

# Report from the Teaching Council 2017



AN CHOMHAIRLE MHÚINTEOIREACHTA

*The Teaching Council*

## 1. Part 5 of the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 – Fitness to Teach – commencement as and from 25th July 2016

Part 5 – Fitness to Teach – of the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 commenced on 25th July 2016. The Teaching Council now has the legal authority to investigate complaints made against registered teachers. 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. A number of complaints have been received and are currently being processed. Extensive training has been provided to the staff in the Council's Professional Standards section and also to members of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committees.

The first Fitness to Teach inquiry was held in public (with the names of witnesses anonymised) on Wednesday 8th November.

A number of stakeholder briefings have been held to inform the relevant educational partners of the commencement, provisions and implications of Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act. A substantial Fitness to Teach section has been added to the Teaching Council's website. All teachers and schools/ employers have been notified of the commencement of Fitness to Teach legislation. It is important that school managements respond to correspondence received from the Council's in relation to Fitness to Teach matters.

## 2. Register/Registration

On 27th March 2017 there were 94,928 teachers listed on the register which represents an increase of 3,124 over the previous year. 3,177 new graduates entered the register which is an increase of 1,500 over the previous year. 42,541 are listed under Regulation 4 (Post-Primary) and 9,699 under Regulation 5 (Further Education).

Conditional Registration – notifications are forwarded to teachers registered with conditions due to expire three months in advance of the expiry date. Teachers are generally given three years to address the conditions set out on their registration. A number of teachers have addressed their outstanding conditions and others have requested extensions.

Registration Regulations 2016 – the newly approved Registration Regulations 2016 take account of the changes to the initial teacher education requirements and changes arising from legislative changes (The Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012). This includes retrospective vetting of previously un-vetted teachers and the linking of completion of Garda vetting with renewal of registration.

## 3. Garda Vetting

The Minister for Justice commenced the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 – 2016 on the 29th April 2016. The Act places Garda vetting on a statutory basis for the first time and places a statutory onus on schools as employers to vet all newly appointed teachers. An online vetting applications system and disclosure notification system were rolled out to teachers and applicants for registration following commencement of the Act in April 2016.

The Department of Education and Skills has issued a comprehensive circular (0031/2016) and the Teaching Council has published detailed FAQs for both teachers and schools. The Teaching Council is required to assess any vetting disclosures for suitability for registration. The Evidence of Character Panel conducts these assessments.

In parallel with the commencement of the National Vetting Bureau Act, the Minister for Education and Skills commenced sections of the Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015 which amend section 31 (initial registration) of the Teaching Council Act. The effect of these amendments is to place the Council's role in Garda vetting for both registration and employment of teachers in school purposes on a statutory basis. It is now a legal requirement that teachers who are registering with the Council must complete Garda vetting.

A project to undertake the retrospective vetting of almost 32,000 previously unvetted teachers is now at an advanced stage and is due for completion by the 31st December 2017. In excess of 35,000 teachers have been vetted to date in 2017.

#### **4. Droichead**

- a) Droichead, the induction framework for newly qualified teachers, was approved by the Teaching Council in March 2016, and a number of revisions were made following feedback. The revised policy was published in March 2017. There has been a good take up of Droichead with in excess of 1,100 applications (over 500 from Post-primary) received from teachers by the 24th October 2017 to undertake the programme.
- b) 501 schools had completed Professional Support Training (PST) at the end of the reporting year (27 March 2017).

#### **5. Cosán**

- a) A Cosán Working Group was convened to guide the development of Council policy in the area of CPD.
- b) Over 150 expressions of interest in Cosán were received from teachers and schools during the reporting year.

#### **6. Teacher Supply**

- a) The final report of the Technical Working Group on Teacher Supply in Ireland, 'Striking the Balance' was published on the 9th June 2017 by the Minister for Education and Skills, and is now available on the Teaching Council website.
- b) The Council has convened stakeholder meetings to discuss the many issues relating to teacher supply and to make progress towards resolving matters. The most recent meeting was held on the 5th of October 2017. The stakeholders include representatives from school management bodies, HEIs, unions and principals' associations. The various bodies have been asked to identify short and medium term solutions which will be discussed at the next stakeholder forum in February/March 2018.

#### **7. Other News**

- a) The Teaching Council hosted six research webinars during the year.
- b) Five research ezines were issued to all registered teachers.
- c) The Council's Research Engagement Group met three times.
- d) The Council's Research Support Framework was launched, with an annual budget of €100,000 to support engagement by teachers in and with research.
- e) 31,519 searches were carried out by teachers on EBSCO, the online library of education research journals.
- f) FÉILTE (Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence) had an attendance of over 1,000 people, including teachers and members of the public.
- g) A shared learning day on school placement was held in November 2016 where schools and higher education institutions (HEI's) highlighted innovative practice in supporting students.
- h) A shared learning day on research was held in March 2017 in collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Centre for Effective Services.

*Mr. Ferdia Kelly – November 2017.*