCCA liaison at the highest levels – Council, Board for Junior Cycle, Board for Senior Cycle, Subject Development Groups, and consultation events
- Meetings with JCT on roll-out of CPD
- Policy-practice dialogue via the JMB National Curriculum Advisory Group
- Close liaison with PDST Technology in Education on a range of developments
- Participation on consultation structures relating to the development of a new National Digital Strategy for Schools
- Policy-practice dialogue via the JMB National ICT Advisory Group
- Meetings with key IT providers to schools
- Engagement with SEC on technological developments
- Data protection updates relating to IT in schools
- Consultations on curricular developments in digital studies and applications
- Meetings with both the IGC and NCGE on current developments, policy and best practice
- Advocating for enhanced G&C allocation to schools
- Liaising with the Department and the Inspectorate on teacher supply concerns in relation to the recruitment of guidance counsellors
- Consulting with NCGE on confidentiality and consent policy relating to guidance and counselling provision in schools
- Continued development of supports

and advice for schools on whole-school guidance provision

- Responding to school queries on guidance and counselling provision
- Close involvement with NCCA on their review of RSE and SPHE across all sectors
- Close liaison with Churches and Trusts

regarding RSE and school ethos

- Continuing endorsement and support of 'Stand-Up' week in schools
- Membership of an education advisory panel with BelongTo
- Responding to school issues relating to RSE, ethos and LGBTI

## GOAL 2

Ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential

### 1. Voluntary Secondary Schools in the DEIS Programme

*From the Statement of Strategy:* We will address the retention and achievement gap between Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and non-DEIS schools through the DEIS programme.

The lengths to which DEIS school leaders and their communities went to maintain student engagement and inclusivity during the pandemic emergency may perhaps never be known. DEIS principals, most without a second deputy and some with just fractions, had to implement every single element of distance teaching and learning provision, school administration, junior cycle reporting, calculated/accredited grades administration and all that every school leader had to perform, but also to:

- Completely redesign, administer and arrange for the provision of school meals for hundreds of families across their communities
- Operate remote pedagogy across a school population with little or no appropriate digital infrastructure
- Find ways to support their students with

special educational needs – typically well over 50% of their enrolment

- Mitigate the worst effects of lockdown on young people at risk of neglect and/or abuse
- Try to re-establish contact with students who completely disengaged from all school provision
- Provide for book rental scheme operations during a lockdown
- Plan for a Summer Programme to re-engage such 'lost' students in advance of re-opening, and this after the school had closed and there was no staff support available

Of all the stress-points JMB experienced during the school closures, it was across our 50 DEIS principals and their deputies that the most worrying levels of anxiety and distress were evidenced. It is finally time for this inhuman imposition of un-resourced responsibility to change.

The impact of policy and initiative overload on DEIS schools is but one factor. What is far more concerning is the effect of higher levels of student behavioural challenges due to emotional, social, and cognitive-capacity issues which erode the time and energies of the DEIS school leader, particularly in our underfunded and understaffed voluntary secondary schools.

As an immediate action, JMB is calling on the Department to allocate a full deputy principal in DEIS schools of up to 400 students. JMB urges the Minister to implement this equity measure immediately and to broaden its scope to include all schools with fractions of deputy principal positions thereafter.

## 2. Special Educational Needs

*From the Statement of Strategy:* We will support the participation and progression of students with special educational needs through the delivery of integrated resources, in particular by advancing towards the roll-out of the School Inclusion Model and a new Special Needs Assistants (SNA) allocation model.

We will also increase the development of special class places for students with additional needs in new and existing mainstream schools, as well as continued support for the development of special schools as a vital part of our education system through effective forecasting of future need and equipping schools to better support students with special educational needs.

The purpose of the present review of the EPSEN Act is to provide assurance that there is an adequate legislative basis for the educational provision, both current and planned, for children with special educational needs in order to protect the interests of the children concerned and their families and those of the State; to reflect best practice in contemporary education in this field, and to take stock of policy developments since the Act was signed into law, almost nineteen years ago.

Given that many sections of the EPSEN Act have yet to be commenced, substantial policy change has emerged since 2004 in special education; there has been much larger investment in special education by the state, and issues relating to school placements have led to changes around the Education and Admissions Acts. Given all of this this review is very timely and is welcomed by JMB.

It must, however, be stated from the outset that our voluntary secondary schools are already extraordinarily inclusive, innovative, professionally committed, and welcoming communities and that we are building on strong ethical and, indeed, spiritual foundations when it comes to living out each school's expressed ethos. This review of the legislative underpinning of the State's provision for our most vulnerable, though equally most wonderfully diverse, resilient, and talented young people, offers our citizens an opportunity to reframe both our conversation and our language as we grow in social maturity as a nation.

### *(a) Essential Supports and Enabling Measures for Schools*

The recent Chief Inspector's Report points to a largely positive, though developing, picture of special education provision across our schools:

- Whole-school evaluation (WSE) inspection findings at primary and post-primary level are reflective of schools' earliest experiences of deploying their resources in line with the special education teacher (SET) model. These indicate that school leaders, on the whole, made good decisions that were informed by the principles of the model, and that they were working to make their schools as inclusive as possible
- The findings also indicate that the quality of teaching of pupils with SEN was good and that there was greater emphasis on the provision of in-class support
- However, inspectors identified scope for development in some aspects of leadership, and teachers' collaborative practice. These included the need to ensure that strategies implemented in schools were aligned fully with addressing the students' identified priority learning needs

As the CI Report sets out, 'the overall policy objective of the Department of Education is to promote inclusive education for children and young people with SEN in mainstream settings. Where this is not possible, the policy commitment is to provide for specialised settings through special-class or special-school placements. It is unclear whether the current review of EPSEN is aimed at an extreme model of mainstream inclusion whereby even children and young people currently receiving their care and education in special school settings will have the right to attend their local school. If that is the case, the government should be up front in its ambitions, and before enacting any new legislation, open the conversation with all providers and parents around the consequences of such an approach.

Inclusion, for inclusion's sake, or worse, for political and fiscal expediency, represents a populist but highly dangerous agenda. We must not be afraid to problematise in advance of commencement every aspect of such a model, and ensure that whatever is needed is provided.

While it is impossible to begin such a discourse without seeing what emerges, the following key elements of current special educational needs provision require urgent attention, even without changing the law.

#### *(b) Special Educational Needs Coordination*

As a matter of urgency, government must make distinct provision for SEN coordination. JMB has repeatedly asserted the need for dedicated special needs coordination, planning, tracking, consultation, and reporting in every school, and this position is supported by the NCSE. Principals' feedback has emphatically asserted the following points:

1. There is absolute unanimity that every school must have dedicated SEN coordination time
2. Continuing to find coordination time from within the resource-hours allocation to students is widely seen as unethical and inefficient
3. There is no clarity or advice on the proportion of hours which should be dedicated for SENCO activities
4. SENCOs continually express their sense of being overwhelmed by the demands of their role
5. Principals report being unable to keep a SENCO in the role for any extended length of time, due to the role expansion, admin overload and lack of time
6. Post-primary schools are given no time for

duties in their posts of responsibility, other than for Programme Coordinator or Adult Ed.

7. Principals agree that SENCO time should be given as a flexible but adequate quantum of hours each year

As an immediate measure, all post-primary schools must be provided with an additional weekly allocation of at least 10% of a school's 'profile hours' to be flexibly deployed by management but ring-fenced to the SENCO and their team. Should the present review lead to a further imposition of legally underpinned rights, this minimum quantum of time will exponentially increase.

