Teachers have their say on the curriculum
The end of a year is an appropriate time not only to review progress but to set out future challenges and ways of meeting these.

The INTO’s campaign for better staffing in primary schools this year has significantly improved employment prospects for teachers next year. The first reduction in class sizes in eight years is excellent news for those entering the profession and for those hoping to turn temporary work into permanent positions.

In respect of the latter, this edition of InTouch contains detailed information on the supplementary panel. This redeployment mechanism, secured by the campaigning of INTO members, saw over a thousand teachers securing permanent positions in schools this year. We expect similar numbers to benefit next year and so I urge teachers in a position to benefit to engage with this process.

Increasing employment opportunities and security of employment is part of the basic work of this union on behalf of its members that has continued this year. The acceptance of the LRA this year paves the way for the start of pay restoration in 2016 for teachers and other public servants. The INTO leadership, at every level, is also aware of the need to make further progress on pay inequalities imposed on new entrant members by government. From the outset the union opposed the pay cuts imposed by government on new entrant teachers. In the Haddington Road deal the unions made a strong start towards pay equalisation.

There is more to be done. In this regard, the decision of the Executive to establish a taskforce to examine those pay inequalities and develop a strategy for action is a significant step. It is hoped the taskforce will set out proposals that will enable the union to make further progress.

This InTouch also reports on last month’s INTO education conference which focused on the curriculum which is at the heart of every teacher’s work. It is clear from the engagement at the conference that curriculum and innovation overload in under-resourced classrooms are key issues affecting teachers’ working lives. We must find space for this on the union’s agenda.

In the meantime, I thank all members who supported the INTO to achieve its successes in 2015 and wish every member and their families a happy and peaceful Christmas.

The INTO will not be sending Christmas cards this year. Instead we will donate the costs associated with sending cards to the charity Console.

Console provides professional therapeutic counselling, support and helpline services to people in suicidal crisis and to those bereaved through suicide.

The Console 24/7 helpline is 1800 247 247 and is available to anyone in suicidal crisis, to anyone concerned for someone else who may be in suicidal crisis, and for those bereaved by suicide. It is a free professional counselling service to provide callers with support, advice and, where appropriate, referral services.

The views expressed in this journal are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the INTO. While every care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this publication is up to date and correct, no responsibility will be taken by the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation for any error which might occur.

Except where the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation has formally negotiated agreements as part of its services to members, inclusion of an advertisement does not imply any form of recommendation. While every effort is made to ensure the reliability of advertisers, the INTO cannot accept liability for the quality of goods and services offered.
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Castle Oaks House Hotel
See pages 8 and 60 for more details

Cover pic: Tina McLaughlin, Education Committee, District 3, pictured at the recent INTO Education Conference. Photographer: Moya Nolan
Keeping in touch

€4,000 solidarity grant for Syrian refugees

The CEC recently sanctioned a grant of €4,000 from the INTO Solidarity Fund to the GOAL Ireland People of Syria Emergency Appeal. Continued conflict in Syria has led to the internal displacement of 7.6 million people, with over 12 million in need of humanitarian assistance and a further four million people fleeing to neighbouring countries. The INTO donation will help support people trying to survive in Syria as well as supporting refugees in Turkey.

Nepal

The INTO and other teacher unions were quick to respond to relief efforts following the devastating earthquakes earlier this year in Nepal.

10 things you should know

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6. Clarity on school transport during status red weather alerts. Page 35.
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10. Members wishing to be included in the jobshare or teacher exchange registers must complete online form by 11 December. Page 9.
Reminder
Job sharing register

Teachers interested in job sharing can avail of a FREE live register provided by INTO Head Office in the Members’ Area of the INTO website.

Fill in your details on the online form by 5 p.m. on Friday, 11 December. The completed list will be posted in the Members’ Area on Monday, 14 December.

Full details were published in the November Intouch and are also available on the INTO website.

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Mailing lists

Mailing lists are a wonderful way of keeping in touch with colleagues who hold similar interests. Usually emails are between two parties. Using a ‘mailing list’ one of those parties can be a group of a 100 teachers! Imagine being able to write to a group of infant teachers or teachers of one-teacher-schools with just one email.

Mailing lists are a powerful way to gain support and information from fellow teachers, to share issues and discussions and to establish friendships irrespective of geographical location.

To join one of the mailing lists log into the Members’ Area and select ‘Mailing lists’ (on right of web page). Click the ‘join’ link in the ‘Options’ column. This will activate your email application and a blank email with ‘subscribe’ in the subject line will automatically appear. Sending this is all that is required to join.

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DICTaT</td>
<td>Developing ICT among teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion forum</td>
<td>For members who wish to make comments on aspects of INTO policies or priorities. Contributors to this mailing list will be asked to provide names and branch with their posting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant teaching</td>
<td>This mailing list is for infant teachers wishing to share views or comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori teachers</td>
<td>For those with Montessori qualifications who wish to share views and comments on various issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>This mailing list is for principal teachers wishing to share views/comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified outside the state</td>
<td>This mailing list is for primary teachers for primary teachers who obtained their qualifications outside the Republic of Ireland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support teachers</td>
<td>Support (remedial)/special/home-school liaison resource teachers etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips for teachers</td>
<td>Teachers are asked to share pedagogical, ICT related, interesting web sites and other snippets of useful information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stay connected

Check our website www.into.ie
Get news on the move at our mobile website m.into.ie
Subscribe to the INTO enewsletter into.newsweaver.ie
Project team on salary inequalities meets
Submissions sought from members

The INTO Executive has established a project team comprising members of the Executive (including the president and general secretary) and new entrant teachers affected by pay inequality. This project group will meet for the first time on Friday, 4 December 2015. The terms of reference agreed by the CEC include work to:

- examine and quantify teacher salary inequalities for new entrants;
- examine responses to these inequalities to date; and
- propose a strategy and timescale for INTO in order to achieve pay equality.
The project team includes representatives from several INTO districts.

A core group will meet in a number of sessions between now and Easter in order to carry out intensive work on the terms of reference.

A larger group will meet again before the end of the school year in advance of the project team bringing its work to finality.

In the meantime, a decision is awaited on the INTO claim before the Equality Tribunal on the matter of pay inequality.

Any INTO member wishing to make a submission to the project team related to its terms of reference is invited to do so by emailing ggglackin@into.ie

Dáil passes FEMPI Bill giving effect to LRA

Last month (18 November 2015) the Dáil passed a bill giving effect to the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

TDs backed the bill by a margin of 110 to 16. Full details of the debate and the vote are available on www.oireachtas.ie

At the time of writing it is expected that the bill will go to the Seanad.

Education at a glance 2015

Last month, the OECD published its annual review of education across 34 member countries and a number of ‘partner’ countries. The publication allows for comparisons of policy issues across countries and groups of countries such as the EU21 (countries including Ireland that are members of both the European Union and the OECD). Some highlights of the 2015 report include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average class size</th>
<th>Teaching time</th>
<th>Age profile of teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>EU 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 pupils</td>
<td>20 pupils</td>
<td>18 11 11 27 30 27 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>EU 21</td>
<td>17 19 27 3 5 11 21 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>671 hours</td>
<td>11 27 30 17 19 18 25 20</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ireland</th>
<th>EU 21</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>First language</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second language</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EU 21 countries are:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Greece
- Hungary
- Luxembourg
- Slovenia
- The United Kingdom
- The Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Finland
- Hungary
- the Netherlands
- Italy
- Ireland
- Portugal
- Poland
- Spain
- Sweden

Further information on EAG 2015 is available on www.into.ie
Full registration for teachers probated in a restricted setting

Following Congress the INTO met with the Teaching Council to discuss probation for qualified primary teachers in special education. The Teaching Council agreed to consider INTO proposals and in this regard has now approved a process to facilitate primary teachers registered under Regulation 2 and employed in special education to become fully registered.

From 4 January 2016, teachers who are registered under Regulation 2 (Primary) with probation in a restricted setting may apply for full registration as a primary teacher.

Teachers who have previously been probated in a restricted setting and do not have any other outstanding condition but who fulfil certain criteria will be eligible to apply for full registration. The criteria require that the teacher is or has been:

- Teaching a full nationally recognised curriculum modified in line with the guidelines as set out by the NCCA.
- To a minimum of six students on a full-time basis for the entire day.
- Is fully responsible for the learning of the students and has responsibilities comparable to those of a mainstream class teacher.

A minimum of 50 days’ continuous service is required in such a position and must be in addition to service given to fulfil the condition of probation/Droichead. Further details can be found on the Teaching Council website from 4 January 2016.

Supplementary panel

Closing date is 11 December 2015

The DES has published Circular 0058/2015 which sets out the arrangements for access to the supplementary redeployment panels for the 2016/17 school year. The supplementary panel is for eligible registered primary teachers in fixed-term/temporary positions including substitute positions and part-time positions in recognised primary schools.

The supplementary panel is used for appointments to full-time permanent teaching posts in primary schools where those posts are not otherwise required for the redeployment of surplus permanent and CID holding teachers. The supplementary panel is not used to fill fixed-term positions in schools.

To be eligible for the 2016/17 supplementary panel teachers have to have met in full all outstanding conditions/satisfied all shortfalls in respect of registration with the Teaching Council (be fully probated) by 11 December 2015.

Completed forms must be received in the DES on or before 11 December 2015 at the following address:
Primary Teacher Allocations Section,
Department of Education and Skills,
Carnamaddy, Athlone,
Co Westmeath,
N37 X659.

Late applications will not be considered for inclusion on these panels. The INTO advises all members to retain proof of postage.

(See page 14 for more detailed information).

Election 2016

Stand up for primary education

In preparation for the general election which will be held in spring 2016 the INTO is engaging with all political parties on matters of concern to members and on wider primary education issues.

A subcommittee of the INTO Executive will co-ordinate this work in the run up to the election.

At national level, meetings have been sought with all parties and groups of independents. A number of these have taken place at the time of going to print and further meetings are planned. The outcome of these meetings will be reported to members prior to the election.

A questionnaire to all parties is being prepared and responses will be published for members in advance of polling day.
INTO Annual Congress 2016 will be held in the Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford, from Monday 28 March 2016 to Wednesday 30 March 2016.

Congress is the governing body of the INTO and each year decides the work programme for the CEC and officials of the Organisation for the coming year.

A committee called the Standing Orders Committee is responsible for the preparation of the Congress agenda. The SOC prepares order papers listing the business of Congress and the motions to be discussed.

The INTO president presides over the deliberations of Congress.

Who attends INTO Congress?

- Delegates elected by members of INTO branches.
- Three delegates from each district committee.
- Members and incoming members of the Central Executive Committee.
- Members and incoming members of the Benefit Funds Committee.
- Members and incoming members of the Education Committee, Equality Committee and Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Committee.
- Members of the SOC.
- Two delegates from the Northern Committee.
- Two delegates from the Accounts Committee.

What is on the agenda?

Annual Congress considers motions submitted by branches, districts or the CEC. It also considers reports from various committees of the INTO including the CEC, Benefit Funds Committee, Northern Committee, Education Committee, Equality Committee, Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Committee and Accounts Committee.

These reports are published online in the Members’ Area of the INTO website. Some motions to Congress are discussed in public session which is open to delegates and invited guests. Others are discussed in private by accredited delegates only.

Delegates to Congress

The number of delegates which a branch may send to Congress is laid down by Rule 10 of the INTO Rules and Constitution. Branches may send two delegates for the first 129 members in the branch with an additional delegate for each additional 65 members or part thereof.

The business of the INTO is governed by the Organisation’s Rules and Constitution. This is available in the Members’ Area of the INTO website. A hard copy version was printed and distributed to schools following Congress 2015.

Want to be a delegate to INTO Annual Congress?

Find out how by attending your branch AGM in January. Check with your staff representative for the date of your branch meeting.

Who can submit motions to Congress?

Any member is entitled to submit a motion to their local branch for discussion at the Annual General Meeting. Motions passed by branches are sent forward for placement on the agenda for Congress.

What do motions for Congress look like?

- A motion is a proposition submitted for
It must ask Congress to declare an opinion or call for a course of action – or both.

Motions should be designed to promote the aims and objects or the Organisation as set out in Rule 3.

All motions must be clear and unambiguous in meaning and intention and must be worded accordingly.

All motions must be capable of implementation.

Each motion should be brief and concise and should not contain argument.

Each motion should deal with one topic only.

**Sample motion**
The following is a motion which was passed at Congress 2014 and is an example of a well worded motion:

* Congress deplores the totally inadequate funding of primary education and calls on the CEC to demand that:
  a. the reductions made over the past years to the school capitation grant be restored in full immediately;
  b. the minor works grant and the summer works scheme be fully reinstated on the calendar of grants;
  c. every school receives a reasonable budget to provide for the maintenance, repair and replacement of school ICT equipment and that high speed broadband be made available to all primary schools.

**How priority is determined for items on the final agenda**
The SOC has regard to the following when determining priority for the final agenda:

- The consensus among the general membership in relation to the priority issues in any particular year.
- The consensus among the SOC in relation to the priority issues, and the motions which will result in the greatest degree of favourable and advantageous publicity for the organisation.
- The degree of urgency attending to a particular motion.
- The extent to which a particular motion will further the objectives of the organisation.

**Congress timetable**
What happens at Congress is decided by Rule 13 of the INTO Rules and Constitution.

On Day 1 Congress runs from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the latest. The business on the first day includes the president’s speech and a response on behalf of the invited guests. During this time Congress also considers financial reports and motions including auditor’s report and statement of accounts.

On Day 2, Congress starts at 9 a.m. and finishes no later than 4.30 p.m. During the first part of this day the ministers for education or their representatives address Congress and the INTO general secretary responds. Motions are debated and reports delivered for the rest of the time.

Congress opens at 9 a.m. on Day 3 and the closing session begins at 2.00 p.m. The agenda for Day 3 includes motions in private and public session as decided by Standing Orders Committee. At the end of Congress the next president of the INTO takes up office.
10 things you should know about Supplementary Panel rights 2016/17 school year

1. The Supplementary Panel provides a mechanism for teachers who have amassed temporary or substitute service to access permanent employment. At least 1,000 teachers got permanent posts through the Supplementary Panel between June and November 2015.

2. The closing date for applications for the Supplementary Panel is Friday, 11 December 2015. Last year, a number of colleagues missed the application deadline and as a consequence missed out on securing panel rights at that time. Apply on time.

3. Find out if you are eligible for the panel. Eligibility is based on your salary point. The date you commenced employment determines your salary scale and incremental point. Teachers appointed prior to 1 January 2011 must satisfy (i) below and either (ii) or (iii) below:

   (i) have been paid a gross salary of at least €29,000 (including allowances) in the 2015 calendar year; and
   (ii) on or before 31 December 2015 be on the third or higher points of the relevant teachers’ salary scale and be contracted to the end of the school year;
   (iii) if on point 4 or higher, there is no need to be contracted to the end of the school year.

4. Check that you are being paid at the correct point of the incremental scale. The primary teacher incremental salary scale points are available on the Department’s website www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/Payroll-Financial-Information/Salary-Scales. Teachers who are not being paid at the correct point of the scale should contact the DES Payroll Section to have this rectified immediately. Email DES at: primtch_payroll@education.gov.ie Don’t leave this to the last minute.

