



# **Controlled Schools' Support Council**

Appointment of Senior Clerical Officer

Organisational information

## **Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC)**

Appointment of Senior Clerical Officer

*Organisational information – section 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 included 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 were 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 with 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 non-statutory body, currently classified as a third level organisation, providing services in supporting and representing the controlled schools sector. In fulfilling this role it employs staff, procures goods and services and performs contractual functions. It is funded by the Department of Education, but may receive funding for specific projects from other sources.

The CSSC is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Currently 95% of controlled schools are members of CSSC.

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

## **The organisation – key functions**

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 EA 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 briefings 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 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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*Organisational information – section 2*

### The controlled sector

The origins of the controlled sector began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 in Northern Ireland (49% of all schools), comprising nursery, primary, special and post primary schools and equates to Controlled schools are attended by 146,138 pupils, 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.

	<b>Controlled schools</b>	<b>Controlled pupils</b>
<b>Nursery</b>	64	4,110
<b>Primary</b>	382*	87,737
<b>Non-grammar</b>	53	33,786
<b>Grammar</b>	16	14,511
<b>Total post-primary</b>	69	48,297
<b>Special</b>	37	5,994
<b>Total schools</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>146,138</b>
<b>Percentages</b>	49.4% of NI schools	42.5% of NI pupils

\* Includes one preparatory school which is not counted in the overall total of schools.

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.

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 are closely associated with the controlled sector through ownership of premises and management, and on the other hand they have a duty to all sectors in making educational provision and support. The tensions between these roles means that the Education Authority is unable to act as advocates for the controlled sector solely or to represent that sector exclusively.

It is the opinion of many within the controlled sector that a deficit of support and advocacy existed for the sector. The proposals for arrangements following the implementation of the Education Act (2014) provided an opportunity to address these issues through the scope, staffing and structure of the Controlled Schools' Support Council.

Controlled Schools' Support Council

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