Equally important however, is the professional learning that members of the SENCO team require, now and into the future. A major professionalisation agenda must be established in which those with responsibility have both the professional learning, systems knowledge, and external supports they need to carry out their duties. Just as with principals, the current work, worry and responsibility capacities of SENCOs have been breached.

None of this provision will come without cost to the exchequer, and not alone the Department of Education, but the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform must be prepared for this.

### **(c) Special Needs Assistants**

The first phase of a new full-service support model based on the NCSE policy advice of 2017, *'Delivering for Students with Additional Care Needs: The Right Support at the Right Time in Schools'*, was postponed in 2020. As the then proposal was to implement solely the profile model of SNA allocation to schools without proper trialling, the JMB welcomed the pause. The capacity of school

management to both identify additional, often complex, care needs and make resource allocation decisions has never been fully resourced or supported in terms of training and external advice, and leaves principals exposed to immediate and *post hoc* legal challenges relating to their deployment decisions and their consequences. Indeed, schools with significant SNA allocations will need a dedicated person to manage this resource. The administration alone virtually constitutes a senior management role in itself, and the current proposals presume that the principal will undertake everything from recruitment to identification and re-identification of ever-changing care-need, to deployment, to HR and IR operations, to training and CPD, to conflict resolution, to professional accountability etc. etc. Currently, principals do not receive any recognition for the additional staffing responsibilities as a result of their SNA allocation, which can be substantial, and this anomaly must be addressed in advance of any changes to this particular sector of our schools' workforce.

It is the position of JMB that, as a profile-based model of SNA allocation is now being considered, the professional development needs of school leaders, SENCOs, SETs, and SNAs must be met. Sufficient coordination and administration capacity must be provided to operate the model effectively. The industrial relations parameters relating to current SNA terms and conditions must be fully resolved, and the voice of families must be heard and comprehended, particularly in relation to the devaluing of clinical judgements and their consequences.

### **(d) Making provision for students with autism**

The CI Report places particular emphasis on the task of making provision for students with autism, stating that 'a number of important



aspects that relate to provision for children with autism require attention including enrolment practices, review of placements and the integration of learners attending special classes into mainstream provision'. JMB welcomes the highlighting of system and school-level challenges in ASD and other special class provision. We recommended, without success, the integration of the special education support service into Oide, the forthcoming teacher education support service, and also the establishment of an ASD-specific advisory unit, resourced with appropriately qualified and experienced personnel, and who will visit schools to support the journey in these high-demand areas of provision, from forming, to norming, to performing.

High level policy, however worthy and shared, demands accessible and professionalised school-level advice and guidance in realising the Chief Inspector's call that 'classes for pupils/students with autism and other special classes should prioritise places for those with complex needs, and pupils/students with less complex needs should be included in mainstream classes with appropriate support'.

## Activities

- Continued development of the JMB National DEIS Advisory Group
- Engagement with key policymakers including TUSLA, DE Social Inclusion Unit, NCSE etc.
- Direct support to schools new to the DEIS Programme in 2022
- Advocacy for enhancement of middle and senior management resources in DEIS schools
- Annual JMB DEIS seminars with presentations on policy, practice, and programmes
- Sharing of good practice on social inclusion initiatives amongst JMB schools
- Research on key support needs of DEIS schools to inform submissions
- Ongoing communication with NCSE and the Department across the three PP sectors, via the Management Representative Group
- Provision of Conference workshops on the establishment of special classes
- Direct support to schools setting up special classes
- Engagement between our JMB National SEN Advisory Group and a range of policymakers
- Close involvement and advocacy on policy relating to a new SNA allocation model
- Liaison with SEC on developments relating to RACE supports
- JMB now represented on NCSE National Council and Advisory Forum
- Advocating for inclusion in a model of emotional therapeutic service

## GOAL 3

Together with our partners, provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector

### 1. School Leadership

*From the Statement of Strategy: We will support school communities through and post Covid-19 to enable continuity of education and assessment, and to help alleviate the impact of Covid-19 especially for those students at risk of educational disadvantage.*

The Chief Inspector's report makes the following observations of contemporary school leadership:

- Inspection findings show that clear communication practices and strong cultures of collaboration lie at the heart of effective schools
- Effective leaders and managers communicate well and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of provision for learners
- Those in leadership and management positions in schools need to place a more substantial focus on the leadership of teaching and learning

That final observation represents the professional instinct of every principal in the State, but it equally goes to the heart of the daily dilemma of the nation's 4,000 apex school leaders i.e., the system itself stops principals effectively undertaking the core duty the system demands of principals.

It is crystal clear that the time for empowered, enabled, resourced, and liberated school leadership has come. It is no longer acceptable that a school principal remains overwhelmed by administrative and other non-core workloads to the detriment of her or his key role as the

leader of learning. We acknowledge and welcome the provision of additional deputy principals in larger schools in recent times, which represents a cost-effective model of enhancing the leadership base in our schools. We have relied on a single person at the neck of that responsibility hourglass for far too long. Schools need a unitary leader, but to exercise the type of transformational leadership demanded of them, fit-for-purpose second and third tiers are essential. Therefore, in advance of any significant developments in this area, the Department must at least provide adequate middle and senior management posts to schools, which have not been restored since the time of the FEMPI cutbacks.

Many of our principals have been running on empty with many considering exit strategies. Recruitment is in crisis, and pleas for sustainability increase every year.

Such a crisis in contemporary school leadership represents perhaps the ultimate threat to the government's agenda of legally mandated, rights-based maximum inclusion: who will lead it? Not the government, not the Department, not NCSE, NEPS, the HSE, or any other agency. School principals will, ultimately, carry virtually all of the responsibility and if their current work, worry, and responsibility loads are

unsustainable, what chance is there for a whole new raft of responsibility, work, and worry to be tolerated by them?

The limit of responsibility has, in the view of JMB, already been breached. This is not an investment issue. The pandemic, and the personal cost to principals of keeping their school communities alive, has forced all to reprioritise. They seem to never say 'No'.

They will.

## 2. Education for Enterprise

While everyone has to make a living, it is a serious mistake to view the educational enterprise as a vehicle for the production of entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, technologists or any other profile the State currently views as a contemporary priority. These priorities change all the time. The mission at the heart of education must be to create lovers of learning – lifelong, multifaceted, agile, and life-enhancing. The curriculum must therefore be relevant, coherent, engaging, and professionally mediated by enthusiastic teachers. We identify some characteristics of such provision as:

- Coherent and with clear continuity between its various phases
- A preparation for the challenges of life
- A preparation for further and higher education
- A preparation for the world of work
- A preparation for citizenship
- Authentically holistic, which includes an awareness, understanding and experience of the sacred in human experience

Individuals and society benefit from the provision of a broadly-based, yet rigorous, education and the current curriculum provides scope for the majority of students to engage

in areas of core learning and subjects of their choosing as well as achieving to academically challenging standards generally aligning with their capacity. In terms of improvement, JMB identifies the following as priorities:

- Curriculum specifications should be updated and revised regularly in light of developments in subject areas
- The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme as a whole is due for revision, not simply its modules on a piecemeal basis
- The backwash on senior cycle from third-level entry demands is no longer appropriate or acceptable. At the very least, work on broadening entry routes to higher education should be recommenced, as this development appears to have stalled
- The Senior Cycle review is providing evidence of a need for re-imagined purposes and reconfigured pathways to accommodate the needs of diverse students with multiple life possibilities. JMB sees the review outcomes as demanding evolution, rather than revolution, at upper secondary level, which is not to argue for conservatism but for a level of responsible and courageous innovation

Civic discourse on education and schooling is, at times, limited, reactive and often focused on peripheral developments. Small-scale additions or short-lived adjustments to the current 'factory model' of schooling in Ireland are just tinkering. What is really needed is a national conversation on post-primary education in general. This will need to propose courageous steps to address the mismatch between the knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes young people need to live a rich and full adult life in the 21st century and the educational structures which are currently in place to prepare them. This process could begin and be

underpinned by a permanent Forum on Second-Level Education.