5. Some service is not counted for the purposes of determining access to the Supplementary Panels. Service which is allowable for the purposes of Supplementary Panel access is service as a fully qualified teacher in a post paid for by the Department of Education and Skills excluding:
   - Previous permanent service – you must have earned three increments since the date of resignation from the permanent post.
   - Previous service as a post primary teacher.
   - Incremental credit for service abroad/ other non-teaching work.

6. Part-time teachers are eligible to apply for the Supplementary Panel, and are required to meet the same eligibility criteria as set out above in point 2 above. However, the salary earnings threshold for 2015 (€29,000 or €26,100 as appropriate) will be adjusted on a pro-rata basis in respect of part-time teachers.

7. For teachers who took unpaid maternity/adoptive leave in 2015, the salary earnings thresholds will also be adjusted on a case by case basis.

8. When applying for the Supplementary Panel, you agree to abide by the redeployment arrangements as set out in the circular.

9. A teacher will be regarded as eligible for access to the Supplementary Panel if the only reason for not meeting the scale point criteria is due an increment freeze under the Haddington Road Agreement.

10. For further information please see the INTO website for Circular 58/2015 and frequently asked questions.
The annual INTO Consultative Conference on Education took place this year in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, on Friday 13 and Saturday 14 November. The topic for discussion was *Primary School Curriculum: Have Your Say* and 360 INTO delegates and national committee members spent two days debating some of the issues.

The conference was opened by INTO president, Emma Dineen, who when welcoming delegates said what constituted essential school learning should always be contested because behind it is a debate about what knowledge is of most worth.

Tina McLaughlin, Education Committee, District 3, outlined the main findings of large scale research the Education Committee had conducted on the curriculum. She noted that, while the curriculum was seen as being ‘flexible’, it created unrealistic expectations and excessive paperwork. Acknowledging the need for curriculum to change and evolve over time, she said this could only be implemented effectively when teachers are provided with adequate resources and quality professional development.

Sarah Fitzpatrick, former deputy CEO of the NCCA, now a class teacher in Naas Community National School, spoke about the developments that were currently taking place in relation to the primary school curriculum. Referring particularly to the revised language curriculum Sarah outlined a roadmap for planning, teaching and assessing.

Patrick Sullivan, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA, made a presentation to delegates on what might be included in a future curriculum in Education about Religious Beliefs and Ethics (ERB and Ethics). He reiterated the importance of involvement by teachers in the consultation process and called for participation by INTO members in the forthcoming dialogue to shape this process.

A keynote presentation was given by Robbie O’Leary, principal of Sacred Heart SNS, Killinarden, Tallaght, on ICT across the curriculum. He stressed that while ICT could be a powerful and creative tool it could not replace the expertise or skills of a qualified classroom teacher.

Anne Looney, CEO of the NCCA, highlighted the involvement of teachers in Ireland in the creation and modification of the curriculum, and emphasised that this involvement was almost unique in Europe. She outlined the process that the NCCA goes through when developing and introducing change to the curriculum – research, consultation, deliberation and networks.

The following workshops were provided for delegates at the conference

**Topic and Presenter**

**Junior and Senior Infants**
Aisling Greene (Scoil Mhuire Convent Primary School, Roscommon)

**SESE – Teaching the 1916 Proclamation**
Ann Murtagh (Kilkenny School Project NS)

**Physical Activity**
Carmel Browne (CEC District 7, Melview NS, Longford)
Creativity across the Curriculum
Helen Hallissey (Scoil Mhuire, Ballincollig)

**Problem Solving**
Mia Treacy (PDST)

**Science and School Self-Evaluation**
Eleanor Fahy (Mother of Divine Grace Primary School, Dublin 11)

**ICT in the Classroom**
Robbie O’Leary (Sacred Heart SNS, Tallaght)

**Religion and ERB and Ethics**
Patrick Sullivan (NCCA)

(Above) Speakers (From left to right) Patrick Sullivan, Robbie O’Leary and Sarah Fitzpatrick. (Left) Discussion group at the Education Conference
INTO Education Conference 2015

SOME CURRENT CURRICULUM CHALLENGES

INTO Education Committee outlines teachers priorities for change.

Curriculum should continuously evolve to reflect changing needs within society. Nevertheless, it is important to obtain a balance between change and stability. Constant change with no clear purpose can lead to uncertainty. Change needs time to bed down.

The primary school curriculum is now 16 years old, and teachers have ideas and opinions regarding its further development.

According to teachers, the primary school curriculum has many strengths. It is a child-centred curriculum that provides flexibility to teachers enabling them to bring their own strengths and talents to their teaching.

Nevertheless, there are some areas where teachers would like to see some change.

Integration

Teachers are of the view that it is not possible to teach all subjects to a very high level. Teachers take an integrated approach to their teaching in order to ensure that all content objectives in the curriculum are addressed. However, for integration to be successful teachers need a very good knowledge of curriculum content. Therefore, allocating teachers to teach the same class level for a period of time can facilitate a deeper knowledge of curriculum content, though this needs to be balanced with the need to enable teachers to gain experience across the range of class levels and teaching positions.

Content

Teachers are of the view that there is too much content in the curriculum, that the required documentation is excessive and that schools are being asked to do too much. Regarding specific curricular areas, the area of SPHE was particularly singled out as a curriculum area with too much content, given the suggested time allocation of a half hour per week. SESE in content, given the suggested time out as a curriculum area with too much content in the curriculum, that the area of SPHE was particularly singled out as a curriculum area with too much content in the curriculum, but also from issues such as large class sizes and the inclusion of children with special educational needs.

Teachers are of the view that there is too much content in the curriculum, with some of the opinion that drama was more appropriate as a methodology and others expressing a lack of time to engage with drama as a subject. Some teachers expressed a desire to spend more time on PE. Teachers would welcome more support in teaching oral Irish. There was a concern among some teachers that the teaching of science was being compromised by the lack of resources, space and time.

Teachers suggest that curriculum overload can be addressed through professional autonomy and integration, but identify class size, documentation and the need for differentiation as significant contributors to curriculum overload.

Assessment

Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the purpose of assessment, but caution against an over-reliance on standardised tests. Teachers acknowledge the usefulness of standardised testing, particularly in identifying where intervention is needed. However, teachers have reservations about an over-emphasis on standardised testing.

ICT

The lack of ICT resources in classrooms is an issue for teachers, as is the lack of professional development for teachers in using ICT, and the lack of technical support. Teachers also commented on the lack of broadband or poor broadband connectivity. Teachers see benefits in using ICT as a pedagogical tool, but feel ICT shouldn’t dominate practice.

Professional development

There is a need for continuing professional development to be an integral part of support for teachers regarding curriculum. The introduction of any revised curriculum needs to be supported by professional development. The clear message from teachers is that professional development should accompany the introduction of the revised language curriculum, which should be whole-school focussed and practical.
SOME SURVEY FINDINGS

The INTO Education Committee undertook research on the Primary School Curriculum, with a view to ensuring that teachers’ opinions contribute to the forthcoming review of the curriculum. In total, 663 questionnaires were returned and compiled for analysis. The following are some highlights of the research. A full research report is available in the conference documentation on the INTO website.

CROKE PARK HOURS AND THE CURRICULUM

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?  

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that Croke Park hours are, in general, productive</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning are prominent factors of Croke Park hours in my school</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the majority of Croke Park hours are a mere ‘ticking-box’ exercise</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croke Park hours have had a negative impact on staff morale</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STRENGTHS OF THE CURRICULUM

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1999 curriculum is flexible and I can bring my own strengths to the classroom</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum provides pupils with an opportunity to study a varied range of subjects</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is too much content contained within the curriculum</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CURRICULUM OVERLOAD

WHAT HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON CURRICULUM OVERLOAD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and paperwork in general</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of subjects</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The INTO is particularly grateful to the involvement of the Athlone branch officers who manned an information desk that provided local knowledge (and local discounts) to delegates.

Also, a special word of thanks to the pupils of primary schools in the Athlone/Moate branch area who displayed artwork and project-work highlighting their favourite areas of the curriculum: An Grianán NS, Mount Temple, Moate; Baylin NS, Athlone; Coosan NS, Athlone; St Brigid’s GNS, Moate; Scoil Na gCeithre Máistri Athlone; Ballinahowen NS, Athlone; Ballybay NS, Kiltoom, Athlone; Kilcleagh NS, Castlehady, Moate; Clonbunny NS, Athlone.

All presentations, speeches, webcast archive and conference photos are now available on the INTO website www.into.ie
thought-provoking paper from INTO director of education and research

Introducing the work of the INTO Education Committee to the 350 delegates at the 2015 conference in Athlone last month Deirbhile Nic Craith, INTO Director of Education and Research, made the point that the INTO’s research of teachers’ experience of curriculum, provides valuable feedback about what’s going well for teachers and what needs further change and development. In a wide ranging paper she highlighted a number of key issues.

**Teachers’ involvement in curriculum**
We are privileged in Ireland to have an opportunity to influence our curriculum developments. Early in the 20th century, the INTO was instrumental in convening the first National Programme Conference in 1921 which led to changes in curriculum in 1922 and again in 1926. The INTO also had the foresight to prepare a plan for Education in 1947 outlining the areas of education policy requiring development and action. The INTO played a key role in developing the revised programme for infants in 1948.

It is very important to INTO members to be involved in education policy. We have a long history of engaging in educational debate, bringing the voice and experience of practising teachers to bear on the policy context. The INTO’s voice is influential and is listened to.

Our current curriculum, published in 1999, was the culmination of almost 10 years of development with practising teachers at the heart of it. The curriculum reflected the educational thinking of the day and was well-received by teachers. This process of curriculum development is highly unusual. In many other countries teachers are presented with a curriculum to teach, having had no input into its development.

Challenges and shortcomings of the 1999 curriculum began to emerge as teachers experienced its implementation. Planning, assessment and ICT were such processes. However, they also have the disadvantage of being part of the primary school sector, which means large class sizes and lack of space for learning through play, both indoors and outdoors, two issues that have yet to be dealt with at policy level.

The pre-school sector in Ireland is changing. It’s growing, additional funding is being made available, the DES inspectors are beginning their evaluations of the free-pre-school year and Aistear, the NCCA’s early years’ curriculum framework informs children’s development and learning.

Over 95% of children now attend pre-school, before they start in junior infants. This has implications for our infant classes in terms of curriculum continuity and transitions in particular.

**Infant education**
We are unusual in Ireland in including a significant portion of early childhood education in our primary schools. In many other European countries children start primary school between ages five and seven, though usually attend state provided or state funded pre-school or kindergarten prior to starting primary school.

Infant classes are an integral part of the primary school, but also very much part of early childhood education, internationally often referred to as birth to six or in some cases birth to eight. The infant classes have the benefit of being part of the primary school, with a national curriculum, highly qualified teachers, quality assurance and school evaluation processes. However, they also have the disadvantage of being part of the primary school sector, which means large class sizes and lack of space for learning through play, both indoors and outdoors, two issues that have yet to be dealt with at policy level.

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**Diversity**
Ireland has also become more diverse since the 1990s. Today’s primary classrooms are inclusive of all pupils – children with special educational needs, children for whom English is an additional language, children of migrants, children of different faiths and none. This diversity creates additional challenges for teachers. A very recent development is the launch of a consultation on proposals for a curriculum in Education About Religious Beliefs and Ethics – ERB and Ethics.

The INTO called for the development of a national curriculum in religious education at our education conference in 1991 in Kilkenny and again in 2002 in Mullingar. The current proposals regarding a curriculum in ERB and ethics are proposals.

If, following the consultation it is considered desirable to include education about religious beliefs and ethics in the primary curriculum for all children, a discussion will have to take place about the what, the how and the when. One thing is certain, there is no room in our curriculum for more.

**Conclusion**
The consideration of new areas of curriculum can only occur in the context of an overall review of our current curriculum. It means deciding what’s important to us as Irish society, what our values are, and what we want the next generation to learn in schools.

Curriculum will always reflect the political, social, economic, philosophical and perhaps religious contexts in which it is developed. Educating the next generation is about the holistic development of the child. Learning outcomes are important, but we should never lose sight of the overarching aims of primary education.
## TIMELINE OF ON-GOING CURRICULUM AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1999 | • The Revised Primary School Curriculum, NCCA  
      • Pilot project on modern languages in the primary school: Draft curriculum guidelines  
      • DES White paper on Early Childhood Education, Ready to Learn |
| 2000 | • DES Learning Support Guidelines  
      • ERC Drumcondra English Profiles |
| 2002 | • Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities  
      • (DES) Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools |
| 2004 | • (ICT) in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines of Teachers |
| 2005 | • NCCA Primary Curriculum Review: Phase 1 Final Report  
      • DES Circular 02/05 Special Education |
| 2006 | • NCSE, Guidelines on the IEP process  
      • NCCA, EAL in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers  
      • NCCA Intercultural Education in the Primary School, Guidelines for Schools |
| 2007 | • NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities  
      • NCCA Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers  
      • NCCA Assessment in the Primary School: Curriculum Guidelines for Schools  
      • NEPS Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support (Resource for Teachers pack)  
      • NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools and Resource Materials |
| 2008 | • ICT Framework: A Structured Approach to ICT in Curriculum and Assessment |
| 2009 | • NEWB Developing a code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools  
      • NCCA Primary Curriculum Review: Phase 2 Final Report |
| 2010 | • Aistear  
      • NEPS (BESD) – A Support  
      • NCCA Aistear Toolkit (online) |
| 2011 | • SESS Supporting Behaviour Management in School for Students with BESD 2011  
      • DES Literacy & Numeracy Strategy |
| 2012 | • NEPS Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers: Good Practice Guide & Resource Pack |
| 2013 | • DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools |
| 2014 | • Well-Being in Primary Schools: A Joint Publication. NEPS/HSE/DES/Department of Health. Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion  
      • NEPS Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents  
      • NCCA Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities  
      • NEPS: A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years |
| 2014/15 | • NEPS: A variety of Guidelines, Tips and Handouts for Parents and Teachers |
Membership Plus brings you fantastic savings across the country...

From restaurants to hotels, cinemas to fashion, leisure centres to golf courses, hairdressers to big brand names, there is something for everyone.

Use your INTO Membership Plus card to gain access to a great range of special offers and discounts for you and your family.

If you are a new INTO member, activate your card as soon as you receive it to view the full range of offers, be kept up to date with new offers throughout the year and enter competitions.

To activate your card, simply go to www.membershipplus.ie/teachers.

Has the hottest new restaurant opened down the road from you or maybe your favourite place to go shopping isn’t yet in Membership Plus? Log onto the Membership Plus website and click on ‘Suggest a Venue’ to let the Membership Plus team know.

For details on offers, as well as checking out new weekly offers visit the Membership Plus website: www.membershipplus.ie/teachers

Your Child in the Primary School – Tips for Parents
Booklet now updated and online

An updated version of the popular INTO booklet Your Child in the Primary School – Tips for Parents is now available online from publications section on the INTO website at www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/TipsForParents.

