



CLERGY GUIDE *to Schools*

NORTHERN IRELAND

The system of schools in Northern Ireland is complex and this guide is designed to give you some basic information on the way things work and what you might be expected or asked to do as a Church of Ireland clergyperson working in Northern Ireland.



CHURCH OF IRELAND

HISTORY

In summary, in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s the Church of Ireland (alongside the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches) was asked by the new Northern Ireland Government to transfer its schools to government control. The term Controlled Schools was created under the 1947 Education Act.

This took place, with a very small number remaining managed by the Church of Ireland, on the understanding that the Churches would still have access to and input to the governance of the government owned 'Controlled' schools. Clergy were given the right to inspect Religious Education (RE), be members of the Board of Governors, and take Christian worship through school assemblies. This has developed over the years and churches still have the right to nominate to Boards of Governors, and many clergy and church staff assist in school assemblies; a form of inspection of RE has only continued in Armagh diocese which is provided through an annual clergy support day for primary schools. The Church of Ireland still has two schools in Northern Ireland.

NORTHERN IRELAND'S SCHOOLS

Schools in Northern Ireland by type and management type 2022/23 - NISRA

	Controlled	Controlled Integrated	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Other Maintained	Voluntary	All schools
Nursery schools	60	2	31	0	0	0	93
Primary	354	24	354	23	27	0	782
Total primary	354	24	354	23	27	0	782
Non-selective	47	6	56	15	2	0	126
Grammar	16	0	0	0	0	50	66
Total Post-primary	63	6	56	15	2	50	192
Special	37	0	1	0	1	0	39
Independent and Hospital	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Total schools	557	32	442	38	30	50	1121

The Church of Ireland is represented at all levels in education through the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) - <https://trc-churcheducation.org>. The TRC is made up of representatives from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland.

There are a range of organisations that help deliver education in Northern Ireland and they include:

- Department of Education (NI) <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>
- Education Authority (employing authority) <https://www.eani.org.uk>

When the Education Authority was established, the Education Act (NI) 2014 provided that the Board of the Education Authority should include 4 persons representing the interests of the transferors of controlled schools. The Church of Ireland nominates up to two of the TRC representatives on the EA Board. The church's voice on the Board of the Education Authority means that we have an important role in influencing educational provision. If you have any concerns regarding the Education Authority please email them to edunorth@ireland.anglican.org and they will be passed on to the relevant EA Board member.

- Controlled Schools' Support Council <https://www.csscni.org.uk>

The TRC were a key part of the formation of this organisation and the Church of Ireland has a representative on the Board of Directors of CSSC.

Other organisations:

- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (employing authority) <https://www.ccmsschools.com>
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) <https://ccea.org.uk>
- Education and Training Inspectorate <https://www.etini.gov.uk>
- Catholic Schools Trustee Service <https://www.catholiceducation-ni.org/about-us/trustees>
- Governing Bodies Association <https://www.gbani.org>
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education <https://nicie.org>
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (for Irish Medium Schools) <https://www.comhairle.org>
- General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland <https://gtcni.org.uk>

UNIONS:

- Teaching Unions e.g. Ulster Teachers' Union <https://www.utu.edu>
- National Education Union <https://neu.org.uk>
- NASUWT The Teachers Union <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk>
- Irish National Teachers Organisation <https://www.into.ie>
- Association of School and College Leaders <https://ascl.org.uk>
- Non-teaching unions e.g. NIPSA <https://nipisa.org.uk>
- UNISON <https://www.unison.org.uk>

GOVERNORS

This is supplemental to the information found in the TRC Governor Handbook on <https://trc-churcheducation.org/governors>.

Nearly all clergy at one point in their ministry are asked to either nominate school governors or be a school governor themselves. Understanding the role, knowing your own strengths and skills, and ensuring the best person is in the role, is required when appointing or being a school governor. Being a governor is a good way of being part of the local community, serving our children and young people, and connecting the mission and ministry of your parish with the community. Transferor Governors have a unique position in continuing to uphold the Christian ethos of our schools. Clergy are afforded the right to be a governor or have responsibility to nominate governors of the majority of controlled schools; it is important that every governor is the best person for the role.