### 3. Adult & Further Education

JMB and ACCS FE-providing schools have been working closely together to establish sound working relationships with DE, FESS, SOLAS and QQI and, in a major step forward, JMB and ACCS have set up a Further Education Support Unit to carry out the following functions:

- Establish arrangements with FE-providing schools both nationally and regionally to work effectively with ETB and SOLAS structures
- Coordinate and support schools in relation to planning and re-focusing provision in consultation with SOLAS in response to the recommendations from the PLC evaluation.
- Coordinate the provision of relevant CPD
- Provide a communication channel facilitating the exchange of information between our schools, ETBs, ETBI, SOLAS, QQI and other relevant stakeholders
- Support JMB and ACCS FE-providing schools with the process of QQI Quality Assurance, QQI re-engagement and QQI programme validation
- Contribute to the establishment of formal arrangements through ETB FET services to facilitate collaboration between ETB FET services and JMB/ACCS schools
- Collaborate to develop and share FET mechanisms to support and encourage cohesive, integrated local planning and delivery

As the landscape of national employment levels and PLC uptake change, JMB, along with our ACCS colleagues, is anxious that the staffing of further and adult education provision is placed on a sounder policy-level footing than currently,

and that any changed funding arrangements be fully consulted upon in advance of implementation.

### Activities

- Advocacy for a policy-pause across the range of demand areas impacting on schools
- Continuing communication with the Department and others on the workload of principals in contemporary voluntary secondary schools
- Roll-out of peer support ('Balint') groups across the network of voluntary secondary school principals
- Provision of a weekly programme of Mindfulness for school leaders
- Ongoing advice and support for middle-management systems in schools
- Achievement of CSL endorsement of our Newly Appointed Principals Training Programme
- Leadership training and development opportunities (e.g., newly appointed principals, deputy principals, and BOMs)
- High level collaboration with NCCA on the Senior Cycle review: Council, Board for Senior Cycle, consultation events
- JMB submission to NCCA and DE on a range of curricular and other issues
- Working with SOLAS to reframe vocation-related pathways in schools
- Working with partner organisations, including Way2Work, on school-industry links and student placement
- Ongoing support of the joint JMB-ACCS Further Education Support Unit
- Continuing engagement with SOLAS and other stakeholders on developing both FE and adult education in our sector



## Other Developments

### JMB Training and Events Calendar 2023-2024

Late Appointees – New Principals and Deputy Principals	In-person	September 12-14 2023
JMB Education Conference	In-person	September 15
FSSU Board of Management Training	Training Video & BOM Manual emailed to Schools	October
Interview Competencies – Refresher During week beginning 16 October 2023 in Athlone	In-person Athlone	w/c October 16
BOM Training	In-person	November 11, 18, & 25
Newly Appointed Principals – Phase 2	In-person	November 14/15
Newly Appointed Deputy Principals – Phase 2	In-person	November 22/23
Education Law Day	In-person	December 4
Interview Competencies – Refresher During week beginning 29 January 2024 in Dublin	In-person Dublin	w/c January 29
Teacher Allocations	In-person	January/February
Interview Competencies – Complete course 1.5 days: Mount St. Anne’s, Killenarden, Portarlinton	In-person	February 26/27
FSSU Budget Preparation Training	Live Online	March 6
Interview Competencies – Refresher During week beginning 11 March 2024 in Cork	In-person Cork	w/c March 11
JMB DEIS Seminar	In-person	March 14
AMCSS/JMB Annual Conference	In-person	May 1-3
FSSU School Administration Personnel Training	Live Online	June 12
Newly Appointed Principals and Deputy Principals – Phase 1	In-person	June 18-20

## Submissions 2022-2023

- JMB Submission to the NCCA on the Background Paper and Brief for Development of Senior Cycle Modules for Students Engaged in L1 and L2 Learning Programmes,
- JMB Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in Irish Education
- JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2024
- JMB Submission on the Review of the EPSEN Act (2004)
- JMB Submission on the National Framework for Guidance
- Post Primary Management Representative Group Submission to the Minister of Education on the Expansion to Post Primary of the Pilot Scheme for Student Emotional Therapeutic Supports
- JMB Submission on a New National Strategy on Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy
- JMB Submission to the NCCA on the Background Paper and Brief for the Development of Senior Cycle SPHE
- Submission to the Department of Education on Expanding JMB Service Provision to Voluntary Secondary School Management
- JMB Submission to the State Examinations Commission on the Development of their Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027
- JMB Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Issue of ‘Mental Health Supports in Schools’
- JMB Submission to the NCCA on the Draft Specification for Junior Cycle SPHE
- JMB Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Issue of ‘Mental Health Supports in Schools’
- JMB Submission to the Department of Education on Transition Year within a Reconfigured Senior Cycle
- JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023

## Date for your Diary!

This year, our JMB Education Conference is themed:

### **Special Classes: Possibilities – Practice – Policy**

We intend the event to be an important support for our school leaders, special education teachers, SENCOs and board chairpersons, as mainstream schools continue to expand on such important provision.

The conference will be held on  
Friday 15th September 2023  
at the Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin

**We look forward to seeing you there!**

Michael Redmond  
Catherine Moynihan  
Elizabeth O'Connor

JMB Education, Training, Research & Development



# School Management Advisory Report



# School Management Advisory Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### The Team

The School Management Advisory Team comprises Bríd de Brun, Siobhán Corry, Gerry McCaul, Raymond McHugh and Christine West. In September 2022, we welcomed Raymond to the team. Raymond joins us from St Macartan's College in Monaghan where he was principal for over 15 years.

### Role

The School Management Advisory Team advises school management on the wide range of issues that arise in the day-to-day management of schools. We are actively involved in the training provided by JMB to boards of management and current and newly appointed principals and deputy principals. We engage with the DE, the other management bodies and the ASTI, TUI and FÓRSA on policy and matters concerning the management of schools. We also feed into the regular bulletins which issue from JMB.

### Advisory Work

Throughout the course of the 2022/23 school year, the team dealt with a large volume of queries by phone and email. We also met with principals, deputy principals and chairpersons of boards of management by Zoom and in person. The queries were wide-ranging, including the following:

- Admissions, suspensions and expulsions
- Reviews by boards of management of decisions to refuse admission due to the school being oversubscribed
- Section 29 appeals
- Complaints of parents and students aged 18 and over
- Guardianship and custody matters
- Anti-bullying procedures
- Child protection
- Recruitment of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff

- Appointments to posts of responsibility, principal and deputy principal and appeals in relation to same
- Allocations
- CID entitlements of teachers, including attending at adjudication hearings
- Working hours of SNAs
- Leave entitlements of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff
- Referrals to Occupational Health
- Applications under the Critical Illness Provisions
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures for teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff
- Negotiating terms and conditions of employment of ancillary staff
- Contracts of employment

## Training

### Newly Appointed Principals and Deputy Principals

Training took place over three days from 6 to 8 September 2022. It was good to be back in person as this gives an opportunity for newly appointed principals and deputy principals to meet the members of the team as well as providing them with opportunities to network with their colleagues. Phase 2 of the training for newly appointed principals and deputy principals took place in November. We look forward to the first session for newly appointed principals and deputy principals which is scheduled to take place from 20 to 22 June.