The booklet is available in English, Irish and Spanish. A French language version will be available shortly. Teachers are invited to download this free ebook and add it to their school websites if they wish.

The INTO would like to thank the Consejería de Educación (Spanish Embassy) for their assistance in translating the Spanish version. In particular, we would like to thank Adolfo Carbón, Education Adviser, for facilitating the project and Samuel Lagos Aguilar who translated the document. More information about the work of the Spanish Embassy can be found on the website: www.mecd.gob.es/irlanda.

We would also like to thank Foras na Gaeilge for their help in the translation of Do Leanbhsa sa Bhunscoil – Nodanna do Thuismitheoirí. We appreciate the interest and support given by Anna Davitt which facilitated the production of Tips for Parents as Gaeilge.

For more information on the work carried out by Foras na Gaeilge, visit www.gaeilge.ie.

INTO news
December 2015

New offers

New offers are added to the Membership Plus website throughout the year. Make sure you visit the website regularly to see what’s new!

Amphibian King
Aroma Palace Café
Baldonnell Garden Centre
Bloom & Grow
Carousel
Designyard
Fahey’s
Irish Design Shop
Orchardstown Garden Centre
Outdoor Escape
Project W
Sports Outlet
The Pocket Money Shop
Wilson Bros

Bray
Rathmines
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin/online
Dublin/online
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin
Dublin

20% discount
10% discount
10% discount
15% discount
10% discount
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For more information on the work carried out by Foras na Gaeilge, visit www.gaeilge.ie.
The current term of the Teaching Council ends in March 2016. A new Council must be elected between now and March 2016. There are a total of 37 members on the Teaching Council comprising as follows:

- Eleven registered teachers representative of the primary sector of whom nine are elected and two are nominated by the INTO.
- Eleven registered teachers representative of the post-primary sector of whom seven are elected and four nominated.
- Two nominees of the colleges of education.
- Two nominees of the higher education institutes.
- Four persons nominated by school management authorities.
- Two persons nominated by representatives of parent associations.
- Five persons appointed by the minister including a nominee each of ICTU and IBEC.

For the purposes of the election of teacher representatives there are four constituencies, i.e. Dublin, Leinster, Munster and Connaught/Ulster. The constituencies of Dublin, Leinster and Connaught/Ulster each have two seats to fill – one male and one female. Munster has three seats to fill, one male, one female and either another male or female. At the time of writing, prospective candidates are seeking INTO endorsement through their district committees in the relevant constituencies.

The following is the timetable for the election/appointment of the new Council:

- 1 December 2015: publication of the Electoral Roll. Teachers should check their details on the Electoral Roll.
- 22 December 2015: closing date for receipt of changes/amendments to the Electoral Roll.
- 8 January 2016: publication of the notice of elections and inviting nominations.
- 29 January 2016: closing date for receipt of nominations.
- Early February: publication of notice re candidates and poll details.
- It is currently planned that balloting will open on 22 February and close at noon on 9 March 2015.

Further details on the Teaching Council elections will be in next month’s issue of InTouch.

Online support for INTO staff reps

The INTO has developed a new online course to support members taking on the role of INTO staff rep. It is available in five modules and explains the main issues dealt with by INTO staff reps. The modules available are:

- Staff representative’s role and responsibility.
- INTO structures and communications.
- Understanding teacher terms and conditions.
- Managing workplace relationship difficulties.
- Supporting a new teacher through probation.

If you are an INTO staff representative and you haven’t received an email from the INTO with your log on details yet please contact tut@into.ie

Elections to the Teaching Council

The CSL has a number of priority areas of work for the coming year:

- A pilot mentoring programme for newly appointed principals.
- To tender for an ‘Aspiring Leaders Programme’ to replace the existing Tóraíocht programme.
- A pilot coaching programme for principals experiencing difficulties in their role.

CENTRE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Last month the INTO welcomed representatives of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) to INTO Head Office. The meeting provided an opportunity to engage with the CSL relation to their programme.

Three principal teachers have been seconded to the CSL. Mary Nihill, the principal of Calasanctus College in Oranmore has been seconded as the national director, Anna Mai Rooney, the principal of St Louis Girls’ NS in Monaghan has been seconded as deputy director at primary level, and Maire Ní Bhróithé, principal of Rathoath College, and education officer with Louth/Meath Education and Training Board is seconded as deputy director at post-primary level.

Pictured are Joe McKeown, CEC Representative, District 10; Declan Kyne, Chairperson PDC; Deirdre O’Connor, INTO AGS; Anna Mai Rooney, Deputy Director, Primary, Centre for School Leadership; Emma Dineen, INTO President and Mary Nihill, Director, Centre for School Leadership
INTO Learning Winter Programme

INTO Learning is currently running two online courses

KEY SKILLS FOR GOOD LEADERSHIP

This course will support all teachers in a leadership role in their schools, in particular school principals, deputy principals and aspiring principals. It explores both the concept and practice of good school leadership with a particular focus on distributive leadership and the skills required for same. It is presented using a variety of media including some INTO Learning produced videos of four school principals who have contributed to the writing of the course content. There are many reflective/thinking activities included in the course and time is set aside for reading.

Course runs from Monday, 9 November 2015. There will be a pause in the facilitation of the course between 21 December 2015 and 11 January 2016. The facilitation of the course will re-commence on 11 January 2016 and the course will close on Friday, 19 February 2016. An online facilitator will support participants with course content. The course costs €75.

To register please log on to moodle.intolearning.ie

INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR LEARNING SUPPORT/RESOURCE TEACHERS

This course is aimed at teachers who have just taken up the role of learning support/resource teaching. It is designed to lead the teacher through the initial stages of setting up a learning support/resource system in their school, testing and grouping children receiving such support as well as providing pedagogical support for children experiencing literacy, numeracy and behavioural difficulties and for children for whom English is an additional language. Administrative and record keeping duties of the LSRT is also explored.

The module outline is as follows:
- Module 1: Introduction: Role of Learning-Support/Resource Teacher
- Module 2: Selection and Assessment
- Module 3: Models of Support: Withdrawal and In-class
- Module 4: Approaches and methodologies 1: Oral Language
- Module 5: Approaches and Methodologies 2: Reading
- Module 6: Approaches and Methodologies 3: Writing and Spelling
- Module 7: Approaches and Methodologies 4: Mathematics
- Module 8: Approaches and Methodologies 5: Supporting Behavioural/Emotional Difficulties
- Module 9: Approaches and Methodologies 6: Supporting Pupils for whom English is an Additional Language
- Module 10: Administration and Record Keeping

This is a 10 week modular online course: five modules will be delivered online from 9 November 2015 and participants can work through the course content at their own pace. Modules 1–3 will be available from 9 November and Modules 4 and 5 will be available from 1 December. There will be a pause in the facilitation of the course between 21 December 2015 and 11 January 2016. The facilitation of the course will re-commence on 11 January 2016 with the next five modules. The course will close on Friday, 19 February 2016. An online facilitator will support participants with course content.

The course costs €200.

To register please log on to moodle.intolearning.ie

District Officers training

INTO president Emma Dineen is pictured with district officers at a recent training course in Charleville. Pictured (l to r) are Niamh O’Dea, Limerick City; Siobhán Noonan, Newcastle West; Emma Dineen, Mary Richardson, Limerick East and Emer Nelligan, Limerick City.

Interested in designing or facilitating professional development for INTO?

Are you interested in designing or facilitating professional development for INTO? The INTO Professional Development/Learning Unit is currently compiling a bank of names of teachers who may be interested in designing or facilitating courses for the INTO in the future. If you are interested in submitting an expression of interest form please visit www.intolearning.ie to access the form. Please return the completed form to INTO Professional Development/Learning Unit either by post or email to learninghelpdesk@into.ie
Thinking of volunteering overseas?

Comhlamh online course for volunteers

Comhlamh has recently introduced a new online course especially designed for teachers who might be considering work as an overseas volunteer. If you are someone looking for a little help in asking the right questions of yourself and your potential ‘sending agency’, this could be a place to start. See www.comhlamh.org/where

Most teachers who decide to do volunteer work, whether for a few weeks during the summer break or on a more long term placing, have found the experience to be very rewarding and, on some occasions, life changing. However, it has also become evident that members need to have prepared properly well in advance of travelling, in order to get the best out of the experience. Comhlamh offer potential volunteers valuable information in helping to make the right decisions: Why am I going? Where should I go? Who should I go with? What should I do when I come back?

The Comhlamh online course will help you to consider issues relating to sending agencies: the different types and durations of volunteering; issues relating to money and volunteering, including looking after yourself; and will deal with useful information relating to the agencies themselves and what questions you need to ask them. Lastly, the course will introduce some interesting ways of continuing to work for development within your home and workplace on your return. The INTO also has ideas in this area and recommends you visit the Global Solidarity pages on the INTO website www.into.ie/ROI/GlobalSolidarity for more on that matter.

Passage to India

Over mid-term, Emma Dineen, INTO President, visited Meghalaya in North East India as part of a union delegation in conjunction with Global Schoolroom. Global Schoolroom gives experienced teachers from Ireland a chance to contribute to teacher education in North East India. The INTO supports Global Schoolroom and has pledged to do so until 2017.

Global Schoolroom places education at the heart of the global development agenda and recognises that, even when children manage to go to school, poor quality education may hold them back or even dissuade them from continuing. Inequality is then further extended, as future learning opportunities are not possible and the cycle of poverty remains unbroken.

The organisation sends around 30 teachers to India for one month every summer, where they act as tutors to local teachers to help them improve their teaching skills.

Accompanied by Annette Dolan (TUI), Máire Ni Chiarba (ASTI), Dr Garret Campbell, Gwen Brennan and Robert Power from Global Schoolroom and retired teachers Rosaleen O’Reilly and Willie O’Brien the INTO president visited the province of Megahalaya. It has a population of three million and the principal city is home to one third of its people.

Four fifths of schools are run by religious bodies with only 20% state run. As part of the itinerary Ms Dineen visited teachers and schools in both rural and urban areas.

The teacher trade union group met officers from the KJDSTA Union, discussing ways of supporting their struggle to improve conditions of service for teacher members. Teachers told of feeling neglected by government, working in schools where teaching resources were very scarce and pupil teacher ratios very high, sometimes reaching 60:1.

Despite these factors the children appeared happy, eager to learn and the teachers were committed to improving the lives of their students.

“With its focus on educating local teachers Global Schoolroom is able to contribute a huge amount to education in the region,” said Ms Dineen. “As most teachers know, a few highly skilled teachers can have a huge impact in a community. The schools that Global Schoolroom works with see significant improvements in enrolments and pupil outcomes.”

Ms Dineen said the INTO’s support for Global Schoolroom was an example of how the union uses the members’ Solidarity Fund to promote teaching and education in developing countries.

Gwen Brennan and Robert Power from Global Schoolroom and retired teachers Rosaleen O’Reilly and Willie O’Brien the INTO president visited the province of Megahalaya. It has a population of three million and the principal city is home to one third of its people.

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Annette Dolan (TUI), Máire Ni Chiarba (ASTI) and Emma Dineen (INTO President) with Genevieve Shangdiar, head teacher at Don Bosco School, Mawshbuit, with some of the pupils.

Emma joins a class in the Good Shepherd school, Jongksha
Retirements

Pictures from branch and district functions to honour retiring members

**Macroom**
L to R: Mairéad De Búrca, Branch Chairperson; Sinéad Twomey, Branch Secretary; Sheila Burke, Stíanna O’Ceilléachair; Emma Dineen, INTO President and John Driscoll, CEC Representative.

**Athlone/Moate**
Back row, L to R: Brenda English, Tang NS; Br Thomas, St Mary’s NS; Ita Maguire, St Mary’s NS; Brendan O’Sullivan, INTO President 2013/14; Sinéad Lenihan, Tubberclare NS; Bryan O’Reilly, CEC Rep. Front row, L to R: Helena Clarke, St Mary’s NS; Darina Dolan, Branch Chairperson; Mary Dolan, Cornamaddy NS; Olive Quinn, St Brigid’s NS; Jacqueline O’Shea, Coosan NS

**Tuam**
Back row, L to R: Aidan Burke, Branch Secretary; Mary O’Mahony, Irene Nolan, Branch Chairperson; Steve Lane, St Patrick’s PS, Tuam; Pat McWalter, Kilkonny NS; Eamonn Callaghan, Cummer NS; Brian Hynes, INTO President 1998/99; Siobhán Lynskey, INTO Education Committee; Tommy Greally, Branch Secretary. Front row, L to R: Mary Cunningham, Sylane NS; Geraldine O’Connor, Barnaderg NS; Mary Hernandez, Castlehackett NS; Breda Roche, Dunmore NS; Noreen Burke, Kilkonny NS; Marian Fahey, Belclare NS and Della Healy, Cahergal NS. Photograph: Johnny Ryan

**Roscommon**
L to R: Mary Naughton, Ballymurray NS; Séan McMahon, INTO President 2014/15; Ann Connaughton, Branch Chairperson and Ciara Naughton, Branch Secretary.

**Limerick East**
L to R: Majella Sutton, Branch Secretary; Mary O’Brien, Betty Murphy, Emma Dineen, INTO President; Anne O’Sullivan, Margaret Maher, Mary Richardson, Branch Chairperson. Photograph: Dave Gaynor

**Portlaoise**
Back row, L to R: Brenda Broderick, Branch Secretary; Angela Esmonde-Murphy, The Heath NS; Ann Curtin, The Heath NS and Kieran Brosnan, Branch Chairperson. Front row, L to R: Deirdre Prendergast, St Pauls NS, Portlaoise; Brendan O’Sullivan, INTO President 2013/14; Anne Boland, Scoil Mhuire, Portlaoise and Sean MacGearailt, Tobar an Leinn NS. Photograph: Michael Scully
Vere Foster was born in Copenhagen of an Irish-born father. He worked in the UK Diplomatic Corps but left to help the victims of the Great Famine on his brother’s estate in Ardee, Co Louth.

Concerned by reports of the terrible conditions for those using emigrant ships, Foster campaigned in the USA and Britain for improved conditions for passengers. He helped to found and became the first president of the INTO, travelling throughout the country campaigning for the maintenance and improvement of national schools.

Foster is also known for the popular ‘Vere Foster National School Writing Books’.

He died in Belfast on 21 December 1900.

The INTO Congress of 1956, held in Belfast decided to organise a suitable memorial as a tribute to the memory of Vere Foster.

The memorial takes the form of a Vere Foster medal, and is generally awarded by the INTO to the student obtaining the highest mark in teaching practice and/or curriculum areas of education.

Vere Foster medal winners

Marino Institute of Education
Oisín Morrison with his Vere Foster medal is pictured with Prof Anne O’Gara, President, MIE and Dr Patricia Slevin, Director of School Placement.

Maynooth University
Vere Foster medal winners Lisa Moore, fourth year B Ed student and Alison Larkin, H Dip student in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, pictured with Prof Marie McLoughlin, Head of Department.

Hibernia College
Zelma Power (left) from Clarecastle, Co Clare graduated in November with a Higher Diploma in Primary Education. Antoinette McGuinness (right) is from Bray, Co Wicklow. Zelma and Antoinette were both awarded the INTO Vere Foster Medal and are from the HDAPe September 2013 cohort.

