Controlled Schools’ Support Council

**Appointment of directors**

Directors’ information pack for member schools.

**Controlled Schools’ Support Council (CSSC)**

**Directors’ information pack**

This is an exciting and challenging opportunity for outstanding individuals with educational experience, who have the ability to deliver tangible results, work with others, drive the change agenda, and help the Controlled Schools’ Support Council fulfil its ambitions for the future.

**Part 1**

# The organisation – introduction

After a lengthy review of Education Administration in Northern Ireland the Education Act (NI) 2014, which became law in December 2014, provided for the establishment of the Education Authority to replace the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and their Staff Commission with effect from 1 April 2015. The Education Act (NI) 2014 also includes a provision conferring power on the Department to pay grants to anybody recognised by the Department as representing the interests of controlled schools. The Minister and the NI Executive agreed to establish and fund a support body for schools in the controlled sector.

Whilst this centralisation of education administration replaced the five Education and Library Boards, the other Education Sectors continue to maintain their support bodies. It was therefore timely that the controlled sector should also receive such support. Since there was no specific support for the controlled sector in over 30 years there are obvious legacy issues which needed to be addressed especially in the areas of ethos, representation and advocacy.

These legislative changes offered an exciting and challenging opportunity to create a new body which has the potential to play a key role in the further development of the largest sector within the education service in Northern Ireland.

CSSC was set up in September 2016. It seeks to enhance the quality of educational provision within the controlled sector, while working in constructive partnership with the Education Authority, other sectoral bodies and the Department of Education.

CSSC is a voluntary body with charitable status providing services in supporting and representing the controlled schools sector. It is funded by the Department of Education, but may receive funding for specific projects from other sources.

CSSC is a company limited by guarantee and is a charity registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC107873. The Commission has confirmed it is satisfied CSSC is established for charitable purposes only. CSSC’s charitable purposes fall under the following descriptions; ‘the advancement of education’ and ’any other charitable purpose’, and the benefits flowing from your purposes are beneficial to the public in general, or to a sufficient section of the public and are therefore for the public benefit.

Currently 96% of controlled schools are members of CSSC.

The CSSC headquarters is at Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis Road, Belfast.

**The organisation – key functions**

The CSSC seeks to support the interests of schools in the controlled sector through activities which focus on a number of key areas as outlined below. The summary of activities in each area is illustrative and not exclusive.

**Advocacy**

* Fulfilling a representational and advocacy role for the controlled sector
* Responding to consultation exercises from government, the Education Authority and other relevant agencies
* Promoting best practice in the controlled sector
* Acting as point of contact for interested parties and providing comment to the media on issues affecting the controlled sector
* Providing advice and support to controlled schools in responding to consultation on education policies, initiatives and schemes.

**Ethos**

* Working with controlled schools, collectively and individually, to develop, promote and maintain the ethos of the sector
* Providing leadership support in relation to issues of ethos
* Providing support to staff and Governors on Religious Education (RE), ethos and moral/ethical issues.

**Governance**

* Identifying and nominating persons as potential school Governors taking account of the nature and character of the school
* Responding to the Education Authority on proposed appointments to Boards of Governors of controlled schools
* Encouraging appropriate nominees to apply for governorship
* Supporting and training Governors in relation to ethos, RE, collective worship and assemblies
* Providing advice to the Education Authority in the development of draft schemes of management for controlled schools
* Providing advice to schools on schemes of management
* Supporting Governors in the appointment of senior staff by assisting in the training of assessors from an assessor pool.

**Raising Standards**

Working with the Education Authority to support schools in raising standards of school achievement.

**Estate organisation, utilisation and planning**

* Participating in the planning of the schools’ estate
* Supporting the Education Authority in the development of area plans for the controlled schools’ estate in accordance with the vision, ethos and values of the sector
* Responding to consultations on development proposals for changes to school provision.

**External relationships**

* Providing press and media briefing on behalf of the controlled sector
* Developing marketing and public relations on behalf of the controlled sector
* Working and co-operating with the support bodies of other sectors in matters of mutual interest and shared education
* Promoting the controlled sector.

**Business management**

* Acting as employer of staff
* Managing Council business efficiently and effectively
* Ensuring good governance is developed and maintained.

In fulfilling these functions the CSSC acts as a constructive and positive critical friend to controlled schools encouraging them to provide excellence for their pupils and communities.

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**Directors’ information pack**

**Part 2**

# The controlled sector

The origins of the controlled sector began in the early 20th century, when schools managed mainly by the Protestant churches were transferred to the state. Together with schools provided directly by the state, they formed a non-denominational, church-related sector delivering free education for all children irrespective of background. From these beginnings of a historic faith context and a commitment to free public education, today's controlled schools provide for a more pluralist society through a diversity of schools with individual characteristics, but with core values and principles.

In many ways controlled schools are unique. The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 defines a controlled school as ‘a grant aided school under the management of a board’ and the Education Act 2014 maintains this definition. In Schedule 4 of the 1986 Order, controlled schools have particular forms of governing bodies recognising their origins, history and the communities they serve. Article 21 of the 1986 Order defines that a seminal purpose of a controlled school is to deliver ‘un-denominational religious education’ and collective worship which forms a distinctive element of a controlled school’s ethos.

In 2020/21 there were 552 controlled schools within Northern Ireland, which was 49% of all nursery, primary, special and 46,138 post-primary schools. 146,138 pupils attended these controlled schools, which represents 42.5% of all school enrolments in Northern Ireland. These figures demonstrate the scale and nature of the controlled sector, illustrating that it has the largest number and range of schools in Northern Ireland, with the greatest number of Governors and a wide range of pupils.