### Board of Management Training

We delivered training online and in person to new boards of management at venues in Dublin, Athlone Cork, Kilkenny, Galway, Limerick, Dundalk and Sligo.

### Allocations and Middle Leadership and Management

We were delighted to be able to deliver sessions on Allocations and Middle Leadership and Management in person this year at eight venues in Dublin, Navan, Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny, Galway and Sligo. A session on Allocations took place in the morning followed by a session on Middle Leadership and Management in the afternoon. Members of the team were available to meet with principals throughout the day. The session on Allocations provided an overview of the allocations process, including how each school's allocation is calculated, guidance on completing the returns for the DE and worked examples of eligibility for CIDs. We are very grateful to Gabriel Martin, Assistant Principal Officer, Teacher Allocations Section, and his colleagues Geraldine Kennedy and Emer McCormack for making themselves available to deliver part of the session and to meet with principals.

In the afternoon, a session on Middle Leadership and Management was aimed at assisting principals in maximising the benefits to schools from their Middle Leadership and Management structures. The session began with an overview of the appointment process with a focus on the grounds of appeal before going on to look at the Biennial Review. The session then focused on how to get the best value out of the Annual Review process with post holders before concluding with a discussion on how to develop leadership capacity in schools.

The number of appeals of appointments to posts of responsibility was half of that in the previous year. As appeals involve considerable amounts of time and expense, we encourage school management to contact us in advance if there are any uncertainties about the appointment procedures.

## Education Law Day

JMB hosted the Education Law Day on 5 December 2022 in partnership with the education law team of Mason Hayes & Curran. The feedback was extremely positive. We would like to thank Liam Riordan, David Ruddy, Fiona Sheil and Lorcan Maule for sharing their expertise with us. We plan to hold a similar day in early December 2023.

## Building Positive Working Relationships Seminars

Good interpersonal skills and an ability to deal with conflict are important skills for principals. Mary Rafferty delivered three sessions online: From Difficult Conversations to Learning Conversations on 26 January, Mediation Skills for School Leaders on 21 February and Collaborative Conversations in Your Team on 22 March 2023. These sessions were also made available to deputy principals and chairpersons of boards of management. Participants were provided with strategies and tips to enhance their skills in fostering positive and collaborative relationships within leadership teams and the wider school community.

## Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments

Revised Circular 62/2021 introduced an appeal system for permanent appointments to principal and deputy principal. There were four appeals in respect of appointments to principal, one of which was upheld.

## Redeployment

The DE has continued the Pilot Voluntary Redeployment Scheme 2023 which is available to permanent/CID teachers who are employed in a post-primary school:

- In counties Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath who wish to be considered for redeployment to a school in any location.
- Outside of Dublin and who wish to be considered for redeployment to a school in Dublin.

There were only two compulsory redeployments this year, a surplus redeployment and a Ward redeployment.

### Redeployment Statistics 2022

	Requested	Refused	Allowed
Reviews	4	2	2
Appeals	4	4	0
Ward - Invalid applications	2	2	0

### Applications Processed

	Compulsory	Voluntary Accepted	Total Redeployed	Voluntary Refused	Total Processed
Reviews	2	0	2	0	2
Amalgamation Dublin	0	4	4	1	5
Surplus	5	10	15	1	16
Ward	8	4	12	0	12
Pilot	0	19	19	16	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>70</b>

From	Secondary	C&C	ETB	Total
Secondary	23	7	5	35
C & C	7	2	2	11
ETB	3	3	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>52</b>

### Pilot Scheme

	Applications processed			No offer	Total applications
	Accepted	Refused	Total		
To Dublin	4	5	9	3	12
Cork	9	4	13	66	79
Clare	2	3	5	22	27
Mayo	4	4	8	22	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>148</b>

### Schools that had not previously received a redeployed teacher

Secondary	16
C&C	3
ETB	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

## Teaching Conciliation Council Sub-Committees

Throughout the year, we attended at meetings of the Interpretation Sub-Committee of Disciplinary Appeals Committee Process, the Payroll Technical Subcommittee, the Incremental Credit Group and the Incremental Credit Appeals Committee.

## SNAs

We attended at quarterly meetings of the SNA HR/IR Forum with members of the Department of Education and representatives of the other management bodies and FÓRSA. The number of SNAs employed in our schools is now approaching 20,000. Under the Building Momentum Agreement, the DE committed to conducting a review of the existing SNA contract, in consultation with FÓRSA, including the appropriate use of the contracted 72 hours. The DE has established a dedicated SNA Workforce Development Unit to oversee this work. An initial meeting took place in March in the DE with representatives of JMB and the other management bodies.

## Secretaries' pay claim

In June 2022, the DE issued Circular Letter 0036/2022, Revision of Salaries and Annual Leave arrangements for School Secretaries employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools. This followed a lengthy engagement at the Workplace Relations Commission. It is intended that the grant-funded secretaries who have opted to move to the new terms and conditions will be paid directly by the DE through a newly established payroll from September 2023. There has been a lot of engagement by JMB and the FSSU with the DE and schools around the process, which is complex, given the variation in terms and conditions of grant-funded secretaries who are employed in voluntary secondary schools.

## Retirement of John Curtis as General Secretary

John retired on 31 March after seven years as General Secretary. During his tenure, John worked tirelessly to advance the interests of principals, boards of management and JMB, even in the face of the challenges posed by strikes and Covid-19. The many tributes that John has received from all of the education stakeholders are testament to the contribution that he has made to education in the voluntary secondary school sector. We extend best wishes to John on his retirement.



## Appointment of Deirdre Matthews as General Secretary

The team welcomes the appointment of Deirdre Matthews as General Secretary. Deirdre brings a wealth of experience to the role from her position as principal of St Vincent's Secondary School, her involvement with the NCCA as Education Officer and Chairperson of the LCA Development Group and her tenure as President of AMCSS/JMB. We wish Deirdre every success in her new role and look forward to working with her.

## Ready to help and advise

The School Management Advisory Team is there to help and advise school management. No matter how small the query may be, please do lift the phone or send us an email. You are not 'bothering us', we welcome and enjoy engaging with you.

Christine West, on behalf of the team.  
April 2023



# Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) Report

# Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU) Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### Executive Summary

The Financial Support Services Unit was established under Department of Education & Skills circular M36/05. In the school year 2018/2019, the Department expanded the remit of the unit to include the Primary (DES Circular 60/2017) and Community & Comprehensive (DES Circular 02/2018) sectors. Objectives for the FSSU were set out in these circulars. This report outlines the founding objectives of the unit and the activities undertaken by the unit over the past year to adhere to and reach these objectives.

#### 1. Provision of advice and support to schools on financial governance matters including compliance with the requirements of the circulars:

The unit issued the following Financial Guidelines to support school management in good financial practice:

- Electronic Banking-Important Security Advice
- Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)
- Once-Off Cost of Living Grant
- Public Holidays 2023
- Government Budget Summary 2023
- Charities Regulator Requirements for Schools
- Supervision & Substitution Payments 22/23
- Repeat of Leaving Certificate Course Fees
- Covid Funding for Term 1 2022/2023
- Revised Chart of Accounts-September 2022
- External School Accountants Guideline 2022
- Financial Year End 2021/2022
- Revised Travel & Subsistence Expenses
- Annual VAT Return of Trading Details (RTD)
- Important Dates for 2022/2023 School Year
- Return of Unspent Covid-19 Funding 21/22

A Financial Update and School Budget 2023/2024 webinar was held in March 2023 to help school management to develop a budget, ensuring good financial management.