Copyright 2015: Fennell Photography
Mary Immaculate College

Grace Cardiff from Bridgetown, Co Wexford, receiving her Vere Foster medal from Emma Dineen, INTO President, for first place in Teaching Practice and Curriculum Education. Grace was also recipient of the college medal, Carlisle and Blake prize and Frostburg Scholarship.

St Patrick’s College

Postgraduate Diploma in Education student, Deirdre Keane, being presented with the Vere Foster medal by INTO Vice President, Rosena Jordan.

Sciath na Scol presentations in Pairc Ui Rinn

INTO President hands over the trophies

Emma Dineen, INTO President, presenting the Roinn DF1 trophies to Ballygarvan’s Sean O’Donovan, captain, and Ciaran Doolan, vice captain, following their win over Gael Scoil Ui Riordain at the Allianz Sciath na Scol finals at Pairc Ui Rinn.

Included is Dermot O’Driscoll, Sciath na Scol.

Photograph: Mike English

Emma Dineen, INTO President, presenting the Roinn DGF3 trophies to Belgooly NS captain, Eva Egan and Aoife Hartnett, vice captain, following their win over Gael Scoil Ui Riada at the Allianz Sciath na Scol finals at Pairc Ui Rinn.

Included is Dermot O’Driscoll, Sciath na Scol.

Photograph: Mike English
In the September issue of InTouch (page 29) a range of examples was given of cases where the INTO had assisted members in correcting their rate of pay. The examples included teachers placed on the wrong point of the scale, a missing qualification allowance and the incorrect withdrawal of pay during a closure period.

As stated in September’s InTouch, members are advised to check payslips on a regular basis to ensure that they are on the correct point of the incremental scale and that any applicable allowances are being paid. There is further information on understanding your payslip in the members’ area of the INTO website.

**An error worth €30,000+**

Recently, the INTO was contacted by another teacher who believed that she was on the incorrect point of the salary scale. When the teacher’s basic pay in her fortnightly cheque was multiplied by 26.09, it was discovered that her annual pay was at a point on the scale which was very much short of reflecting her years of teaching.

Following contact with the Payroll Section of the DES, this teacher has now been restored to the correct point of salary. In addition, she was paid arrears of over €30,000, earnings which she should have received over the years but which were delayed due to an error.

While it can be welcome to receive arrears in addition to being put on the correct point of the scale, it is more satisfactory all round that teachers are paid at the correct rate.

So we advise again – check your pay slip!

### COMPLAINTS UNDER RULE 104/5

Rules 104 and 105 of the INTO Rules and Constitution set out a system of investigation of charges made by members of the INTO against other members. This Rule was reviewed and updated at Congress 2015. Such charges relate to engaging in activities declared to be injurious to the professional or trade union interests of the INTO, including breaches of directives. It should be noted that the vast majority of INTO members support and implement INTO directives, and that compliance with them is the norm in primary schools.

Complaints were dealt with initially by district secretaries at the early stages, and then referred to INTO Head Office in cases where they were not resolved.

Since the last update (InTouch December 2014) a further 16 arbitration hearings have been conducted, dealing with 23 complaints. Two cases did not proceed to hearing and three complaints against one member were withdrawn.

In three cases, the findings of the Arbitration Board were appealed. The appeals have been heard.

Arbitration and appeals reports are forwarded to the CEC for decision. A total of 21 members were found to be in breach of a directive. Sanctions ranged from warnings to 12 months’ suspension from INTO membership.

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### Conference on poverty and social inclusion in education

**INTO/St Patrick’s College, DCU. Saturday, 5 December 2015**

**Programme**

- 8.45 a.m. Registration
- 9.30 a.m. Opening of conference
  - Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality.
  - Dr Daire Keogh, President, St Patrick’s College.
  - Sheila Numan, INTO General Secretary.
- 9.50 a.m. Keynote address:
  - Carol Coulter, Social exclusion and child protection.
  - The Primary School Experience: Pat Courtney, principal teacher.
- 10.30 a.m. Discussion groups
- 11.15 a.m. Tea/coffee
- 11.30 a.m. Workshops
- 12.30 p.m. Final Plenary Session
  - Panel discussion
    - Pat Courtney, principal teacher,
    - Eibhlín Byrne, Tusla,
    - DES representative,
    - Bernie McNally, DCYA,
    - Anne Colgan, CES,
    - Deirdre Nic Craith, INTO.
- 1.45 pm Crioch/lón

**Workshop topics**

- **Emotional and behavioural support**
  - Examining what schools are adopting as effective practices for teaching and supporting students with SEBD.
  - Mary Keane, National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS)

- **Multidisciplinary teams in and around schools**
  - Working towards equality of outcome in areas experiencing education inequality.
  - Fiona Kearney, Familiibase, Ballyfermot

- **Traveller and Roma children in education**
  - Looking at the current issues faced by Traveller and Roma pupils in the Irish education system and the role that ethnic data can play in improving educational outcomes for all children.
  - Hilary Harmon, Pavee Point

- **A national strategy for hunger prevention in schools**
  - Examining the need and recommended features of a national strategy for hunger prevention in schools.
  - Sinead Keenan, Healthy Food for All

- **Northside Partnership**
  - The work being carried out in the Dublin 17 area with families, health services, early years settings and schools in an integrated fashion to improving child outcomes.
  - Noel Kelly, Northside Partnership

- **A community-based approach to addressing educational disadvantage**
  - How a community can work together to address poverty and social inclusion in education, thereby improving educational outcomes for children.
  - Josephine Bleach, NCIRL
Massive change now on cards for religion teaching

Government education advisers have unveiled proposals for a ground-breaking Education about Religion, Beliefs and Ethics (ERBEE) subject for all children, in all 3,000 primary schools... The NCCA plan has found favour with the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), although it acknowledged a key challenge would be to find space for the proposals in an already over-crowded curriculum. The INTO previously suggested a common religion programme for all children – with some separate religious instruction, perhaps for one or two classes per week.  

Irish Independent, 4 Nov 2015

Education gets a hefty €144m investment but third-level fees are not reduced

Minister O’Sullivan said: “From next September, average class sizes will decrease from 28:1 to 27:1. This positive development will require approximately 300 additional teaching posts.” The minister also said she hopes to see class sizes fall below 25 “in coming years”. Sheila Nunan, general secretary of the INTO said: “This is the first move to tackle overcrowding in nearly a decade. Irish primary schools will see this as progress towards a fairer deal for children. This decision will benefit children in primary schools. Teachers have more time with each pupil in smaller classes and can identify when a child is having difficulties faster.”

Irish Daily Mail, 14 Oct 2015

Extra 2,200 teachers to use up bulk of spend

The INTO, which set lower primary class sizes as its main Budget 2016 target, welcomed the move but expects more similar initiatives from Ms O’Sullivan or her successor next year. “This is the first move to tackle overcrowding in nearly a decade. Irish primary schools will see this as progress towards a fairer deal for children,” said INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan.

Irish Examiner, 14 Oct 2015

More teachers and smaller classes ‘important first step’

An increase in the number of teachers and smaller class sizes brought about by the Budget has been welcomed as the “first move to tackle overcrowding” in a decade. The Government announced an additional 2,260 teachers will be employed in the system from next September... Sheila Nunan of the INTO said cuts to class size were an “important first step” in bringing sizes to international levels. “This is the first move to tackle overcrowding in nearly a decade. Teachers have more time with each pupil in smaller classes and can identify when a child is having difficulties faster,” said Ms Nunan.

Herald, 14 Oct 2015

Extra €144m cuts primary class sizes and allows more time for guidance

Spending will rise €144m to a total of €9bn, the highest it has been since 2010.

An additional 2,260 teachers will be employed next September, the bulk of whom – 1,410 including resource teachers – will be recruited to deal with the additional 14,000 students at both primary and second-level. On top of that, and in a reversal of a cut that took effect in September 2009, there will be a further 300 primary teachers to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio from 28:1 to 27:1. The INTO described the cut to class sizes as an important first step towards bringing classes down to international levels. INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan said Irish classes were among the largest in the EU, second only to the UK.

Irish Independent, 14 Oct 2015

Education: Over 2,200 new teaching posts being created

A small cut in the pupil-teacher ratio and the creation of 2,260 additional teaching posts are the key education measures of Budget 2016... The INTO primary teachers’ union welcomed the reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio as a “first step towards bringing Irish class sizes into line with other countries”. General Secretary Sheila Nunan said studies in the United States and Canada had shown that smaller class sizes delivered better learning outcomes, especially with younger children. The average class size at primary level is 24 compared to an EU average of 21, but a quarter of Irish children are taught in classes of 30 or more.

The Irish Times, 13 Oct 2015

If you had seven minutes to revolutionise teaching

Teachmeet Ireland has found a simple way to spread tips and tricks that can be easily integrated into the classroom. In a very informal meeting, nano (two-minute) or macro (five-minute) presentations are given by participants, focusing on any aspect of education... Teachmeet Ireland recently held a meeting at Féilte, the Teaching Council’s festival of education and learning in the RDS. Presentations ranged from rebels to robotics. Another, run by Kathleen Byrne, the other founder of Teachmeet Ireland and the principal at St Patrick’s NS in Glencullen, took place at the INTO Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Conference.

The Irish Times, 13 Oct 2015
Tips to help you avoid getting in a knot over your wedding costs

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission have some tips and tools on taking the stress out of wedding planning.

**REVIEW YOUR FINANCES**
Start by getting a clear picture of your finances. Discuss with your partner what both of you may have already saved and what you can afford to put aside on a regular basis. For working out your costs it’s a good idea to track your spending over a week or month. Use the spending diary on www.consumerhelp.ie to help you clearly see what you spend your money on each day.

**THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE**
While your wedding day is very special, it is important to have savings for other unexpected future expenses that pop up after you are married. Always keep in mind your longer-term future goals.

**WHAT TO DO WITH CURRENT DEBT**
If you have outstanding debts such as loans or credit card bills, concentrate on clearing them first, starting with the most expensive ones. Use the credit card ready reckoner on www.consumerhelp.ie to see how long it will take you to clear your current balance on your card compared to switching to another card.

**MAKE A WEDDING BUDGET**
It is important to keep track of how much you are planning to spend. You can do this by prioritising what is important to you and then making a list of all the things you have to get and comparing the cost against your budget. Check out the wedding budget planner on the Competition and Consumer Protection’s consumer website, www.consumerhelp.ie

**START SAVING**
Saving up as much as you can means you are less likely to need to borrow. At www.consumerhelp.ie you will find a savings comparison that helps you compare the interest rates on savings accounts from the main providers.

**STRUGGLING TO MEET THE COST**
If you are struggling to stay within your budget and feel that you need to borrow, check to see how much it will cost you and how long it will take you to repay the loan. You can do this by using the loan calculator on www.consumerhelp.ie.

**WHAT ABOUT INSURANCE?**
Taking out wedding insurance offers you more security if something goes wrong. Make sure you know what the policy covers and compare premiums before you buy.

**PAY BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD**
Before you pay for any goods or services, research the companies or suppliers you are thinking of using. Pay as small a deposit as possible. For instance, if you put a deposit on a wedding dress and something goes wrong such as the bridal shop closing down you won’t be at risk of losing a large amount of money. Avoid signing a contract with a venue until you are sure what is and isn’t included in the price being quoted. Paying by credit/debit card instead of cash offers you some protection if things go wrong.

**WAYS TO SAVE**
- **Prioritise what’s most important** – you may decide that you want to spend more on a photographer, but you’re happy to hunt for a bargain on the dress.
- **Choose an unusual venue** – choosing a venue that is in high demand can be costly. Why not think of other venues which have their own charm such as a public park, gallery or historical site?
- **Consider getting married off-peak.** You’ll usually get better deals if you choose to get married in off peak months, or if you choose a day midweek.
- **Ask friends and family for help.** Do you know a photographer or printer? Ask for help in return for a wedding present.
- **Take your time** – Having a longer engagement can save you money. It gives you more time to do research on what places/vendors are the least expensive without sacrificing quality. Use online discussion forums and read up on wedding blogs to find out about other consumers’ experiences with suppliers. You may also find some more money saving tips.
- **Read the terms and conditions carefully.** Before you sign a contract with a venue, make sure you understand what is and isn’t included in the price being quoted, including the VAT, so that you don’t end up paying more than you planned.
**Introduction**

Teachers pay contributions towards pensions and the state, as employer, also contributes. The pension benefits under the pension scheme are calculated by reference to the number of years' worked. Subject to certain rules/restrictions, teachers can purchase additional years' service. The terms on which teachers who were employed after 1 January 2013 can purchase additional service have not yet been agreed. Accordingly, this article is only relevant to pre-2013 joiners.

The purpose of this article is to explain the options available and the steps that teachers should contemplate before making any decisions relating to pensions. This article is not a substitute for personalised individual financial advice, which should be sought before making a pension saving decision.

**Options to save more for retirement**

There are three main options:
- Purchase Added Years (or Notional Service)
- Pay into the approved Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme
- Pay into a Personal Retirement Savings Account – AVC (PRSA–AVC)

**Investment risk**

The primary difference between purchasing Added Years versus AVCs/PRSAs is the level of risk faced by the individual. Investment risk under AVCs/PRSAs can be managed through the selection of funds at the outset and/or the reduction of risk as an individual approaches retirement. It should be recognised that Added Years (NSP) is not completely risk-free either because you are buying a salary-related benefit and your salary at retirement is not known in advance.

**Charges**

There are charges associated with both AVCs and PRSAs. Note: Charges for the Teachers' AVC Scheme provided through Cornmarket were agreed at the most recent review:

- **Teacher** €450 (after purchase only and with full consultation advice)
- **AVC** 4% of annual contributions
- **Scheme service. Other services such as Execution Only’ are also available at reduced rates – see Cornmarket website)
- **3.75% of annual contributions**
- **1% of fund value p.a.**
- **Standard** €450 consultation charge
- **AVC** 4% of annual contributions
- **1% of fund value per annum** (note some funds have a higher charge)
- **PRSA** PRSA charges vary widely. Standard PRSAs have a maximum charge of 5% of contributions and 1% of the fund value p.a. Non-standard PRSAs can have much higher charges.