What do I have to do?

The Education Authority describes the role of governors as follows:

‘Governors set the strategic vision and direction, approve the budget and work in partnership with the senior leadership team. Governors are expected to attend meetings regularly and to read documentation associated with the meetings.’

A Board of Governors is required to meet once a term, but some schools may meet more than this. You may need to contact the school to ascertain the frequency of meetings before agreeing to take up the role. Many schools have further sub-committees, and you will have a choice, if you wish, to join one of these. You will also be asked to sit on appointment panels for new members of staff and internal appointments and to attend school events such as carol services or fetes. Governors are also responsible for ensuring school improvement including performance, further information can be found in the Every School a Good School’ document at <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-governance/school-improvement-and-self-evaluation-for-school-governors>. A full range of training programmes is provided by the Education Authority. These are now online so there is more flexibility and can be undertaken at a time that suits you. More information can be found at <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-governance/governor-training-resources>.

The Board of Governors acts as one body yet as a Transferor Governor you have the unique role of upholding the Christian ethos in a school and how that ethos is enacted.

How are governors appointed?

Transferor Governors make up 4/9ths of the majority of Controlled Schools’ Board of Governors. Governors are appointed for a four-year period, they can resign themselves at any time, but once appointed they cannot be removed unless under certain circumstances such as they fail to attend meetings or are prosecuted for fraud or other serious offences. Once they are appointed there is no requirement for a governor to report to their nominating body / person, but we would encourage you to inform your Select Vestry of both your nomination and your work in the local school. You can only be a governor on a maximum of three schools at the same time.

PRIMARY SCHOOL - For every controlled primary school there is a unique list of nominators to the role of Transferor Governors. This list has been passed down historically and for some schools there are local traditions that have determined how the Transferor Governors are appointed.

Some examples of Nomination rights:

School A: Two Church of Ireland, One Presbyterian, One Methodist.

School B: Four place nominated by the Presbyterians - but the local tradition has been to split that between two Presbyterians and one Church of Ireland and one Methodist.

Nomination rights can also be held by Diocesan Boards of Education, the Church of Ireland Board of Education (NI), local dignitary landowners, and local charities with a church connection. In most of these cases you may be contacted as the local rector and asked to assist in nominating to fill these places. Church of Ireland nominations make up approximately 40-45% of all Transferor Governor nominations.

If places are not filled by the local churches, then the Education Authority has the right to appoint in lieu of that place. There are a number of cases of this having taken place across Northern Ireland.

It is essential that the right person is appointed to the school - do not feel any pressure that it has to be a clergy person. Why not contact the school and find out from them what skills/experience would be helpful for them?

POST PRIMARY SCHOOL - Once reconstitution of governors has taken place in the primary schools then each post-primary school that has Transferor Governors contacts its feeder schools and the Transferor Governors from the feeder schools are offered the opportunity to be nominated to the post-primary. If more than the required number ask to be nominated, a vote is taken. Transferor Governors for primary schools therefore get first chance at being Transferor Governors for post-primary schools.

Should this process fail to appoint sufficient governors, then the Education Authority will contact the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) to ask for nomination to the school. The TRC may contact you to help with this process and at this stage governors can be appointed who are not governors for a primary school.

What happens when I leave?

If you are a local school governor and there comes a time when you intend to move on to another parish or ministry, it would be good to help the school and protect the local churches' role of governor to appoint someone from your parish to your post for a short time on the understanding that a new rector may take on this role. *This ensures the following:*

- *continuity for the school;*
- *protecting the place if the parish vacancy takes a long time to fill;*
- *giving a member of the congregation experience of being a governor;*
- *giving the new incumbent time to evaluate whether they wish to be a governor for the school.*

If you find that the role of governor is taking up too much time, there is no problem appointing a member of your congregation to replace you.