#### 2. Development of templates for use by schools in relation to financial matters, including a standardised national template for annual school accounts

The unit has devised budget templates, board of management reporting templates and practical sample forms and spreadsheets. These templates are consistently revised to enhance effectiveness.

The monthly template reports tie into the year-end reporting format.

### **3. Acting as a central repository for receipt of annual school accounts prepared by an external accountant/auditor registered with a recognised accountancy body in the State.**

The unit has developed an online secure cloud system for the submission of school financial data. This data is uploaded by the school's external financial accountant/auditor. This allows the unit to receive timely, accurate data that allows comparisons and research. The online submission incorporates the ability to fulfil the financial obligations of the board to the Central Statistics Office and the requirements of the Charities Regulator.

### **4. Carrying out such audits as may be required.**

A number of requests have been received from the DE to carry out audits on specific areas of concern in schools.

### **5. Preparation of an annual report for the Department.**

An annual report is prepared and submitted to the Department of Education.

### **6. Liaison with the Department in relation to financial matters pertaining to schools.**

When issues of a financial nature arise that affect schools, the unit will liaise with the Department on behalf of the schools.

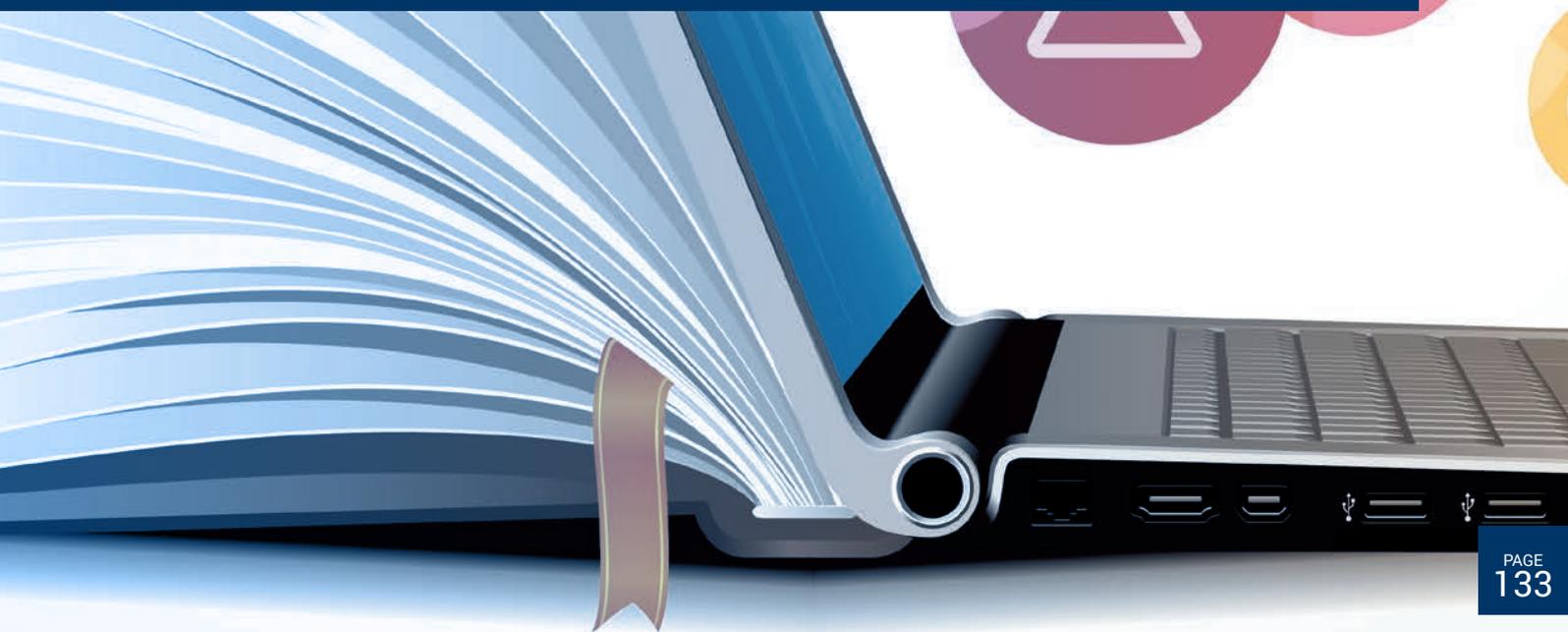
The unit continues to provide advice and support to our schools through the following mechanisms:

- A. Financial Internal Controls Review
- B. Telephone and online support from the unit on all aspects of financial management
- C. Free support on the computerised accounts package, Sage 50, is available to all voluntary secondary schools
- D. One-to-one training for new principals, boards of management and finance committees

Louise McNamara, Director,  
Financial Support Services Unit  
March 2023



# Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) Report



# Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### Annual Report on operational activities in 2022

#### Introduction

2022 presented a unique set of operational, logistical and resource demands for the SPU, and the team remained steadfast in its commitment and endeavour to deliver the best service possible to our client schools.

#### Summary

The Schools Procurement Unit delivers a free professional advice and practical support service to almost 3800 schools, to help them achieve improvements in their procurement processes, practices and outcomes.

Fundamental to the role played by the SPU is improving access for schools to the centralised procurement model. The stated ambition is to change the behaviour at school level, from sourcing to ordering their requirements. What remains clear is that a considerable amount of procurement activity and effort is still taking place at the level of individual schools, because central arrangements which service specific school requirements remain at a premium. To that end, SPU has been involved in a number of sectoral procurement initiatives, covering ICT, projectors and interactive flat screens, school ePayments, school MIS and classroom furniture. Some of these projects remain ongoing, with delivery expected in 2023 for most. SPU has been working and will continue to work with stakeholders, through the Education Procurement Project Board, to identify and advance further procurement initiatives on behalf of the sector.



## SPU 2022 Statistics

Table 1 - All recorded SPU activities

SPU all Activities via CRM	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022 Total
SPU Internal/External/Tasks	38	38	10	6	92
Incoming Calls	48	38	10	8	104
Outgoing Calls	53	38	10	8	109
Incoming Emails	1,587	1,808	2,974	2,166	8,535
Outgoing Emails	1,522	1,338	2,532	1,757	7,149
Bulk Emails /Newsletter/Survey /Electricity & Gas	118	128	1,582	540	2,368
Twitter	54	265	138	88	545
SPU website	12,639	14,735	22,316	14,614	64,304
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,059</b>	<b>18,388</b>	<b>29,572</b>	<b>19,187</b>	<b>83,206</b>

■ Stats highlighted in yellow recorded in the CRM

### Highlights:

- A total of 18357 activities are recorded in the CRM for Q1 – Q4 in 2022. These activities reflect, not just email and telephony traffic across a total of 55 different categories, but team interaction with stakeholders and resultant team outputs.
- The top 8 categories consolidated in the table below account for 16944 of the overall figure for recorded activities and represents 92.3% of all activities during this period.