**Key advantages and disadvantages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors affecting all options</th>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase added years (notional service purchase or NSP)</td>
<td>• Contributions attract tax relief</td>
<td>• Any funds that you invest in a pension are locked away until retirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You know how your pension benefit will be calculated (defined benefit)</td>
<td>• Not eligible to those who will have 40 years’ service at NRA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You are buying a salary-related benefit</td>
<td>• Not open to those who will have less than 9 years’ service at normal retirement age (NRA)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You know the cost</td>
<td>• Benefits will be adjusted downwards if you retire early</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVC scheme</th>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Flexibility as regards contribution adjustments</td>
<td>• AVCs are subject to investment risk: low risk options now generate a return close to zero; high risk options are unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Retirement fund can be directed towards benefits that you choose</td>
<td>• AVCs are subject to fees and charges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ARF option available</td>
<td>• Actual retirement fund is only an estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• AVCs can help to fund for early retirement</td>
<td>• Additional AVC saving is still subject to Revenue limits: overfunding for retirement is not permitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>PRSA</th>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The advantages per AVCs apply plus…</td>
<td>• The disadvantages per AVCs apply plus …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You can choose any PRSA provider</td>
<td>You are responsible for organising your own tax relief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall considerations and conclusion

TENDING TOWARDS NOTIONAL SERVICE

- Starting to save within 12 years of retirement
- Not comfortable taking investment risk
- Happy with the additional pension and lump sum benefits; not interested in other retirement options
- Can commit to the added years contributions over the long-term

TENDING TOWARDS AVCS/PRSA

- Not eligible for added years
- Interested in a lump sum rather than a guaranteed income for life
- Interested in an ARF rather than a guaranteed income for life
- Would rather build up a personal retirement fund rather than have more pension benefits linked to final salary which cannot be known in advance

While the choice between Added Years and AVCs/PRSAs can be complicated, a core point shouldn’t be lost: if you want to improve retirement income and have the scope to contribute more now, find out more about the types of arrangement and start along one path or the other. Uncertainty between the two is not a good reason for doing neither.

Further information
A more detailed version of this advice is available on www.into.ie Further information in relation to the AVC scheme is available from the INTO and from Cornmarket.

Further information in relation to PRSAs is available from PRSA providers and from financial advisors.

Further information in relation to added years is available from the CS pensions website:
  Home page: www.cspensions.gov.ie/home.asp
  Calculator: www.cspensions.gov.ie/calculators.asp

John O’Connell, Trident Consulting, Dublin.
Work Life Balance

How newly qualified teachers can achieve a work-life balance

A new teacher has much to learn and consider when they arrive in a school setting for the first time as a qualified teacher. Taking on a professional role, becoming part of the school community and taking responsibility for a class can be a demanding process. Fortunately, we have a strong culture of support in Irish primary schools and it is important that as an NQT you take advantage of this support.

Your initial year/s in the profession will be demanding on your time as you get to grips with the demands of a busy career. It is important to maintain a good work/life balance for your personal and professional wellbeing.

Planning day to day

- Time is a limited commodity so it will be necessary to prioritise, plan and manage your time.
- Prioritise your ‘to do’ list in relation to work on a high to moderate to low scale.
- When planning lessons look for topics which span three or four lessons.
- Make a grid of your use of time for a week and see where your time is being spent. If you feel that you need to make changes then make one small change at a time.

Seek help around you

- Get as much help as possible. It is really important that you seek advice and support. All teachers were once in your shoes as an NQT and will empathise with you on what that first year is like.
- If you feel overwhelmed by the demands of the job talk with someone you trust at school level.

Try not to fall into the trap of comparing what you have covered in your class-range with a fellow NQT in another school. All schools are different, all classes are different, all children are different and all teachers are different.
- Work to your own pace, particularly in your first year out.
- Stay clear of rumours about probation etc. Check out the facts and work from there.
- Have a notebook and when you get a positive comment from a pupil, parent, colleague, principal or inspector write it down. On days when you are feeling overwhelmed it is good to look at this notebook and see the positive!
- Before you go home in the evening it may be good to talk with your mentor or another teacher, for a few minutes, about your day. Many teachers have, what has been described as a third space – a day in the week where they meet for a coffee/tea – so this might be an opportunity for you to meet with other teachers.

It all begins at home

It is important to eat well, exercise and get adequate sleep as it can be difficult to be effective in the classroom when you are tired.

Make time for recreation and social activities and maintain relationships with family and friends. If you find yourself making excuses for not meeting up with friends or not going home at weekends because of workload, then reflect on how much time you are spending on work-related tasks.

Take care of yourself

It is important that you find a sense of achievement in all you do. There will be days when you will ask yourself “Why did I become a teacher?” This feeling will pass – every teacher has days like this. Try not to over-analyse, just ask yourself what small step could I take to enable me get back in there again and make tomorrow more satisfying.

Don’t be too hard on yourself. Teaching is a really demanding and challenging job, very often there are no easy answers. You will have to work through problems and try different approaches but that is what makes teaching interesting and challenging.

Maintain a positive attitude towards your work. Avoid negative talk or people who talk down the job.

As an NQT do take care of yourself and remember ‘it is a sign of strength to ask for support’.

Remember: The optimum work/life balance is different for every teacher and will vary from day to day, week to week and year to year, depending on personal and professional circumstances.

Further reading

Useful contacts
www.teacherinduction.ie
www.education.ie
www.teachingcouncil.ie
www.ncca.ie
www.carecallwellbeing.ie
In November the DES announced a new €2.8 billion school building programme to run from 2016 to 2021 covering 184 primary and special schools projects and delivering an additional 25,000 pupil places by 2017.

The INTO broadly welcomed the announcement but questioned whether it would provide for increased diversity in school type, required to meet a changing population. The announcement confirms that schools listed on the architectural planning list at detailed design stage will now move forward towards construction. The INTO continues to demand that projects not in the plan but already in the DES system – from application stage onwards – should continue to progress towards completion.

The DES announced its intention to eliminate the use of prefabs as a long-term accommodation solution. This was welcomed by the INTO as a long overdue initiative.

In 2012 the INTO called on the Department of Education to outline a five year plan to rid the country’s schools of prefab accommodation.

Acknowledging that the number of prefabs has been reduced the INTO said government is still spending too much on prefabs and has not reduced the overall bill enough.

“Most of the prefab scheme remains in place,” said Sheila Nunan, INTO General Secretary. “Although reduced, the bill for prefabs is still bad value for money.”

Ms Nunan said prefabs are unsuitable educational accommodation and warned there was a long way to go before prefabs became a thing of the past.

Details of the programme are on www.education.ie

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Bus Éireann outlines its policy for status red weather alerts

Last month, Bus Éireann announced that if a status red weather warning is announced for all or part of a given day then all services provided by Bus Éireann under the School Transport Scheme will be cancelled in the affected area. The decision to cancel services will be made locally by regional School Transport Office. The School Transport Office will inform schools of a decision to cancel transport.

It remains the decision of each school whether to close in a red alert.

Announcing the policy with immediate effect Bus Éireann stated the policy had been put in place in the interest of pupil safety.

Bus Éireann operates the School Transport Scheme on behalf of the DES.

In the event that a status red warning in place in the morning is downgraded at or before noon, services, which do not operate in the morning, will operate as normal at school closing time. If a status red warning is not downgraded until after noon or later in the evening Bus Éireann will endeavour, where possible, and with the assistance of emergency services if necessary, to bring children home.

In these circumstances Bus Éireann will keep schools and media informed of school transport service developments.

The full policy is available on www.buseireann.ie/StatusRed

Minor Works Grant

The 2015/2016 Minor Works Grant issued to all primary schools in November 2015.

The grant is intended for improving the physical infrastructure of schools and the purchase of standard furniture, physical education equipment and IT related equipment.

The rates payable are €5,500 per school plus €18.50 per mainstream pupil and €74 per special needs pupil.
Registration conditions deadline extended to 31 January 2016

As previously notified to members in InTouch and in e-newsletters, there are a number of teachers registered with the Teaching Council with conditions that are due to expire on 31 December 2015. This expiry date has been extended to 31 January 2016.

The Teaching Council is communicating directly with the teachers concerned. Teachers are required to notify the Teaching Council in writing where they have addressed their conditions of registration. Teachers who have encountered circumstances that have prevented the completion of a condition of registration may be eligible for an extension. Such circumstances might include for example maternity leave, career breaks, unemployment.

Teachers who wish to submit documentation that a probation condition has been met, or an extension request, should include relevant supporting evidence. This should be submitted to the Council before 4 December 2015.

A teacher employed in a state funded position who does not fulfil conditions by 31 January 2016 and who does not engage with the Council in the interim will see registration lapse. This means that the payment of salary will stop.

It is of vital importance that all teachers in this group make contact with the Council immediately. The lapsing of the registration of any teacher has serious implications.

Members should contact the Council, by phone: 01 651 7900 or email conditions@teachingcouncil.ie now to discuss options.

Labour Court recommends increase for school secretaries and caretakers

The grant paid to a primary school for capitation and ancillary services (secretarial and caretaking assistance) is determined by enrolment. A minimum grant applies for ancillary services in respect of enrolments up to 60. A maximum grant applies in schools with enrolments of 500 or more.

In 2015 the Ancillary Services Grant is €147 per pupil.

Following the Lansdowne Road Agreement the DES and unions entered an arbitration process conducted by the Labour Relations Commission. As a result the Labour Court recommended secretaries and caretakers employed by BOMs receive pay rises of 2.5 per cent between 2016 and 2019 increasing minimum hourly rates from €10.25 to €13 an hour. If accepted the following will apply:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Minimum hourly rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>€10.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>€11.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>€11.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>€11.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>€13.00</td>
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PAVEE POINT CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Last month, the INTO was represented at a celebration of 30 years of Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. The event was attended by Uachtarán na hÉireann, Michael D. Higgins.

The event highlighted the crucial work done by Pavee Point over the decades on behalf of the Travelling and Roma communities, work that they continue to do to this day.

The Pavee Point Education Group has worked in conjunction with the INTO in the past on a number of issues.

In his address to the gathering President Higgins began by making reference to the Carrickmines tragedy in which 10 Irish citizens lost their lives in the most harrowing way. After pausing in a silent show of solidarity, he spoke about the unjust treatment the Travelling and Roma community have endured over the past number of years and how we, as a nation, must do better to foster a comprehensively inclusive society.

The president highlighted the unwavering efforts that have been made by Pavee Point and instanced gains made in the areas of women’s rights, education as well as the creation of a Traveller LGBT group.

Michael D Higgins was accompanied by his wife Sabina. The event was attended by founding members of Pavee Point, Ronnie Fay and Martin Collins, as well as chairperson of Pavee Point, Anastasia Crickle. Others present included the lively Missy Collins and Pavee Point board member Máirín Kenny, a former principal of St Kieran’s NS, Bray.

Pictured L to R: Sabina Higgins, Michael D. Higgins, Martin Collins, Pavee Point; Joe O’Reilly, INTO intern.
Canadian astronaut helps discover Ireland’s best schools science videos

Canadian astronaut, Commander Chris Hadfield, helped discover the best new science videos made by Irish primary and secondary school students for Science Week 2015. The winners of the NUI Galway video competition, ReelLIFE SCIENCE, at primary level were announced on 9 November 2015 as Scoil Aonghusa Senior, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Supported by the Science Foundation Ireland Discover programme and the Centre for Research in Medical Devices (CÚRAM) at NUI Galway, ReelLIFE SCIENCE challenged Irish schools to make short videos, which would entertain and educate people, on a range of scientific topics.

Joining Commander Hadfield on the judging panel were Aoife McLysaght, Trinity College Dublin, professor of molecular evolution and BT Young Scientist and Technologists of the Year, Ian O’Sullivan and Eimear Murphy from Coláiste Treasa, Kanturk, Co Cork. The judges selected Scoil Aonghusa Rocket Launch produced by fourth class students of Scoil Aonghusa Senior, Tallaght, under the direction of their teacher Jennie Smith, as the best primary school video and deserving winners of the €1,000 first prize. The video, a news report live from Tallaght’s first manned rocket launch, was described by Commander Hadfield as “fun” and “well-acted”, while Professor McLysaght praised the “humour interspersed with the science,” remarking that, “This video is great fun and I think the pupils had fun making it too.”

An animated, bilingual video called Ag Dearadh an Todhchaí claimed the €300 second prize. The video was made by fourth and fifth class students in Gaelscoil Riabhach, Baile Locha Riach, Co na Gaillimhe. In third place, winning €200, were the fifth and sixth classes from Sooey NS, Co Sligo, with Ninja Nematodes. Also shortlisted were second class students from Gaelscoil Bhale Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9, with their video about gravity, Imtharraingt; and an original musical number Water is Cool for School: Hydration for Concentration written and performed by fourth class students in Scoil Einde Boys NS, Galway.

All the videos can be viewed at www.reellifescience.com

Free Being Me

The Dove Free Being Me campaign is an initiative by the Irish Girl Guides and Catholic Guides of Ireland, to boost body confidence and self-esteem of Irish girls aged seven to 16. The campaign aims to reach 16,000 Irish girls through the programme which unmasks society’s beauty myths, exposing air-brushing and challenging unhealthy body talk through a series of fun, interactive and thought-provoking activities.

The programme has been developed by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the Dove Self-Esteem Project, with the vision of creating a world free from appearance-related anxiety by boosting the confidence of a whole generation.

More information is available on Facebook www.facebook.com/freebeingmeciga and on the main campaign homepage www.free-being-me.com/
The secret of Kilkenny success revealed

There is no secret!

2015 saw another chapter unfold in the Kilkenny hurling success story. Brian Cody stepped down from his role as principal of St Patrick’s De la Salle BNS but had added the senior hurling title to the black and amber roll of honour by the end of the first weekend in September.

The Kilkenny secret is that there is no secret. Just a system devoted to ensuring that the conveyor belt of talent doesn’t slow down. Here’s where Cumann na mBunscol comes in.

Gaelic games in primary schools in Kilkenny were first organised on a formal basis in 1939. Fifty years later, a publication chronicling the first half-century of activity was launched, fittingly titled Caoga Bliain ag Fás. On 23 October this year, a book looking back on the last 25 years of Cumann na mBunscol was launched in the city by none other than Henry Shefflin. Ó Fhás go hAois, compiled and coordinated by Gerry O’Neill and Dermot Dunphy, it records the story of Gaelic games in the primary schools of the county over the last quarter of a century.

Dermot is from exalted hurling stock. His dad, Joe, taught for many years in Ballyhale NS. It was fitting that Henry Shefflin should launch this book as he has frequently credited Joe as a hugely influential figure in his early years. A glance through the pages devoted to Ballyhale NS shows not just Henry, but James ‘Cha’ Fitzpatrick, Michael Fennelly and TJ Reid wearing the school jersey. The work of teachers such as Joe Dunphy can never be overstated. Many administrators have given their time and talents to the cause of Cumann na mBunscol but few can match the longevity or efficiency of Paul Kinsella, St Patrick’s De la Salle BNS and John Knox, Gowran NS.

In 1973, Paul was elected secretary of Cumann na mBunscol, Chill Chainnigh, while John was elected as treasurer, roles they filled until 2008. A combined 70 years of unbroken service! John is photographed in the 2002 Kilkenny publication with two of his former pupils, DJ Carey and Charlie Carter, both distinguished Kilkenny captains.

A flick through the section on the INTO Mini Sevens is akin to reciting a list of the best hurlers of the last 30 years. Have a look at these:

- 1995: Tommy Walsh.
- 1996: James Fitzpatrick and Eoin Reid.
- 1997: James Fitzpatrick.
- 1998: TJ Reid.
- 2000: Lester Ryan.
- 2002: Colin Fennelly.

Ned Quinn, current chairman of Kilkenny County Board GAA, highlights the contribution that generations of teachers have made to the Kilkenny success story when he observes in the foreword to Ó Fhás go hAois.

“Teachers not only bring their teaching expertise but their expertise of dealing with young people into the arena. They were the ideal group to start things.”

