

# ACCS

## Newsletter Nuachtiris

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail is Cuimsitheacha Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

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## Announcement of New General Secretary

The Executive of ACCS is pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Eileen Salmon to the position of General Secretary designate of ACCS. Eileen's appointment was ratified at the ACCS Executive meeting held on 5th March. Eileen will take up the appointment on 1st September 2014. Eileen has acted as Assistant General Secretary of ACCS for the past three years and was previously the Principal of Coolmine Community School. On behalf of the President and the ACCS Executive I would like to wish Eileen every success on her appointment and wish her well in her new position.

Ciarán Flynn,  
General Secretary, ACCS



## Education Conference 2014 Theme: Implementation of Junior Cycle 2014

Hodson Bay Hotel, February 5, 2014.

Given the turmoil in schools prior to the Christmas holidays, and the further changes to the Junior Cycle Framework announced on 17 January 2014, the Education Committee debated whether this was the right time for an Education Conference. The number of delegates who registered to attend, (over 140) confirmed that it was the right time!

Eileen Salmon, Assistant General Secretary of ACCS, outlined the changes to the Junior Cycle Framework and indicated that the pace of curriculum change had slowed down. Following considerable pressure from the Management Bodies the DES conceded a full day's whole school CPD each year while the Junior Cycle Framework is being introduced. Schools can now concentrate on whole school developments in the coming year without the pressure to make major changes to their time-tables.

Dr. Mark Fennell, Education Consultant made an inspiring presentation on three interconnected themes. Firstly he conceptualised a framework for aligning the three key curricular initiatives of Literacy and Numeracy (L&N), School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and the Junior Cycle Framework (JCF). Mark compared the commencement of these major initiatives to three ships being launched and making a convoy out at sea. SSE is the tool that schools can use to implement JCF and L&N, and schools have a great deal of choice in how to use it. He indicated that the JCF is the focus of school improvement in Ireland and that early secondary educational change is also the focus of educational reform worldwide. Literacy and Numeracy are the core learning priorities within and alongside this reform. Mark felt that the 2012 PISA results have allowed a collective sigh-of-relief regarding L&N and the improvements in our performance in the latest tests have reduced our anxiety and allowed perspective back into our education system.

Mark's second theme was to illustrate a plan for an aligned approach to these initiatives. He outlined a sample 'roadmap' for the years 2013 – 2016. Finally, Mark spoke about building capacity in planning and professional learning. The essential requirement for success in bringing about a professional learning community in any school is an empowered and collaborative staff. Schools need to build initiatives together. Schools need to shift from being passive. Each school needs to learn more, be more knowledgeable.

Delegates felt encouraged and enlightened by Mark's presentation and it proved the ideal introduction to the input from our Network Schools. Áine Ó Sullivan, Principal of Ashbourne Community School and an Associate with the JCT (Junior Cycle Team) led a two hour session titled 'First Steps' on how implementation of the JCF could happen in our schools.

Áine reminded us about why we have to change teaching and learning. She quoted Mark Hederan from 'Boy in the Bubble' (and encouraged us all to read the book) who says "An education based on memory presumes that the future will be more of the present". The vision of the NCCA in respect of the JCF is that "The Junior Cycle places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives." Áine encouraged schools to embed key skills in the classrooms, for teachers to open their classrooms to each other. "The Junior Cycle is about what is happening in your classroom."

Cahil Doherty, Principal of St. Louis Community School, Kiltimagh, described what was happening slowly but surely in his school. "It is a H&S issue, that is Hearts and Souls!" For Cahil it was moving from "deciding to doing". The school community has started implementing changes in



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ACCS: 10H Centrepoint Business Park,  
Oak Drive, Dublin 12.  
Tel: 01 460 1150 Fax: 01 460 1203  
E-mail: [office@accs.ie](mailto:office@accs.ie)  
Website: [www.accs.ie](http://www.accs.ie)



Delegates enjoying the Education Conference

what is happening in the classrooms, embedding key skills, group work, becoming confident in opening up their classrooms to other teachers and having professional conversations about teaching and learning. Cahil's very frank description of his own journey with his staff was a great encouragement to all delegates.