Table 2 - Summary of Top 8 Activities by (combined) Category

	Categorisation of Activity	No of Activities
1	Utilities/Energy	8474
2	Advice & Clarification Procurement Guide, Drafts, Registration +	2626
3	Advisory	1857
4	General Correspondence	1820
5	Reports	1290
6	ICT (all)	877
7	OGP/eTenders	565
8	Catering (all)	244
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16944</b>

**Table 3 - School-based Procurement Projects (RFQ/RFT) initiated in 2022**

Category	Number of School Projects
T4 Subjects	71
Loose Furniture	27
Science	19
Home Economics	14
PE	13
Catering	11
Miscellaneous others	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>188</b>

## Commentary

Tables 1 & 2 demonstrate strong ongoing interest in the core services that SPU provides, and highlights the areas of procurement focus which have been particularly active within schools in 2022. Table 3 represents SPU core business activities, projects which have already had considerable consultation input from SPU personnel, from the provision of document templates, advice provision, document review and assistance with e-tenders to providing guidance with the evaluation process. Many of these projects, depending on contract value and category of procurement activity, have a high level of complexity which necessitates commensurate high levels of SPU resource commitment. Even after SPU involvement, the progress path is not always smooth, with some schools pausing projects and others disengaging entirely for whatever reasons. The majority, however, reflected in the totals above, result in good procurement outcomes.

## Other activities in 2022

- Reform of the service delivery model
- Developed new suite of tender templates to simplify the process for schools
- Developed and maintained indicative pricing lists based on the Department's post-primary equipment lists
- Successful delivery of School Payments procurement project
- School MIS procurement project participation
- Primary/Post-Primary Classroom Furniture procurement project participation
- Averaging 35 individual MS Teams consultations per week across 2022
- School Payments/School MIS project meetings participation
- School Furniture meetings participation

## Events / Stakeholder engagement in 2022

- Procurement clinic for JMB member schools, JMB annual conference, April 2022.
- Introduction to the SPU presentation for newly appointed JMB principals and deputies – June and September 2022.
- Presentation at the Education Buildings Conference, November 2022.

## Conclusion

2022 has proven to be another highly effective year for the SPU. The SPU continues to grow its client support base, becoming of greater relevance to schools. The ambition must remain for the unit to be properly constituted to best serve its client schools going forward.

Ronan Farrell  
Director  
Schools Procurement Unit  
April 2023



# Data Protection Report

# Data Protection Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

JMB support to schools is provided through the services of a Data Protection Advisor. Advice on data protection issues is accessible through telephone and email. In addition JMB issues policy templates and bulletins to schools.

### Issues arising

A broad range of data protection queries continues to be referred to JMB, although the past year has seen some adjustments in the frequency with which different issues are arising. The management of Data Subject Access Requests (DSARs) has emerged as the most frequent reason for schools to seek advice from JMB (accounting for 39% of all queries to the Data Protection Advisor), a statistic that probably reflects the complexities that can arise when a DSAR response is being prepared. In contrast questions related to personal data breaches (prompting 13% of all queries to JMB) were down on previous years. Interestingly, these statistics are broadly in line with those recorded by the Data Protection Commission. The DPC's 2022 report showed a decline in the number data breaches reports it received as the supervisory authority for Ireland. It also confirmed that Access Requests are the most common source of complaint to the DPC, accounting for 42% of the total received nationally.

The other two areas that were most likely to prompt schools to contact JMB for data protection advice were "data sharing" queries (13% of total) and "video/CCTV" queries (11% of total). It is worth noting that the deployment of

CCTV in schools receives fairly regular attention on an ongoing basis from the Irish Data Protection Commission. It is also an area that has been targeted for policy review by JMB in 2023.

In previous years JMB lobbied for the provision of a dedicated channel for relaying school take-down requests to social media companies and a more rapid removal of online content. This past year saw additional supports put in place (through the anti-bullying centre based in DCU) which appear to have expedited the take-down of inappropriate online content. This area of social media misuse accounted for some 5% of queries to JMB during the past year.

Other referral issues include:

- Dealing with data sharing requests from law enforcement bodies
- Data sharing with other controllers (other schools, colleges, DE, HSE, etc)
- Appropriate retention periods and erasure of personal data
- Use of school Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Sharing data with Parents' and Past Pupils' Associations
- Third Party Contracts
- Guidance on processing of Special Category Data (counselling, health data, SEN etc)
- Processing of personal data for school events (school reunions etc)
- Technical and Organisational Measures for data security

## Data Protection Training

The JMB's Data Protection Advisor is available to deliver GDPR training to schools. This training most frequently takes the form of a one hour presentation highlighting data protection issues that are relevant to the staff body as a whole, emphasizing particularly the principles of data security, data retention and data minimisation, as well as how to recognise and deal with Data Subject Access Requests and Personal Data Breaches.

Other training provided on request to schools has addressed the specific GDPR needs of particular school groups such as school administration staff, and senior management teams. Most recently a webinar was hosted for members of boards of management and a recording of this is now available on demand from the JMB website alongside other data protection resources for schools.

## Other engagements

JMB continues to engage with other stakeholders where it believes that this will be of benefit to member schools. In previous years this has included expressing support for a proposed Online Safety Act and a new regulator with the power to order internet and social media firms to take down content that breaches agreed codes of conduct. JMB welcomes the fact that the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 has now been signed into law establishing a regulatory framework for online safety, overseen by an Online Safety Commissioner. The newly appointed Commissioner has been given powers under the Act to introduce an individual complaints mechanism on a phased basis, focusing initially on children.

**Cyril Drury**  
(JMB Data Protection Advisor)  
April 2023



# School Buildings Projects Advisory Report

Like

# School Building Projects Advisory Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

The School Building Projects Advisory Service was set up in June 2014. The principal aim of the service is to provide a support for principals and boards of management in meeting the practical challenges surrounding building projects.

A great number of schools have accessed the service over the past nine years, many of them on multiple occasions.

Due to Covid restrictions, visits to schools continued to be curtailed during 2022 but online meetings became much more common.

### Expansion of the Service

Such as been the expansion of the advisory service, the Department of Education agreed in late 2021 to fund its expansion by supporting JMB with the appointment of two School Building Officers. Following a recruitment process, Mr Tom Shannon and Mr Michael Cregan joined the service in April 2022.

The service includes the following:

### 1. Supporting schools with the appointment of design teams

- On behalf of boards of management, advertising consultancies on e-Tenders
- Supporting schools in the assessment of tenders
- Drafting the formal appointment documentation
- Preparing for and facilitating the initial meetings of new design teams with clients
- Working with school boards of management and Department officials, facilitating the progress of projects through the design process, dealing with problems and delays as they arise
- During the past year, JMB, at the request of the Department of Education, has been actively assisting the boards of management of over 28 secondary schools and 86 primary schools with the appointment of full design teams for Additional Accommodation projects valued at between €1m and €10m. This assistance to schools now forms a significant part of the service's work.

- JMB is acting as *Project Executive* for two major capital projects. We are responsible for the progression of the projects through the design stages and for the financial administration of the projects. Both projects are progressing well. In addition, JMB is actively supporting four other major projects where the local board of management is the client.
- In addition, JMB continues to assist many schools that have been approved for additional accommodation or 'small works' of values less than €1 million.
- The provision of SEN bases has been a priority for the Department of Education during the past year and JMB has supported this initiative. During the spring of 2023, the Department set up a special internal section on the provision of modular accommodation and the reconfiguration of existing accommodation.

## 2. School visits and advising on the possibilities for future development

The needs of schools differ. The visits are aimed at assisting school management identify the physical needs of the school, often in the context of a review of its curricular provision.

## 3. Assisting with and reviewing applications for:

- Emergency Works
- Additional Accommodation

## 4. Summer Works Scheme 2019 - 2022

A multi-annual Summer Works Scheme was announced in March 2019. Applications for this scheme closed in June 2019 and the first set of projects were approved in December 2019. A second set of projects for the refurbishment of toilets was announced in December 2020 and a further set of 93 projects was announced in January 2022. However, there has been no announcement of further Summer Works approvals during the past year.