Cumann na mBunscol, on a national level, would like to see all county units attempt to chronicle the history of Gaelic Games in primary schools. The role of schools as nurseries of young talent should never be forgotten.

“In recent times,” says Pat McGivern, “a number of counties have begun to produce a book on the history of Cumann na mBunscol in their county. There is a great wealth of information in each county either from founder members or through minutes and documents. It would be a great pity if this wealth of knowledge and history was lost as the years went by. The national committee asks each county Coiste if they could produce a short history of their Coiste that could be included in a book to be produced by the National Committee.”

So, there’s a challenge to all counties. Get writing!

JOE LYONS, PRO, Cumann na mBunscol.

Cumann na mBunscol awards

Scheduled for Friday, 11 March 2016

The details of the 2016 Cumann na mBunscol awards in association with Cornmarket Financial Services have been announced.

Category 1: Pat Trainor Hall of Fame Award

Category 2: Public relations

Category 3: Best publication category

Category 4: Promotion of Gaelic games and culture

Category 5: 1916 and my locality

Category 6: School of the year (schools with a roll of 150 pupils or less)

Category 7: School of the year (schools with 150 or more pupils)

Closing date for all entries is 31 December 2015.
This year, 44 schools or school education organisations around Ireland received funding of more than €2.5 million from Erasmus+, the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. The programme allows for a diverse range of activities in projects large and small. Erasmus+ thus has huge scope for integrating change and innovation into the classroom. Yet often teachers don’t quite know where to start, or what options are available.

To begin, it’s essential to know that Erasmus+ has an organisation-based approach: projects need to address the identified needs of the entire organisation rather than of individual staff members, and must be in the context of a European Development Plan. In effect this means that organisations must agree what their development or strategic priorities are, and use Erasmus+ to pursue these goals. There are two types of projects available to do this, known as ‘Key Actions’. No matter which type, a successful Erasmus+ project is one that becomes central to school life and is beneficial to school, staff and pupils.

Under Key Action 1, staff members can travel abroad for short teaching assignments or training periods designed to assist the whole school. As an example, St Paul’s Primary in Laois used this action to develop intercultural competencies among its staff. With pupils coming from ever more diverse cultural backgrounds, the school saw a need to promote a sense of shared citizenship empowering all pupils to be part of the larger European community. A cross-section of staff was selected to attend a training course on ‘European Diversity Education’ in Latvia, or to job shadow teachers in Slovenia. The staff then shared their learning within the organisation, helping to implement an intercultural approach across the whole school that recognised diversity and individual pupil needs.

Under Key Action 2, schools and/or school education organisations can lead or join a Strategic Partnership – a collaborative international project where organisations work together to raise standards in teaching and learning, by developing and sharing new working methods or research. These can be school-only partnerships, partnerships between local/regional authorities, or partnerships between schools and other education and training organisations. These kinds of projects need not be highly complex; for example, St Mary’s Parish Primary in Louth formed a partnership with four European schools to collect myths and legends from each country using ICT. The legends became the basis for a curriculum resource to develop students’ oral and written literacy skills, which will be made available online for other literacy teachers. From 2016, strategic partnerships in school education will further distinguish between projects that produce innovative intellectual outputs and those that focus on exchange of good practice. There will also be a separate budget allocation for each, so that like is compared with like!

Implementing successful Erasmus+ projects requires the support of the organisation as a whole, which may be a challenge if there is no history of such projects or a reluctance to get involved. One approach for teachers in this situation is to begin with eTwinning, a European initiative that digitally connects schools for highly flexible collaborative projects. eTwinning projects can begin immediately after registration and be as short or long as desired, so they are well suited for individual class work. In addition to creating the initial engagement with Europe, many Erasmus+ projects have been born out of connections made through eTwinning – including the Key Action 1 project mentioned above!

Schools that are considering Erasmus+ applications should be aware that it is a competitive programme, and that applications require a good deal of planning and forethought. There is one deadline each year for applications: 2 February 2016 for Key Action 1 and 31 March 2016 for Key Action 2. Léargas holds information and application sessions before each deadline, and supports applicants throughout the process. See www.leargas.ie or contact schoolsvet@leargas.ie for more information. See also ad on page 30.

CHARIS HUGHES, Communications Officer, Léargas
Children need access to real books first and foremost
Elaine Ryan argues children need book time before screen time

Books must be a part of every child’s life from a very young age. In the first year of life, cloth books, board books and bath books designed for small hands get young children turning pages, and sharing reading with a parent or carer. This not only boosts speech and language skills, but creates positive associations around reading as an enjoyable activity, encouraging a lifelong habit as well as strengthening the bond between parent and child.

Government should support, financially and practically, a universal book gifting scheme to be available to babies and their families on a nationwide basis. Such a scheme is currently in place in Dublin, Limerick and Wexford. It supplies books to new parents free of charge and ensures that every child has access to at least one excellent book regardless of socio-economic circumstances. Schemes like this are run successfully all over the world. In the UK, Bookstart has grown from a pilot with 300 babies in 1992 to now providing free books for every child at three key stages: babies, toddlers and preschoolers. There are over 30 affiliated schemes across five continents, not to mention other independent regional and national schemes worldwide.

Booktrust, which administers Bookstart, constantly assesses and researches its programmes: 68% of Bookstart (UK) parents said that looking at books was among their child’s three most enjoyed activities (compared with 21% of comparison group parents) and 43% said they took their child to the library once a month or more (compared with 17% of comparison group). 75% of Bookstart parents bought books as presents for their children (10% for non-Bookstart). Longitudinal research on the initial Bookstart pilot group, though the sample was small, found that children who had received Bookstart packs were clearly ahead of other children in both literacy and numeracy upon entering school, and this head start was maintained, with Bookstart children doing significantly better than their counterparts across all SAT assessments at age 7.

Reading for pleasure must be at the heart of all literacy initiatives. At a recent International Literacy Conference, Dr Peter Archer, Director of the Educational Research Centre, highlighted the relationship between reading proficiency and interest. If reading is seen as enjoyable, relaxing and stimulating, rather than a chore or something that is simply ‘good for you’, the child is more likely to want to pick up a book.

Technological competency is important, but the skills that underlie the acquisition of such competency — the ability to read and evaluate print information and to deal with printed words and images without distraction — should be nurtured.

Government urgently needs to consider early interventions which encourage a love of reading before a child reaches school-going age. When a child does go to school, they should have access to a well-stocked library and a librarian or teacher with the expertise to guide them in their reading.

Economically speaking, ensuring that these basic provisions are in place would be far more cost effective than purchasing tablets for every child. An iPad per primary school child would cost approximately €257m. For less than €300,000 per year, every baby born in Ireland could receive two high quality board books along with relevant resources for parents about reading with young children and an invitation to join their local library. This cost includes a robust evaluation to monitor and assess outcomes.

In his foreword to the 2015 PISA OECD study, Students, Computers and Learning: Making the Connection, Andreas Schleicher states that “the results show no appreciable improvements in student achievement in reading, mathematics or science in the countries that had invested heavily in ICT for education” (2015, p3).

Technological competency is important, but the skills that underlie the acquisition of such competency – the ability to read and evaluate print information and to deal with printed words and images without distraction – should be nurtured through the availability of a wide range of books from a very early age. This will underpin every aspect of educational and personal development and help to make our young people discerning, creative and competent adaptors to whatever new technologies they will encounter throughout their lives.

ELAINA RYAN is the director of Children’s Books Ireland, the national organisation for the promotion of children’s books and reading. More information, see www.childrensbooksireland.ie
Children benefit when both parents are involved in their education. Yet, the reality for many schools is that it is the involvement of the mother which is expected and received. However, recent research in three DEIS schools in Cork city highlighted the importance of fathers in the educational lives of their children (Keane, 2015). The study did not seek to incite rivalry between mothers and fathers but rather to highlight the complementarity of their roles in relation to supporting their child’s learning.

**Key findings**
- Fathers were more involved in the education of their children than had been anticipated by the educational community.
- The majority of fathers in the sample group supported their children’s learning in the home, primarily through their involvement with homework. However, as two thirds of the fathers rarely signed homework their involvement was not always visible in the school.
- Many of the fathers who were former construction workers were confident in their ability to help their child with maths.
- Fathers with literacy difficulties indicated that the laptop was a significant support for them in assisting their children with homework.
- Barriers to the involvement of fathers included low levels of education, negative experiences from their own school days and reluctance by fathers to initiate communication with the school. Some fathers were also disinclined to participate in groups which were dominated by mothers. In addition, a positive bias by teachers towards mothers was noted.

**Fathers’ greater interest and involvement in their children’s learning and in schools are statistically associated with better school outcomes for children …**

 Goldman, 2005:121

- The teachers in this study perceived that parental involvement is primarily the domain of the mother. However, they acknowledged that the involvement of fathers is increasing. Teachers noted the growing attendance of fathers at parent-child activities such as cookery, science and maths, together with ‘hands on’ outdoor type activities like gardening. They observed that this increased contact has contributed to the breaking down of barriers between fathers and teachers.
- A number of issues emerged which hinder teachers in their efforts to involve the majority of fathers:
  - Two thirds of teachers were hampered by a lack of knowledge of the significant males in the household.
  - Teachers lacked sufficient opportunities to engage in both formal and informal communication with fathers.
  - The majority were uncertain about the level of interest of fathers in education and also their capacity to support their children’s education.
- For some teachers, lack of visibility was interpreted as a lack of interest. The exceptions to this were teachers in the preschool or infants classes who reported higher levels of contact. This in turn facilitated higher levels of involvement by fathers in home and school activities.
  - Notwithstanding the barriers to the involvement of fathers, some teachers were successful in engaging a minority of fathers. Positive outcomes were noted when teachers made a particular effort to involve a father. They reported that fathers followed through with action when they were given specific, practical tasks to support their child’s education.
  - One unanticipated finding was the extent to which some teachers considered that, in relation to increasing the educational achievement of the child, an interested father in a DEIS school could exert an influence above and beyond that of the mother. This was not considered a slight on the mother but rather a reflection of the heavy workload and stresses associated with motherhood which can detract from the mother’s capacity to focus on their child’s learning outcomes.
  - Some teachers considered that many fathers have a greater capacity to support their children with maths, a view consistent with the perceptions of the majority of fathers in the sample group. Other practitioners observed that fathers are often more structured and focused in relation to keeping a child on task, particularly in relation to homework. They commented that they generally exert greater levels of control. Teachers noted that their view of the potential of fathers had been positively influenced by observing fathers at work with pupils during parent-child activities in the school.
The study concluded that strategies which encourage paternal involvement include a strength-based, gendered approach, issuing specific invitations to fathers, enlisting the support of mothers, building on fathers’ interests together with an overall proactive approach to communication with fathers by all educational professionals.

**Some recommendations for teachers and schools to encourage father involvement:**

- Review enrolment forms to ensure that information on both parents is included, particularly in the case of a non-resident father.
- Reflect on your practice to address any unconscious bias in favour of communication with the mother. This may involve respectfully resisting the tendency of many fathers to direct engagement towards the mother, particularly in the context of home visits or phone calls to the home.
- Build on informal opportunities to communicate with fathers e.g. at the school gate, school concerts and sports events.
- Be alert to informal signals of paternal engagement. Encourage fathers to sign or co-sign homework, as an indicator of interest and as an initial step in setting up a chain of communication.
- Raise expectations, where possible, from one-parent to two-parent involvement.
- Affirm fathers in their role by acknowledging the impact of their involvement with their child’s learning. This needs to be done in a manner which is respectful of the involvement of the mother and avoids over celebrating actions by fathers for work routinely undertaken by mothers.
- Fathers’ specific interests could be considered in relation to encouraging them to read with their children.
- Utilise fathers’ self-efficacy in relation to maths. The provision of maths games for use in the home would encourage father involvement in maths related activities. This would capitalise on the fun approach to learning favoured by many fathers. It would also offer a non-threatening opportunity for the teacher to gauge the interest level of the father and initiate communication about the child’s learning.
- Adopt a gendered approach to communication with parents. The findings suggest that teachers might adopt a fact-based, non-emotive style of delivery when communicating with fathers about their child’s progress, in both formal and informal situations. This would include the provision of concrete evidence indicating the performance of the child relative to his/her own ability and to the overall standard of the class. The positive achievements of the child must be emphasised at the outset. Consider the manner in which negative issues are communicated to fathers in order to avoid a confrontational situation or an over-reaction to a named issue. Give practical, realistic suggestions about how to address an identified difficulty, including a built-in time frame for review. Where possible, fathers of children with learning difficulties should be consulted about their child’s needs at the earliest opportunity.
- Adopt a gendered approach to parental involvement activities. For some fathers, a non-feminised environment is a prerequisite for their participation. However, activities for males should be inclusive of grandfathers, older brothers, uncles etc. to avoid stigmatisation for the child whose father is not involved in his or her life.

**References**


DOROTHY KEANE is a home school community liaison co-ordinator at Scoil na Croise Naofa and Gaelscoil Mhachan in Mahon, Cork. She was awarded a bursary from the INTO for this research and was also the 2014 recipient of the Dr Concepta Conaty Memorial Bursary.
“Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did” – Mark Twain

It’s break time and the theme music from *Dances with Wolves* is playing over the loudspeakers. The boys are heading out to play in the November sunshine. There is no bell; John Barry’s soundtrack punctuates our day.

It’s spring in Buenos Aires and my wife, Nan and I are enjoying a career break here with our 12 year old son, Darragh.

**A mad idea!**

Fifteen years ago, we took our first career break to go on a round-the-world trip. It didn’t disappoint. We were particularly taken with Latin America, where we fell in love with Argentina, Chile and Nicaragua. We have cherished memories of that time but the travel bug had bitten and we were itching once more. We often dreamed of heading off again and sharing our adventures with Darragh. A mad idea! Especially at our ages when we should be settled and sensible. But the itch lingered and we realised that it was now or never. Darragh finished primary in Ballygarvan NS, and his classmates were moving on to 12 different schools. It was a natural break and he was young for secondary school. He could take a gap year, return to secondary and still be the same age as his classmates.

I am principal of Blarney Street CBS in Cork. I love my job and school but principalship is demanding and all-consuming and the thought of a breather to try something different was attractive. When I told my chairperson, deputy principal and staff, they were encouraging and supportive and fortunately were also willing and capable to step up. The mad idea was becoming a reality.

**Explore. Dream. Discover!**

Luckily, the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) had been developing links between Christian Brothers schools. A new initiative, Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders (EREBB) sought to share the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice and promote partnership between schools nationally and internationally. Through this initiative, an opportunity arose to base myself in Buenos Aires for six months.

We needn’t have been nervous about fitting in. We received the most heart-warming welcome from staff and house and took Twain’s advice to throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover!

Our school is Cardenal Newman College, a Christian Brothers’ college situated just outside Buenos Aires. It operates in the Edmund Rice tradition and values academic achievement, faith formation, sport, community and parental involvement. The last two Christian Brother principals were Corkmen: Br John Burke from Shanballymore and Br Paul Keohane from the Lough in Cork. So heading out, I hoped that the staff would be able to understand my Cork accented Spanish.