Suzanne McMahon, a teacher in Ashbourne Community School (and a role model for devolved leadership!) explained how she was doing research in formative and summative assessment and trialling these methods very successfully with her own students. This research could inform and advance a different assessment model for in-school assessment into the future.

Donal O'Mahony, a teacher from Portmarnock Community School, brought delegates through his school's experience in Short Courses development. His enthusiasm for the benefits to students from experiencing a different type of teaching and learning coupled with his very practical experience in how these courses can be time-tabled was an inspiration and encouragement to all. This was the first time that delegates had seen Short Courses in action.

Áine summed up this session on the range of experiences presented to delegates by reassuring them that a lot is happening in schools already, schools should adapt what they are doing to fit in with the key skills of the JCF. For success the JCF needs to have "Leaders of schools and Leaders in schools".

The final presenter of the day was Dr. Pádraig Kirk, Director of CPD of the JCF. Pádraig gave a very clear and concise outline of the JCF programme from 2014 – 2022.



Key Skills in action in Kiltimagh - Mr. Cahil Doherty, Principal of St. Louis Community School with students.

He indicated that in 2016 there would be a review of how the JCF was working and the pace of change at that stage could increase or decrease depending on the outcome of the review. Pádraig encouraged delegates to take full advantage of all the CPD that was on offer while acknowledging that there would inevitably be disruption in schools while teachers were attending CPD. The Chairperson of the Education Committee, James Duignan acknowledged the sincere and straightforward input from Pádraig.

The feedback received by the Education Committee was very positive. Delegates found the day very helpful and felt that it gave them a renewed impetus and ideas to 'kick-start' the JCF back in their own schools. This year the Education Committee encouraged schools to bring along staff members who were interested in the JCF. This proved to be an excellent opportunity for these delegates to see how they could lead reform in their own schools and their enthusiastic feedback indicated that devolved leadership is ready and waiting in our schools.

The following presentations are available on the ACCS website: [www.accs.ie](http://www.accs.ie)

- Cahil Doherty presentation on Key Skills
- Mark Fennell presentation "Only connect"
- Pádraig Kirk presentation on CPD & changes to JCF
- Donal O'Mahony presentation on Experience of Short Courses
- Áine O'Sullivan presentation "First Steps"
- Eileen Salmon presentation on Junior Cycle Changes January 14

## How is your Health and Wellbeing?

The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) in association with Dr. Phillip Riley of Monash University in Melbourne is conducting an independent in depth research project on the current health and well-being of Irish School Leaders in second level schools.

Principals and Deputy Principals are faced with many stressors. There are concerns that the increasing complexity and workload demands on school leaders is impacting on health and well-being. This research is an attempt to establish the true facts and influence policy makers and employers as well as lobby the relevant organisations for greater support, understanding and professional development for Irish school leaders.

Please take the time to participate in this important research as the results could have a significant impact on future policy developments and working conditions for school leaders. Research will be carried out over a five year period so that a

solid trend can be established.

We need the support of as many Principals and Deputy Principals as possible.

Please go to [www.principalhealth.org](http://www.principalhealth.org) and click the symbol of the Irish flag.

There are questions on 42 areas of occupational health and safety. The survey is confidential and independent. On completion of the survey you will receive confidential individual feedback. School leaders can monitor their own health, safety and well-being over a five year period. This form of reporting is considered best practise.

We need a high participation level to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Survey closes on 18th April 2014.

Further information is available from the Health and welfare committee at [www.napd.ie](http://www.napd.ie) or you can contact Dr. Phillip Riley or Dr. Aimee Maxwell at [www.principalhealth.org](http://www.principalhealth.org)

# Resources for Schools on Anti-Bullying

Schools are currently developing and formally adopting an anti-bullying policy which fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as outlined in Circular Letter 45/13.

The following comments and resources may support schools as they work towards completing the requirements of the procedures.