## 5. PE Halls

Three years ago, JMB welcomed the commitment of Government in the National Development Plan to a '*PE build and modernisation programme*'. The plan states that this will ensure "*that students in all post-primary schools have access to appropriate facilities to support PE provision, particularly also in the context of the roll-out of PE as a Leaving Certificate subject. Enhanced and modernised PE facilities will also provide important amenities for local communities*". However, we still wait for implementation of this aspect of the plan.

## 6. Collaboration with the School Building Unit

- Meetings with senior officials continued during the year and now take place on a monthly basis.
- Ongoing representations also continued to be made to the Building Unit on behalf of schools. JMB greatly welcomes the assistance of Department officials in this respect.

## 7. Finally

It has been a pleasure to assist so many of our schools over the past year. The commitment and dedication of school management to modernise their school buildings for the benefit of their students and staff is to be highly commended. We also wish to acknowledge the support of the outgoing General Secretary, Mr John Curtis, and also that of the President and Council, the board of the Secretariat and the staff of Emmet House for the service.

Michael Cregan

Tom Shannon

Noel Merrick

April 2023



# Child Protection and Garda Vetting Report

# Child Protection and Garda Vetting Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### Child Protection High Level Independent Review of the Department of Education's Current Policies and Processes

A review of the Child Protection Procedures for primary and post-primary schools has been initiated by the Department of Education. To this end the Department engaged an expert from Northern Ireland to examine the current procedures and to make recommendations. A number of recommendations are now being considered. The Department is consulting with all stakeholders, including JMB and the other management bodies, to consider the recommendations. JMB is represented in the High-Level Independent Review process by Gerry McCaul who has brought our schools' perspective to the table. All elements of the procedures are being reviewed, including the Child Protection Oversight Report. The review is well advanced and it is hoped that a revised CPP will be published in the near future.

### Child Protection in Schools with Boarding Facilities

The Department has been developing *Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023*. These incorporate revision to the mandatory template for Safeguarding

Statements and Risk Assessments for schools with boarding facilities. JMB boarding schools have been involved in the process from the beginning, with JMB represented on the Expert Group by Audrey O'Byrne, principal of Rockwell College. Howard Welch, principal of The Royal and Prior School in Raphoe, is also on the Expert Group. Jack Cleary represents JMB on the group.

Inspection of boarding facilities by the DE inspectorate is being introduced as part of this process. A number of our schools participated in pilot inspections and these have informed the DE in designing the *Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools*.

The *Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023* and the *Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities* will be published very shortly and will be available on the gov.ie website.

The final part of this process is to provide CPD on the procedures and the inspection model. All our schools with boarding facilities have been invited to the CPD to be delivered by the inspectorate on 21 April. PDST are currently developing a CPD webinar on the procedures which is expected to be available

immediately after the Easter school holidays. A link to this webinar will be sent to schools, once it is available to view, along with a link to download the *Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023* and the *Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities*.

The cooperation of our schools has been central to this process and has been greatly appreciated by the DE.

## Garda Vetting for Exchange Visits

A notable development in the vetting process this year has been the very substantial increase in the number of schools engaging in student exchange visits. This has resulted in a big increase in the applications to vet persons over the age of 16 in our host families. For the most part this has proceeded well. The vetting personnel in JMB greatly appreciate the work done in schools to conduct this process.

An important issue that arose this year relates to the steps taken by our schools to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of our students when they are hosted abroad. Some difficulty has been encountered when one exchange school in another jurisdiction was asked to have their families get police clearance for the purpose of hosting a student. A message for all schools planning exchange visits is to engage with the counterpart school at the start of the planning of the exchange to identify any difficulties that may arise, some of which may relate to different legal requirements in other jurisdictions. JMB is ready to advise boards and principals should they encounter difficulties.

## The Vetting Process

The national Vetting Bureau recently advised that 549,000 applications were processed by them in 2022. A consequence has been that the average turnaround time is now 9 working days. NVB personnel are working seven days a week to cope with the volume of applications. The NVB has also reminded us that *'unfortunately, we are not in a position to prioritise any organisation above another, as the legislation applies to all organisations.'* We understand that this can be challenging for schools who may need to appoint personnel at short notice or where TY applicants may not reach 16 years of age until late in the school year. Nevertheless, we need to cooperate with the NVB which provides us with a service of the highest professional standard.

In order to assist schools and conscious that the personnel in schools who process vetting applications change frequently, we recently sent a 6 page document entitled Garda Vetting Process to all schools. The document is designed in such a way as to enable personnel involved in the different types of application to be provided with the relevant section. Secretarial staff can consult the Staff Forms section while TY or LCA coordinators can consult the TY/LCA Forms section. The overall Garda Vetting Process is set out in another section. Additionally, JMB re-launched the webinar on garda vetting which can be accessed on [jmb.ie](http://jmb.ie) as required.

## Need to Comply with Vetting Legislation

Schools are reminded that to employ or place a person in the school without first obtaining a vetting disclosure is a breach of the legislation. A small number of situations came

to light recently where schools had to extricate themselves from difficult predicaments in this regard. Schools are also reminded that Statutory Declarations are required **in addition to and not in substitution for** vetting disclosures before persons can start work in the school.

## Vetting Personnel in JMB

Patricia Higgins is the Assistant General Secretary to whom vetting personnel report. Since Patricia's appointment she has made significant improvements to the section. The processing of applications is proceeding efficiently. Many thanks are due to Patricia, to Cathy Glavey, our office manager, to Ewa Lichnerowicz, Jennifer McManus and Teresa Madden who help greatly when their other duties allow, and to our most recent appointee, Zilma Bezerra. Particular thanks are due to our recently retired General Secretary, John Curtis, who has always been a great support of the vetting process and of the vetting personnel.

Jack Cleary,  
April 2023



# Communications Report

# Communications Report

## AMCSS/JMB 36th Annual Conference 2023

### JMB Bulletins 2022– 2023

- Bulletin 01** Composite
1. New Circulars on Parent's Leave for Teachers and SNAs
  2. School Management Advisor
  3. JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023
- Bulletin 02** Composite
1. Boards of Management
  2. A Manual for Boards of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (2021 Edition)
- Bulletin 03** Composite
1. Leaving Certificate 2022 – Important Information in Advance of the Issue of the Provisional Results
  2. Deputy President AMCSS/JMB
- Bulletin 04** Composite
1. Croke Park Hours and Circular M58/04 – Teaching Staff
  2. Croke Park Hours and June Working – SNAs
- Bulletin 05** Guidelines for the implementation of the compulsory supervision and substitution scheme in each school
- Bulletin 06** Composite
1. Updated Inspectorate Policy Documents, SSE Circular 2022-2026, and Revised 'Looking at our School'
  2. JMB Representatives to Three NCCA Senior Cycle Development Groups
- Bulletin 07** Composite
1. School Immunisation Programme
  2. Biennial Review - Middle Leadership and Management