**Nervous start**

When we arrived at the start of August we were really very nervous especially about how our son would fit in and get on in school, which starts at eight and finishes at four, so it’s quite a long day. We had organised an apartment downtown near the famous Recoleta cemetery and during those new, first few days, we soon figured out how to navigate our new morning routine.

We caught the school bus, or combi, at 7 a.m. from the city. We walked 14 blocks to the combi, admiring the city, bathed in early morning light. The sky over Avenida Coronel Diaz was pink as Porteños set off on their morning routines. The city was alive. On Avenida de Libertador, 11 lanes of traffic revved at red lights as the three of us laughed and raced across, tracking our 29 second digitalized countdown. Black and yellow taxis competed with orange school buses for lane superiority. Yellow city bikes spun along cycle lanes, sharing with joggers. Dogs were lovingly led through streets and parks while inside plush lobbies parents waited with pupils for school transport. Outside there were many homeless sleeping under blankets.

Monica, the combi driver, welcomed us by name and chatted cheerfully to us as she carefully negotiated the busy PanAmericano Highway to San Isidro. The bus was full of sleepy students catching a last few winks before school.

We needn’t have been nervous about fitting in. We received the most heart-warming welcome from staff and...
students. They were really delighted we had come to their school; they hugged and kissed us on the cheek. Both the men and women!

We’ve been here four months now and it’s been wonderful to be in a country for a long time and really get to know people and understand the culture.

Irish connections
The school community is enchanted by Ireland and is very curious about Irish history and customs. Many staff have Irish surnames: Valerie Murray teaches fifth grade, Maria Kenny teaches sixth. The school secretary is Maureen Flynn.

On roll, there are families of McCormacks, Scallys, Duggans, Lawlors and even Lynchs. All of them are Argentine with Irish roots going back generations; there has been little recent Irish immigration here.

School life
As it’s a bilingual school, there are two staffs. Until noon, the curriculum is delivered entirely through Spanish. These teachers leave to teach in different schools in the afternoon. They tell me that it’s exhausting teaching two shifts but teachers are poorly paid in Argentina so they must work extra hours to make ends meet. There is little regard for teaching as a profession here, they lament.

At midday the English primary staff arrive; the same students but a new staff and deputy principal. It was confusing at the start but I’m used to it now. Like their colleagues, these English speaking teachers generally arrive from a morning’s work elsewhere.

Teachers have different qualifications here depending on the course studied so most are only qualified to teach either in the Spanish section or the English section.

The primary and secondary school are connected by a central hall and there are a huge number of teachers in the secondary too, as most teachers have only part-time hours. In total, 180 teachers work in both schools.

Lunchtime is very interesting, the cafeteria is like a city with so many people coming and going. The food is excellent and staff and students lunch together.

Everyone is welcoming, and it’s a great opportunity to meet and chat with different people and hear their stories.

The three of us are enjoying the experience in our own way. I work mornings in the secondary and spend my time preparing small groups for oral English exams such as IELTS or Trinity. I do team-teaching and substitute work too so it’s very varied.

Later, in the primary I support the principal and deputy principal who are very interested in Blarney Street’s reading initiatives; they’ve asked me to talk to the staff about graded readers, station teaching and Reading Recovery.

The concepts are very new to them so they found the PDST website a great resource. The school has introduced station teaching so at least I feel that my visit has been of some value.

My wife, Nan, has taken a break from teaching and has relaxed and been involved with some of the school’s work to support the needy in the barrios.

There is a huge social divide in Argentina so Newman is very aware of its Edmund Rice ethos and has many pastoral and social justice projects in operation. We both have had the lovely experience of helping out in a less fortunate school nearby that Newman supports.

Having a ball
Darragh is having a ball. I see him outside now smiling with his buddies in the playground. I hope that 20 years from now, he will have happy memories, friends and new skills from his travels in Latin America. Three of us having a great break, it hasn’t disappointed, Mr Twain!

BILLY LYNCH teaches in Scoil Cholmcille BNS, Co Cork. You can follow the adventures of Billy, Nan and Darragh on https://3gosouth.wordpress.com
What model of primary for the future?

A legacy issue

The model of the state-aided private primary school system, established in the early 19th century, no longer satisfies the needs of primary school provision for Irish society in the 21st century. As the system evolved, the private patrons became almost exclusively the authorities of religious denominations, so that, by 2015, 93% of schools are under denominational patronage.

However, Irish society has become much more heterogeneous, multicultural, multi-religious and secular than it has been in the past. A significant minority of Irish parents now find it very difficult, if not impossible, to exercise their educational rights in line with Article 42 of the Constitution.

The problem is not a new one, and was publicly highlighted in the Report on the National Educational Convention in 1994 and in the Report of the Constitution Review Group in 1996. However, 20 years later the issue has not been resolved.

Intervention towards change

The INTO, was the first group to call for the establishment of a forum on school patronage and religious education in 2002.

In April 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, TD, took the initiative of establishing the forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary sector, prompted by the expressed willingness of Catholic authorities to consider divesting patronage of some primary schools. It is important to note that the forum was not to engage in a fundamental appraisal of the patronage system. Rather, its terms of reference directed it to advise on “the practicalities of how divesting of patronage should operate” and how such divesting “can be met on a widespread basis nationally”.

The forum took a widely consultative approach with all relevant stakeholders and achieved a high level of consensus among participants. The Report of the Forum’s Advisory Group was published in April 2012, over three and a half years ago.

The report’s recommendations focused on four key themes:

- Decisions on patronage for newly established schools.
- Modes of divestment of patronage of a school in towns where there was a large cluster of denominational schools.
- How ‘stand alone schools’ serving rural areas, could be made more inclusive when their pupils were of different belief systems.
- The introduction of a new subject called Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics for all pupils.

A significant minority of Irish parents now find it very difficult, if not impossible, to exercise their educational rights in line with Article 42 of the Constitution.

Outcomes

While progress has been made on the implementation of some of the recommendations the overall outcome has been disappointing over the time span.

Since 2011, progress has been made on the planning of appropriate patronage patterns for 24 primary schools in areas where increased pupil numbers have justified the building of new schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some progress has been made in some stand alone and other schools moving towards becoming more inclusive. However, this is due to the common sense, humanity and professional acumen of individual teachers rather than to a coordinated, structured approach to inclusion, as suggested by the forum report.

The report recommended that the NCCA, in consultation, would prepare an ERB and ethics programme for all pupils, but particularly for pupils of no religious belief system, to help them understand the heritage of religious systems, and the need for tolerance. In October 2015, the NCCA issued a consultation document on such a programme.

It is in the area of general divestment of patronage where clusters of denominational schools occur and where there is parental demand for an alternative type of school that progress has been most lacking in drive and engagement. At the request of church authorities and as recommended by the report, the Department of Education and Skills conducted surveys of parental views in 47 areas, where there seemed to be a prime facie case for an alternative form of school. The aim was to see if there was a significant minority of parents in those areas who desired change. This was to be a first phase of what was intended to become a more national survey. It was adjudged that this first phase indicated that change was sought in 23 areas. This was communicated to the Catholic patrons. Local meetings were convened in these areas to explore the possibility and processes of divesting. Predictably, knowing the sense of identity and loyalty of local communities with schools, no school community opted for the voluntary divestment of its own school.

For divestment to become a realistic option a much more committed and proactive engagement by patrons and public representatives would be required, based on good communication of why change was necessary and in the public interest of a pluralist democracy.

To date, eight primary schools have benefited from the school patronage divestment process and there are some omens that some progress may be made through the process of school amalgamations.

The on-going challenge

Even though Ireland has a very high proportion of schools per head of population by international comparison, parents are expressing great frustration,
If the divestment is not activated and progressed in a satisfactory way, then pressure is likely to build for a more fundamental approach to change the model of primary school provision. Situations such as these may lead to social conflict on school provision.

If the divestment is not activated and progressed in a satisfactory way, then pressure is likely to build for a more fundamental approach to change the model of primary school provision. Politicians have been reluctant to engage with the constitutional and legal issues underpinning the current system. However, the current system is not sustainable into the future.

Ireland has already been subject to international criticism on the issue from a range of bodies such as the European Commission on Human Rights and the UN Conventions to which Ireland has been a signatory. This is likely to become more intensified and the state’s embarrassment in the light of the European Court’s finding on the state’s role in primary schooling, as expressed in the O’Keefe case (2014), may be further exacerbated.

An issue of such public importance as the satisfactory provision of primary schooling for the citizens of a pluralist democratic republic cannot be allowed to drift indefinitely without injury to the body politic.

This issue of genuine political concern demands satisfactory resolution.

Professor JOHN COOLAHAN is professor emeritus of education in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has lectured extensively in Ireland and abroad, is author of three books and has published over 120 articles in Irish and international journals. He was a founding member and president of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland, and was editor of Irish Educational Studies. He is chairperson of the governing body in St Patrick’s College since 2007.
Discovery and learning

Take care of your garden birds this winter

We have an abundance of native bird species in Ireland that need some extra care and attention over the cold winter months. Wild birds may look small and delicate, but they are good at surviving the cold temperatures in winter. To do this they need quite a supply of food to produce enough heat to keep warm.

Here’s what you can do to help them along in your school garden:
• Set up a bird feed table away from predators.
• Place bird feeders outside your window or in trees and spot the birds that visit your school garden each day.
• Birds love seeds and nuts. Having a variety of food is the key to keeping our birds healthy and happy.
• Don’t forget to leave out water for birds. They need it for drinking and they also like to have a bath from time to time.
• Having fat in their diet helps to build up insulation. Why not make feed balls for your birds.

Make your own bird feed balls

What you need
• Fat – such as lard, suet or coconut oil.
• Fresh seeds, fresh peanuts, dried mealworms (any combination)
• Mixing bowl
• Scissors
• 30 cm of string
• Gloves (optional)
• Empty yogurt cartons (optional)

Method

1. Place the fat, seeds and other ingredients together in a bowl. A good rule of thumb is to use one part fat to two parts seeds/nuts.
2. Mix together the ingredients until they can easily come together in a ball. (Use gloves if necessary)
3. Using a scissors, cut pieces of string and tie them in a loop with a knot at the end.
4. To make a ball feeder, simply place the knot of the string into some of the mixture and mould it into a ball using your hands.
5. When you are happy with the shape, place the feed balls in the fridge or a cool area to harden.
6. If using empty yogurt cartons, pierce a hole at the bottom and push the knot through.
7. Fill your empty carton up with your mixture and pack it well and place in a cool place to harden.
8. Hang up your bird feed balls on tree branches and spot all the birds that come to visit.

Remember

Check for nut allergies amongst your class before arranging the lesson

Take the bird watch challenge. Can you spot these birds in your garden?

Blue tit (Cóilín MachLochlainn)
Blackbird (Jerry Cassidy)
Robin (Clive Timmons)
Goldfinch (Terry Flanagan)

Thanks to Bird Watch Ireland for providing pictures of some of our garden birds.
Meet our new Rothschild giraffe calf

The Rothschild giraffe is one of the most threatened of the nine sub-species of giraffe. Our new calf will join a herd of eight Rothschild giraffes in the African Savanna. Our giraffes spend time with zebra, scimitar-horned oryx and ostrich just like they would in the wild. Check them out here on our webcams: www.dublinzoo.ie/159/African-Savanna

Giraffes spend much of their day feeding, stripping leaves off tree branches with their tongue. The tongue is a dark blue colour to prevent it from getting sunburned.

Each giraffe has its own unique pattern of coat markings like fingerprint for humans.

Curriculum Link – Geography
Giraffes are found on only one continent. Can you find out which one?

Curriculum Link: Science, Numeracy and Literacy
Measure the height of various objects in the classroom such as the door, shelves etc. Mark out the height of a fully grown giraffe and compare taller and smaller objects.

Dublin Zoo is an accredited Discover Primary Science and Maths Discover Centre. Why not check out our website, www.dublinzoo.ie/55/Primary-Education, to find the DPSM accredited courses that we offer. For further information on the programmes in Dublin Zoo’s Discovery and Learning department, please contact Aileen Tennant: E-mail education@dublinzoo.ie, or call 01 4748932.
FÍS celebrates 11th anniversary

FÍS, the film project for primary schools, celebrated its eleventh anniversary at the FÍS Film Festival held in the Helix, DCU, on 3 November.

Representing school and community at national level
The FÍS Film Festival is a great celebration for the lucky finalists who represent their schools with pride. To participate in an awards ceremony in the grandeur of the Mahony Hall is very special. From a curricular perspective, FÍS is a fantastic way to mediate a particular curricular strand/unit, while integrating a variety of subject areas. It also affords opportunities to engage with the local community. For example, the pupils of St Attracta’s NS, Charlestown, were visited by former army officer Michael McGrath (grandfather of a present pupil in the school) and he told the pupils about the time his army cadet class performed the guard of honour at President John F. Kennedy’s funeral in 1963. Scenes were recreated from a number of perspectives. “The Fís film festival offered endless learning opportunities for our students. . . . We thoroughly enjoyed participating in this wonderful project with participating teachers, all are provided with learning opportunities. FÍS enables children to learn about the techniques involved in storytelling through film. These skills include: planning, scripting, storyboarding, cameras, lighting, audio, music, set design, post production editing, costume and of course acting. Throughout the process, children also develop skills in communicating, working in a team, taking responsibility, collaborating with others, making decisions and problem solving.

Participate without submitting film
It is possible to participate without ever submitting a film and many schools do this. Why not introduce film-making to your class and when you and your pupils become more confident, consider submitting a film then. PDST Technology in Education issued a grant to your local education centre to purchase film-making equipment or software to be available for schools. With new multi-purpose devices, scenes can be captured, edited and produced all on the one device.

Support for teachers
The FÍS classroom resource pack offers the primary school teacher a structured approach to introducing film as a cross-curriculum medium into the classroom. It was developed by teachers for teachers and contains 16 lessons that support the development of children’s creativity and critical response. A FÍS technical manual is also available with clear practical information about film making processes and techniques at www.fisfilmproject.ie/teacher-resources/resource-pack

PDST Technology in Education also designed a FÍS summer course and this was scheduled in many education centres in the summer of 2014 and 2015. You can also avail of the FÍS interactive online course or approach your local education centre and ask if any face-to-face support sessions are taking place in your locality. If you know of other teachers in your school who are interested in FÍS and considering implementing it in their classrooms, PDST Technology in Education, through the education centre network, can fund a tutor to deliver a whole school ICT training session (a minimum of 10 participants is required). “FÍS is an inspiring and heartwarming event which showcases the amazing creativity of school children across Ireland. Winning this award allowed us to show that although our children have additional needs, they are able to be successful on an equal standing with all of the children in Irish schools.” Michael Fabizak, teacher, Little Angels Special School, Letterkenny.

More information
Log on to www.fisfilmproject.ie for more information on all of the above and view details of all the winners, including their films. The deadline for entry is the end of
June in any school year, so there is no need to commit before then! There are some pre-determined categories for 2016 - Decade of centenaries and Our Active School.

Films selected for the ‘Decade of Centenaries’ award will convey a story or moving images that commemorate the anniversary of any key centenary event between 1912 and 1922. Films may comprise of historical enactments, explorations of records and primary source material, interviews with historians among other methodologies to commemorate a range of events. These may include, the Lockout, the Sinking of the Lusitania, the Easter Rising, the Civil War and the Treaty amongst others.