- Comment on procedures by Dr. Brendan Byrne
- PDST notice on CPD and supports
- BeLonG To Education Packs
- ISPCG Shield Campaign

## Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools September 2013

### Comment: Dr. Brendan Byrne

*Dr. Brendan Byrne is a former Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Home School Co-ordinator and Principal. He has written extensively on bullying and is an accredited Psychotherapist.*



Dr. Brendan Byrne

The procedures are to be welcomed, because after a very long wait, schools now have concrete direction about how they should prevent and tackle bullying. While most of the issues are dealt with clearly there are areas which may cause difficulty.

1.1.2 states that 'Parents and pupils have a particularly important role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere'. It may be very difficult to determine what that negative impact is and to decide the parameters for a school in dealing with that impact. This may be particularly relevant in the case of cyber bullying where the actual incidents will usually have happened outside the school building and school hours. It highlights the importance of a statement in 6.3.5 'In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí etc'. The reference to the Gardaí is of particular significance, especially in the case of cyber bullying.

A second area of difficulty may relate to the 'relevant' teacher in dealing with bullying. In 6.8.3 it says that 'At post-primary level, the school will determine, having regard to its own circumstances, which members of teaching staff have this responsibility'. The following paragraph says 'it is not necessary to specify the relevant teacher(s) by name in the policy so long as it is made sufficiently clear to all which teachers in the school have this responsibility'. How is 'sufficiently clear to all' to be defined?

From 6.8.9 it is clear that in investigating and dealing with bullying the relevant teacher has significant responsibility. The teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. It is well documented that it can be very difficult to prove bullying e.g. looks, rumours. There is also an onus on the teacher to investigate and deal with all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying. The teacher has responsibility for interviewing pupils, contacting parents if they consider it appropriate but most of all for making a judgement as to whether or not bullying has taken place and who was responsible. The teacher is then required to attempt to restore relationships.

All of this highlights the importance of fully resourced supports for schools. Reference is made to an anti-bullying website, NEPS and the NEWB. One of the worst aspects of bullying is the loneliness. It would be wrong if the relevant teachers were also to feel this.

The procedures note that a programme of support for pupils who have been bullied must be in place (6.8.15) 'Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed'. In the context of the changed role of guidance counsellors as a result of no longer being ex quota members of staff, this seems ironic.

## CPD on the Anti-Bullying Procedures

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in consultation with other support services is planning a phased approach to the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and support for schools following the publication of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (DES, 2013) and with reference to Circular 045/2013 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools'.

The first phase of this support will comprise provision of a set of online interactive presentations and resources combined with the delivery of workshops at local level. Both the online supports and the workshops will be based on the Anti-Bullying Procedures and will aim to support schools in the development of policy.

The online supports will be available on the PDST website from the end of February 2014. Schools can access the interactive presentations and resources to facilitate those who wish to avail of online support. Schools can use it in a variety of ways e.g. informing staff and Boards of Managements on the Anti-Bullying Procedures, providing supporting material for policy development, providing a focus for whole-staff review of Anti-Bullying Procedures etc.

Workshops will be provided in collaboration with the local Education Centre. The purpose of these workshops will be to provide an overview of the revised procedures and to support staffs in the development of a policy. One member of staff, preferably the Principal is invited to attend.

The content of the workshop and the online resources will be very similar so Principals may choose to attend the workshop or alternatively to access the on-line support which will be available to all staff members. In the next school year it is planned to support to staffs in the area of awareness-raising and prevention and intervention strategies.

## BeLonG To Education Packs

While the 5th Annual - Stand Up! Awareness Week against Homophobic & Transphobic Bullying took place from 10th to 14th March 2014, Education Packs were sent to schools in February 2014 containing very useful videos and activity guides.

Stand Up! is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and endorsed by the education partners to tackle homophobic & transphobic bullying by building friendship between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) pupils and other young people.

Stand Up! is very useful in helping schools to meet the DES's new *Anti-Bullying Procedures*, which require schools to develop anti-bullying policies - including prevention strategies - by early 2014.