- Bulletin 08** Composite
1. Supporting Ukrainian Students and their Families
  2. Consultation on the Draft Updated Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE specification
  3. Catholic Schools - Online Survey of RE Teachers
- Bulletin 09** Composite
1. Information Regarding Covid-19
  2. Information and Support regarding pupils/students from Ukraine
- Bulletin 10** Minister Foley announces adjustments to 2023 State Examinations
- Bulletin 11** Return of the JMB Mindfulness Programme for 2022/23
- Bulletin 12** Composite
1. Filling leadership and management posts
  2. Assessment of Education Needs under the Disability Act 2005
  3. SNAs – Use of the 72 hours as provided for in Circular Letter 0071/2011
- Bulletin 13** Information Note TC 0009/2022 Revision of Salaries and Annual Leave arrangements for School Secretaries employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools
- Bulletin 14** Composite
1. Information Note - Temporary lifting of restrictions in Career Break Scheme
  2. Ukrainian Students Travelling on School Tours / Study Trips
  3. Additional SET allocation by NCSE to schools
  4. Amendment to Circular 0003/2018, Leadership and Management in Post Primary Schools
- Bulletin 15** Composite
1. ESRI / JMB Research Study: 'Exploring the Value of the Voluntary Secondary Sector in Irish Education'
  2. Catholic schools: Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) seminar and information
- Bulletin 16** Composite
1. Background Paper and Brief for the Redevelopment of Senior Cycle SPHE
  2. Junior Cycle Examination Results 2022
- Bulletin 17** Composite
1. October Returns
  2. Final date for the appointment of permanent and regular part-time (RPT) teachers for the school year 2022/23
  3. Nursing Pilot Scheme for Children with Complex Healthcare needs
  4. Summer Programmes 2023

# Communications Report

- Bulletin 18** JMB Job Vacancy: General Secretary
- Bulletin 19** Catholic Schools: Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) Resources
- Bulletin 20** Composite
1. Teaching Hours Extension Scheme 2022/2023
  2. Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs at Post- Primary Level
- Bulletin 21** Composite
1. Guidance to Schools Regarding the use of Physical Fitness Testing in Physical Education lessons
  2. Enhancement to Irish Sign Language (ISL) Scheme
  3. Senior Cycle SPHE Consultation
  4. Graduate Diploma in SPHE and RSE 2023
- Bulletin 22** Inspectorate evaluation of Special Classes
- Bulletin 23** Admission Policies of all schools
- Bulletin 24** Important update re Bulletin 23 – Required Changes to Admission Policies
- Bulletin 25** Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying
- Bulletin 26** Leaving Certificate Oral Language Examinations in 2023
- Bulletin 27** Increase in viral infections and Group A Strep infection
- Bulletin 28** Changes to Bereavement Leave for teachers and SNAs
- Bulletin 29** Seniority List for Redeployment Purposes
- Bulletin 30** Appointment of New General Secretary
- Bulletin 31** Composite
1. Department Updates on the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle in 2022/2023
  2. State Examinations Commission: Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations; Acceptance of Coursework; Recruitment of Examiners
  3. Upskilling Programmes for Post Primary Teachers
  4. Training and Events Update
  5. Christmas Arrangements for the Secretariat of Secondary Schools



- Bulletin 32** Composite
1. State Examinations Commission: Timetables for 2023
  2. Department of Education Post Primary Survey – REALTs (Regional Education and Language Teams)
  3. Catholic Schools Week 2023
- Bulletin 33** Composite
1. Job-Sharing
  2. Career Breaks
  3. Secondments
- Bulletin 34** Composite
1. A New Integrated Support Service
  2. Finance Seminar
- Bulletin 35** Composite
1. Pilot Voluntary Redeployment Scheme 2023
  2. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN) review
  3. Support for Ukrainian Teachers4.Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS)
- Bulletin 36** Composite
1. Teacher Allocations 2023/2024
  2. Education for Sustainable Development – Call for Participants to the Second-Level Pilot Programme
- Bulletin 37** Composite
1. Teaching Hours Extension Scheme 2022/2023: Additional Hours for Schools
  2. Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement
  3. Student Teacher Availability from MIC Thurles
- Bulletin 38** Composite
1. Examiners / Supervisors for the 2023 State Examinations
  2. Post-Primary Schools' Summer Programme, 2023 - 'Building Confidence and Connections'
  3. Save the date: DEIS Shared Learning Day Webinar – Effective Literacy Strategies - 7th March 2023
- Bulletin 39** Composite
1. Standardisation of the School Year for the years 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26
  2. Review of a Redeployment

## Bulletin 40

### Composite

1. Deferral of planned move of Paper One in Leaving Certificate English and Irish Examinations
2. Establishment of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board
3. Consultation on the Review of the EPSEN Act
4. Post-Graduate Programmes for Special Education Teachers

## Bulletin 41

### Composite

1. Change to the process for allocating SET hours to schools resulting from the Projected Enrolment process 2023/24
2. NCSE Services Evaluation – Have Your Say
3. NCCA Updates – (a) L2LP Progression and (b) JC Gaeilge

## Bulletin 42

### Composite

1. Amendment to the Job-Sharing Scheme for Special Needs Assistants in post-primary schools
2. Ár nAmhrán / Our Anthem – Ireland's 50-year membership of the EU

## Bulletin 43

### Composite

1. Classes for Students with Special Educational Needs due to open in September 2023
2. Anti-Bullying Policy and Review



## JMB Submissions 2022-2023

- Submission 01** JMB Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in Irish Education
- Submission 02** JMB Submission on the Review of the EPSEN Act (2004)
- Submission 03** JMB Submission on the National Framework for Guidance
- Submission 04** Post Primary Management Representative Group Submission to the Minister of Education on the Expansion to Post Primary of the Pilot Scheme for Student Emotional Therapeutic Supports
- Submission 05** JMB Submission on a New National Strategy on Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy
- Submission 06** JMB Submission to the NCCA on the Background Paper and Brief for the Development of Senior Cycle SPHE
- Submission 07** Submission to the Department of Education on Expanding JMB Service Provision to Voluntary Secondary School Management
- Submission 08** JMB Submission to the State Examinations Commission on the Development of their Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027
- Submission 09** JMB Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Issue of 'Mental Health Supports in Schools'
- Submission 10** JMB Submission to the NCCA on the Draft Specification for Junior Cycle SPHE
- Submission 11** JMB Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Issue of 'Mental Health Supports in Schools'
- Submission 12** JMB Submission to the Department of Education on Transition Year within a Reconfigured Senior Cycle
- Submission 13** JMB Pre-Budget Submission 2023

## FSSU Guidelines 2022-2023

Financial Guideline 01	Return of Unspent Covid-19 Funding 21/222
Financial Guideline 02	Important Dates for 2022/2023 School Year
Financial Guideline 03	Annual VAT Return of Trading Details (RTD)
Financial Guideline 04	Revised Travel & Subsistence Expenses
Financial Guideline 06	Financial Year End 2021/2022 for VS Schools
Financial Guideline 08	External School Accountants Guideline 2022
Financial Guideline 09	Revised Chart of Accounts-September 2022
Financial Guideline 10	Covid Funding for Term 1 2022/2023
Financial Guideline 11	Repeat of Leaving Certificate Course Fees
Financial Guideline 12	Supervision & Substitution Payments 22/23
Financial Guideline 14	Charities Regulator Requirements for Schools
Financial Guideline 15	Government Budget Summary 2023
Financial Guideline 16	Public Holidays 2023
Financial Guideline 17	Once-Off Cost of Living Grant
Financial Guideline 19	Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC)
Financial Guideline 20	Electronic Banking – Important Security Advice
Financial Guideline 22	Statutory Sick Leave Pay Scheme
Financial Guideline 23	Grants payable to Non-Fee Paying Voluntary Secondary Schools School year 2022/2023
Financial Guideline 24	Payment Arrangements for School Appointed Personnel for SEC Examinations
Financial Guideline 25	Covid-19 Capitation Grant Funding for Term 2 2022/2023
Financial Guideline 29	Summer Programme 2023 School Based Programme in Post-Primary Schools
Financial Guideline 30	VAT Compensation Scheme for Charities