What happens if things go wrong?

Working as a school governor can be extremely rewarding and provides a vital link of the church in the community. On rare occasions things can go wrong and you may need support. If you are the Chair of your governors, then you can contact the Education Authority for direct support. If you are not the Chair, then encourage your Chair to contact EA when an issue arises. You can always contact the Secretary to the Board of Education (NI) and they can provide support and guidance.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN ASSEMBLY

A daily act of collective worship is meant to be taking in every school on every working day. We are aware this is not always the case, but collective worship is a vital part of Christian ethos of the school and the weekly routine of a school.

You may be asked to take part in collective worship, and we know clergy enjoy this experience. We see the act of collective worship taking place as part of an assembly and believe that this worship must be Christian in nature as set down in the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986.

Should you need support and resources, we recommend the following organisations who can help:

- Scripture Union <https://www.suni.co.uk>
- Church Missionary Society Ireland <https://www.cmsireland.org/childrens-resource>
- SPCK <https://www.assemblies.org.uk/search.php>
- Christian Aid <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/school-assemblies>
- Association of Christian Teachers <https://www.christian-teachers.org.uk/all-resources/assemblies>
- Youth for Christ <https://yfc.co.uk/schools>
- Love for Life <https://www.loveforlife.org.uk>
- Christians in Sport <https://christiansinsport.org.uk/churches/videos-to-show>
- Tearfund <https://wearetearfund.org/schools>

(Please note that we have no control over the content of these external websites).

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education is an academic subject and is delivered as part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, therefore anyone taking part in Religious Education classes should be aware of the content of the curriculum. We welcome this opportunity for you to give an input into Religious Education classes, but we would also recommend that only qualified teachers deliver any significant content in a school.



RE is not currently inspected in schools by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) unless the school requests this inspection. The TRC is lobbying for RE to be included with all other subjects and be subject to inspection by ETI. Some Dioceses still operate an annual inspection day in Primary Schools for RE and this has become a support day and Clergy are not qualified to inspect Religious Education in schools. We believe that all Transferor Governors should uphold the place of Religious Education as an integral subject in the overall curriculum.

The content of the RE curriculum was agreed by the four largest churches in 2008 and this may be subject to review soon. The Church of Ireland is represented at all levels in the process for any review.

Sometimes clergy partner with other organisations (such as those listed in the previous section). One example of such a programme is the 'It's Your Move' programme run by Scripture Union looking at the transition from Primary to Post Primary School.

PASTORAL SUPPORT

Feedback from clergy shows that many have a role of pastoral support to Principals and staff of their local school. We would encourage you to undertake this role, obviously with the full permission of the Principal and the school Board of Governors. Churches need not only show their support to the children and young people of their community but also to the educators who work in that community.

OTHER PROJECTS

More than 20% of parishes already have engaged with their local schools in new and innovative ways. This may include helping to fund projects such as gardens or prayer spaces. It may also include ongoing support such as volunteer reading assistants, help with extra-curricular clubs, and supporting parents in language / study skills. The Board of Education (NI) may be able to help with funding or ideas for such projects, do contact the Secretary if you need any support in this area. Stranmillis University College is also working on a support pack to enable churches to better engage with their schools at point of need.

Projects that we have come across through the funding scheme include:

- *Music programmes.*
- *Primary to Post Primary Preparation.*
- *Puppet Ministry.*
- *History programmes and trails.*
- *Finance programme for children.*
- *After schools clubs including gardening, cooking.*
- *Creating reflective or sensory spaces both indoors and in the playground.*
- *Reading support.*
- *Supporting parents in helping their children with homework.*
- *Teaching English to newcomer parents.*

If you would like any further information on any of these programmes, please contact the Secretary to the Board of Education (NI) on edunorth@ireland.anglican.org.