The DES *Anti-Bullying Procedures* include the following points:

- LGBT students are among the 'more vulnerable pupils' (p. 14.)
- Prevention should specifically address homophobic and transphobic bullying (p.6.)
- Positive school climates (p. 21-27) should be encouraged by, e.g. 'open dialogue' across school communities, awareness-raising, and 'specific statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the school community' (p. 26), etc.

For more information see: [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

## Resources for Schools on Anti-Bullying



Stand Up! at the launch of LGBT Awareness Week against homophobic & transphobic bullying were:

L-R: Dr. Carol-Anne O'Brien, Advocacy Co-ordinator BeLonG To; Mr. Ciarán Flynn, General Secretary ACCS; Cllr. Anna Quigley, Chairperson BeLonG To; Mr. Clive Byrne, Director NAPD; Mr. David Carroll, Director BeLonG To; Mr. Jerry Buttimer, TD; Mr. Michal Barron, Founding Director BeLonG To.

The ISPCC Shield Campaign has a high profile and very useful resources. There are a number of components to this campaign including:

- A national media campaign endorsed by their celebrity Ambassadors to raise awareness of the issue of bullying. Last year they had the support of One Direction, Gary Barlow, Emeli Sande, Colin Farrell and Saoirse Ronan just to name a few!
- 'Shield My School' Programme – a self-evaluation tool developed for schools to help them to identify how effective they are in dealing with, and responding to incidences of bullying within the school and broader school community environment. This toolkit is based on evidence from international research. This toolkit is free and available to download from the website [www.ispcc.ie/toolkit](http://www.ispcc.ie/toolkit)
- Online Bullying Support service - a live one-to-one text messaging support service for children and young people affected by bullying. By texting the word 'Bully' to 50101 a young person from anywhere in Ireland can avail of this



free confidential service. This service is available from 10am – 10pm every day

- "Stand Up" – Bullying Report Tool - an innovative online based bullying report tool for schools
- Shield Flag Award Scheme for Schools - an award scheme to publically recognise the efforts of schools who are taking a positive proactive approach to bullying
- Shield Campaign Youth Award – a prestigious award open to Transition Year Students which will find them competing in an "Apprentice Style" finale in an exclusive board room in the heart of Dublin's financial district on Friday 9th May
- Follow up supports - a suite of supports being offered to schools following the completion of the self-assessment toolkit including bullying outreaches, information evenings for schools/teachers/parents and support and input around developing anti-bullying policies
- ISPCC Shield - available for €2 nationwide to raise awareness and funds for the ISPCC Anti-Bullying work.

### For the attention of 'out-of-field' Post-Primary Teachers of Mathematics

The DES asked ACCS to let our schools know that a third cohort for the two year part-time Professional Diploma in Mathematics for Teaching (Level 8) has been approved.

Consequently the National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning (NCE-MSTL) is in a position to invite applications from eligible teachers.

This programme is jointly accredited by the University of Limerick and NUI Galway. The Teaching Council has confirmed that registered teachers successfully completing the diploma will meet the Teaching Council's requirements for mathematics.

This programme is free to eligible teachers. It is fully funded by the DES as part of the national strategy to support the implementation of Project Maths and improve standards in mathematics education by up skilling out-of-field teachers of mathematics.

This university-accredited Professional Diploma is delivered nationally in blended learning format through local nodes in associate partner institutions located in the regions, in face-to-face and/or on-line modalities. It is also offered through the medium of Irish. (Quotas apply for each region).

Eligible teachers may apply online at: [www.graduateschool.ul.ie](http://www.graduateschool.ul.ie). Applications open from 19th March 2014 until 30th May 2014.

### Circulars in electronic format only

Up until now the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit in the DES have sent any relevant circulars in hard copy to our schools. From now on (March 2014) these circulars will be sent to schools electronically – via esinet.

The circular on prescribed examination material is due to issue. The CAP Unit will send this in hard copy and post a notification on esinet. The next circular after this will only be available electronically.