**Table 1: Pupil numbers in controlled schools 2020/21**

| **School sector** | **School nos.** | **Percentage** | **Pupil nos.** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nursery** | 64 | (11.6%) | 4,110 | (2.8%) |
| **Primary** | 383 | (69.3%) | 87,737 | (60.0%) |
| **Secondary** | 53 | (9.6%) | 33,786 | (23.1%) |
| **Grammar** | 16 | (2.8%) | 14,511 | (9.9%) |
| **Special** | 39 | (7.1%) | 5,994 | (4.2%) |
| **Totals** | **552** | **49.4%**  of all schools | **146,138** | **42.5%**  of all pupils |

The modern controlled sector is a large, diverse and inclusive education system which is:

* church related
* diverse in provision and governance
* inclusive in making provision for children and young people from all backgrounds
* aspirational in seeking to provide the best possible education.

The controlled schools in Northern Ireland are owned and managed by the Education Authority. The Education Authority has a unique dual role, on the one hand they were closely associated with the controlled sector through ownership of premises and management, and on the other hand they had a duty to all sectors in making educational provision and support. The tensions between these roles means that the Education Authority are unable to act as advocates for the controlled sector solely or to represent that sector exclusively.

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**Directors’ information pack**

**Part 3**

# The role of the Council director

As a nominee for director of the Council, you will be one of 13 directors who will have collective oversight of the body and play a key role in its corporate governance. You will be required to act as a charity trustee and are not prevented from doing so under section 86 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. It is hoped that your practical experience will inform debate and discussion and provide valuable insights into key issues as the Council moves forward.

The Board of Directors shall be constituted as follows:

* one director elected by those Members representing nursery schools
* one director elected by those Members representing special schools
* one director elected by those Members representing secondary schools
* one director elected by those Members representing grammar schools
* two directors elected by those representing primary schools
* three representatives of Transferors’ Representative Council
* four directors who have expertise of assistance to the charity, provided that no such director shall be employed in the public sector but shall be supportive of the aims and objectives of the controlled sector.

The Council includes a number of sub-committees and directors may serve on one or more of these. The Chief Executive, leads a team of approximately 18 full-time equivalent professional and administrative staff, who report to the Council on a regular basis.

The functions and operations of organisations, whether they be public, private or voluntary, are under increasing scrutiny by the media, by Government or by the public at large and the Council is seeking to ensure that its directors are well placed to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively.

**Functions and duties**

The Council directors will be expected to:

* focus on issues of governance by:
  + working with the Chief Executive, under the leadership of the Chair to agree strategic goals and objectives for the Council
  + examining the impact of the Council’s work and progress towards goals and objectives
  + monitoring key performance indicators on a regular basis
  + defining delegated authorities
  + setting objectives for, and appraising the performance of the Chief Executive
* regularly attend and take an active part in Council and Committee meetings. Currently Council meetings are monthly and Committee meetings bi-monthly but a new schedule may be agreed by the new Council once constituted
* debate issues with other directors and members of the Council’s Senior Management Team in a manner that encourages others to participate and shows respect for, if not agreement with, their views
* recognise that although they may challenge, debate and express dissent during Council discussions, they are bound by collective decisions made by the Council and as such should not express contrary views outside of that forum while remaining a director
* maintain confidentiality on sensitive and restricted information
* analyse information and when necessary challenge constructively
* participate in training events as far as is practicable
* respect the boundaries between executive and governance functions
* avoid behaviour which is likely to undermine the authority of the management team or be interpreted by staff as involvement with operational matters or undermining the role of the Chief Executive. This could include:
  + giving instructions to members of Council staff
  + providing feedback to members of staff on the performance of their duties
* participate in reviews of the Council’s performance
* notify the Chair, as soon as practicable, of their involvement with any event or activity outside of their activities for or on behalf of the Council which could negatively impact on the Council’s reputation by association
* notify the Chair of any activities that may cause a conflict of interest and withdraw from that part of the meeting
* ensure that the Council’s activities are within the law and that it meets its charitable objectives.

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**Directors’ information pack**

**Part 4**

# Criteria for appointment

* A director must be a natural person aged 18 years or older
* No one may be appointed a director if he or she would be disqualified from acting under the provisions of Section 39 of the Companies Act 2006 or section 86 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

As a nominee for appointment as a director your name will be placed before an Annual General Meeting of the Council as a company limited by guarantee.

The election of a director of CSSC will be based upon a written submission which should outline, in not more than 300 words, the nominee’s suitability to act as a director.

In particular nominees should highlight their skills and experience which enable them to meet the following criteria:

**Essential criteria**

**Experience of governance:** Provide evidence of experience of governance in the public sector, community and voluntary sector, or private sector, including: a) holding executive teams to account for delivery of results; and b) previous membership of a board/committee which has responsibility for policy decisions; or c) knowledge and experience of strategic management within a corporate environment.

**Strategic thinking:** Provide evidence of a proven ability to influence the strategic direction of an organisation and of contributing to policy making at a sectoral, regional or national level.

**Knowledge of education in Northern Ireland:** Provide evidence of knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the local education system and the place of the controlled sector within it.

**Interpersonal skills:** Provide evidence of proven ability to develop and maintain co-operative working relationships to achieve high standards of service and results.

**Commitment to the controlled sector:** provide evidence of commitment to the vision, values and ethos of the controlled sector.

Please ensure that you give specific examples to support your application.

Please complete the application form and return it on or before 11.59pm on Wednesday 15 September 2021.

Following receipt of nominations an election will take place in autumn 2021 with results ratified at the AGM on Thursday 18 November 2021.