The ‘Active School Flag’ category will accept films that tell a story depicting how schools strive to achieve a broad and balanced PE programme or how schools promote inclusive physical activity across the school day/year for all members of its community. For example, this story may be documentary in style capturing footage of the Active School Week in addition to ongoing PE, physical activity and school sport. It may also portray a PE related activity through fiction, action, adventure or other film genres.

**Student voice**

In considering the merits of any initiative like FÍS, the student voice must be the strongest, “I had so much fun doing the Fís project with all my friends. I loved getting into costume and acting but I also learned how much there is to do to make a movie”, pupil of Redeemer Girls’ NS.

Written by SEÁN GALLAGHER, PDST Technology in Education, PDST.
INTO – 1916 Rising

Around Easter 1916, the injured included at least two persons with INTO links while a third led the rebels' most decisive success of the Rising. These teachers were:
- Thomas Ashe, senior Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) leader and school principal.
- Margaret Skinnider, wounded in action in the 1916 Rising; later INTO president.
- Con Mac Sweeny, principal teacher, member of INTO executive; wounded in trench warfare, France 1916. (See boxes for further detail on Ashe, Skinnider and MacSweeny).

Ambiguity

The INTO in 1916 was made up of local 'Teacher Associations' and inspection. General secretary Eamonn Mansfield held office reluctantly, pending reinstatement to teaching following his dismissal for backing the war effort. Belmullet Teachers' Association, for example, supported war relief in order to demonstrate the fidelity of organised teachers “to the general interests of the Empire in this great national crisis”. In similar vein, the associations voted to abandon Annual Congress in the context of the war, leaving 1915 as the only year in INTO's history when there was not a Congress.

Even after the 1916 Rising, the INTO locally heard echoes of the war, as when North Clare and Milltown Malbay Association congratulated a member on the success of his son “Captain Walsh, at the front”.

INTO priorities 1916 and allegations of treason

When delegates assembled in Cork for Congress at Easter 1916, the dominant issues before them related to salary, inspection and a much-publicised individual case in Co Clare.

Both World War and Rising impinged on Congress. The Lord Mayor was absent due to his nephew's death in the war, numerous delegates could not reach the venue following rail disruption related to the Rising, and delegates appeared anxious and preoccupied as news filtered through of disturbances in Dublin.

Despite little evidence of widespread involvement of primary teachers, the Easter Rising was characterised as a “schoolmasters' rebellion” by JP Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College Dublin. In a hyperbolic letter to the press following the Rising, he suggested that national teachers should be required to make periodic declarations of loyalty.

Thomas Ashe:
born 1885 to a West Kerry farming family, by age 15 Ashe was a 'scholar monitor' in a local school, subsequently qualifying as a teacher, and from 1908 was principal of Corduff NS in Lusk Co Dublin. A member of Dublin Central Teachers' Association (INTO) Ashe was also a prominent IRB leader and commandant in 1916 of the Fifth Battalion, Dublin Brigade, of the Irish Volunteers. His battalion on the Friday of Easter week fought a battle with the RIC at Ashbourne, resulting in the deaths of eight policemen and two volunteers. Ashe was initially sentenced to death after the Rising but was released from prison briefly before his re-arrest in August 1917. He died following injuries sustained under forced feeding in Mountjoy jail in September 1917. His death and funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery were events of huge significance, confirming the growth and predominance of the separatist movement. The unspecified “tragic circumstances” of his passing were noted in the School Weekly and several INTO associations (including Sligo, Tralee and Dungarvan) formally voted to sympathise with Ashe’s relatives on his death. Minister for education Seán Moylan and Margaret Skinnider were among attendees at the presentation by the INTO of a painting of Ashe to the Teachers’ Club in 1954.

Con Mac Sweeny:
Born Co Cork 1866, Mac Sweeny qualified as a teacher and by 1901 was principal of the Boys’ NS in Aughrim, Co Wicklow. Married in 1898 to Mary, principal of Aughrim Girls’ School, both were INTO members in Rathdrum Association. From 1910, MacSweeny was part of the INTO executive (CEC), condemning unfair treatment of teachers by inspectors at the Dill Commission (1913). In early 1915, MacSweeny tendered his resignation (which was declined) from the executive, and was appointed to a war commission in the British army. His character witnesses for this commission were William Redmond (East Clare MP, widely admired brother of John and destined to die in battle at Messines in 1917) and former INTO president James Hegarty. Wounded severely by a bullet at Loos, France in May 1916 with the Royal Irish Fusiliers, Mac Sweeny was hospitalised but resumed army duty that August. Posted thereafter to Greece and Egypt (where he contracted malaria), he left the army in 1920 with the rank of major (as referenced in the INTO Directory 1923). He resumed service as principal in Aughrim up to the early 1930s, and died in March 1955.
He alleged that, as things stood, teachers “pocket their salaries and spread treason with perfect impunity”.

“No connection whatever”
The INTO was outraged at these accusations, and condemnations of the Provost proliferated. Donegal Association, for instance, rejected his depiction of the Rising as a “teachers’ rebellion”. When the INTO executive met on 27 May, it felt obliged to reply to Mahaffy and to certain press accusations of “sedition-mongering” on the part of teachers.

The CEC meeting adopted a resolution stating that, as the body which represented teachers of all religious and political creeds, “knowing as we do that the teachers generally had no connection whatever with the recent insurrection, (we) repudiate in the strongest manner” certain newspaper articles and the “outburst” of Dr Mahaffy.

It is hard to envisage a clearer reflection of the ambivalence within the INTO (as in wider society) concerning the Rising than this resolution, coming just 15 days after the execution of James Connolly.

County Antrim Teachers’ Association went beyond a non-involvement position,condemning those who had attempted “a rebellion in Ireland at the dictation and with the assistance of Germany…”

“No connection” was clearly an accurate depiction in respect of INTO as an organisation. But what of individual members? Provost Mahaffy’s statements gave rise to an inquiry by the National Education Commissioners. They found no evidence that seditious teaching existed to any appreciable extent. Following “careful scrutiny” of teacher identification with the rebellion, the Commissioners stated that two teachers were undergoing penal servitude with 15 others imprisoned following the conflict. The Provost had provided no evidence for his charges when invited to do so.

Where was the INTO in 1916?
Most leaders of the organisation, including delegates from the Associations, were physically in Cork for the INTO Congress, well removed from the Dublin events.

The INTO’s composition and rules, and the practical agenda for Annual Congress, did not indicate an embracing of nationalist priorities. The general secretary reflected a desire for political neutrality when in November he told the Irish School Weekly of his pride that INTO uniquely could enlist the support of all parties; this referenced the achievement of a war bonus for teachers where the parliamentary leaders of Irish nationalism and unionism – John Redmond and Edward Carson respectively – had supported the INTO.

It is notable that the Weekly itself – although not INTO-controlled it carried extensive coverage of INTO activities and notices – adopted an editorial position of hostility to the Rising (a “sad and misguided action”) immediately after the events. The same edition noted with regret that CEC member Lieut. Con Mac Sweeny had been “wounded in action”.

Coomemorating teacher involvement
The INTO’s retrospective narrative around the Rising reflected a greater degree of association than is evident from contemporary reports. The martyred Thomas Ashe and the combatant Margaret Skinnider featured prominently in this narrative.

At INTO Congress 1966, the Rising’s 50th anniversary, Margaret Skinnider as a guest speaker recounted her involvement throughout Easter 1916 when participants had set out “to ensure that the children of the nation would be born in freedom”.

Thomas Ashe too was remembered, with a ceremony organised by North Dublin INTO at Easter 1966, and later by the unveiling of a plaque at Corduff National School, each reported in the INTO journal An Muinteoir Náisiúnta which headlined Ashe as a “teacher patriot”.

After the Rising, John Dillon MP excoriated the government for its military response to “the first rebellion…in Ireland where you had the majority on your side” He warned of a changed public mood. Similarly, there had been little apparent support throughout INTO for the rebels. But subsequent events – the executions, Ashe’s death in custody in 1917, and the conscription controversy of 1918 – fuelled nationalist sentiment so that the Rising soon became an event more honoured in retrospect.

The INTO executive went unchallenged on its “no connection” statement immediately following Easter 1916, but histories are not written contemporaneously. As time moved on, Ashe and Skinnider were celebrated while Mac Sweeny’s comparable courage has been largely forgotten.

Margaret Skinnider: born 1892 near Glasgow in Scotland to Irish parents, she qualified as a maths teacher and became involved in Cumann na mBan. She was in contact with Countess Markievicz in Dublin who became her mentor. Skinnider smuggled bomb-making equipment to Ireland in advance of the 1916 Rising. She participated in the rebellion as a scout/messenger, and as a combatant in the Michael Mallin unit at the College of Surgeons. Wounded in action, she spent several weeks in St Vincent’s Hospital. By 1917 she was in the USA, raising funds for the rebel cause, where she published her account of the Rising Doing My Bit for Ireland. She became a primary teacher, serving in Kings Inn Street school, Dublin. Having taken an active role, and been imprisoned, during both the War of Independence and Civil War, she was initially denied a military pension because she was female. She later became prominent in INTO affairs and was elected president in 1956. She retired from teaching in 1961. Her address about the Rising to INTO Congress 1966 was covered over six pages of An Muinteoir Náisiúnta. Margaret Skinnider died in 1971 and is buried in the republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery.
National Children’s Choir

New committee elected

The National Children’s Choir has its roots in the 1985 European Music Year. Séan Creamer (then a music inspector with the DES) had the idea that large groups of children in primary schools would learn and then perform a common repertoire in public.

He approached a number of teachers and they willingly supported him. Thus began the National Children’s Choir. The aims of the National Children’s Choir are to foster a love of choral singing among primary school pupils and to enhance the musical education of those involved.

Since then over 100,000 pupils have enjoyed singing with the National Children’s Choir.

Last month at the AGM of the National Children’s Choir in Club na Muinteoirí a new committee was elected. The new committee members are Órla Gillan, Musical Director; Mairéad Déiseach, Musical Director; Anne Purcell, Musical Director; Pauline Lennon, National Organiser; Des Sutton, Chairperson; Berni Gunning, Treasurer; Fionnuala Ní Uiginn, Secretary; Maeve Quinlan, Emer O’Connor; Michelle Greamey; Anita McEnroe; Margaret Healy; Anne Neville; Siobhán Treacy; Brian O’Doherty; Marie-Therese Wallnutt; Bernadette Shiel-Nolan and Bernadette Kennedy.

NCC Summer courses to prepare for 2017 series of concerts will take place in first week of July 2016. All enquiries to nationalchildrenschoir@gmail.com

BizWorld Ireland:

Equipping Children with Entrepreneurship Skills

Did you know that business studies is one of the most popular subjects in secondary school with over half of pupils sitting the Junior Certificate exam? Yet business and entrepreneurship are subjects that are rarely addressed in primary school? BizWorld Ireland – a national organisation that promotes entrepreneurship skills amongst young people – is working to change this by delivering free workshops in primary schools for children aged 10 to 13 to teach them about money and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, teachers report the social benefits with the children working in groups and presenting to their classmates.

Educator and CEO Fiona McKeon is the driving force behind BizWorld in Ireland. Speaking about the programme she said: “I work to bridge the gap between educators and business people with the aim of instilling an entrepreneurial spirit in children from a very young age. I want them to develop an awareness of financial management to ensure they are equipped to become financially responsible members of society.”

For further information or to register your interest in a workshop in the future, please email admin@bizworldireland.org.

Deadline for entries: Friday 29th January

Bord Gáis Energy is calling on schools and teachers all over the country to submit their entries for the 2016 Bord Gáis Energy Student Theatre Awards before 5pm on Friday 29th January.

The awards were set up to recognize and reward participation in drama; they are open to primary school students from 3rd – 6th class and all secondary school students. There are 12 categories ranging from group categories such as best overall school musical to individual categories such as best short scene script and best performances in a leading role.

Students, teachers and schools can enter the awards by completing an entry form and submitting a video clip or a written submission, depending on the category. For all the details visit www.bgesta.ie

Shortlisted schools will be invited to a special awards ceremony at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre on 5th May 2016 and will also be in with a chance to perform on stage. Winning schools will share a prize fund, and receive a commemorative trophy and plaque for their school.

All class entrants will be automatically entered into a competition to win a class trip to Annie at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre and individual entrants could win six tickets to see Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Pictured are (L to R) Berni Gunning, Des Sutton, Fionnuala Ní Uiginn, Pauline Lennon, Mavee Quinlan, Marie-Therese Wallnutt and Bernadette Sheil-Nolan.
Cluichí Teanga

Is breá le páistí cluichí a imirt agus níl am níos fearr ná aimsir na Nollag chun cluichí a cheannach do pháistí agus lad a imirt sa rang. Tá roint chuige nua ar an margadh a chuideoidh le páistí foclóir a leathnú agus teanga a shaibhriú i ngan fhios dóibh féin, chomh maith le spraoi a bheith acu. Le bheith in ann aon chluiche a imirt sa rang, ní mó rialachana gcleachtaí a mhíniú trí Ghaeilge, agus an teanga a bheadh ag teastáil le linn imeartha a mhúineadh go sonrach roimh ré.

Thar Barr
Cluiche díslí as Gaeilge atá sa cluiche Thar Barr, le 8 ndíslí bhána agus 8 ndíslí dhearga agus litir difriúil ar gach taobh. Caitheann duine ar gach foireann na díslí agus ag baint úsáide as na litreacha a thaispeántar, déanann siad iarracht an focal is faide is féidir leo a chruthú. 9 seal a bhíonn sa cluiche. Faigheann an focal is faide pointe amháin i ngach seal nó coinnítear comhairdeóilí ag fhadh na bhfocal a bhíonn ag gach imreoir, pointe amháin do gach litir. Bionn an bua ag an imreoir leis an scór is airde.

Spraioi le Brí
Tá 6 phaca cártá (ainmfhocail, briathra, aidiachtaí, seanfhocail, an ginnideach, 5,4,3,2,1) sa cluiche Spraioi le Brí a chruthaigh Eoghan Mac Corama. Is é an sproicí atá ann ná ciall focal agus abairtí (ainmfhocail, briathra, aidiachtaí, seanfhocail) a mhíniú gan a bhaint as na focal nó abairtí féin, agus seo a dhéanann laistigh de nóiméad amháin chun pointí a bhuachan le haghadh freagraí cearta. Níl cead aisteoireacht nó frapaí a úsáid. Caithfear focail agus abairtí eile a úsáid chun an bhri a chur in iúl.

Úsáid sa rang
l Arraí focal air féin.
  - Ainmfhocail, briathra, aidiachtaí, seanfhocail, an ginnideach, 5,4,3,2,1.
  - Is féidir focail le 1 go 8 litir a chumadh.
  - 8 marc d’fhocail le 8 litir, 7 marc d’fhocail le 7 litir agus mar sin de.
  - Bionn an bua ag an imreoir leis an scór is airde.

Úsáid sa rang
l Roinn na páistí i bhfoirne ag tús an cluiche agus aonadh fad an cluiche m.sh. 20 nóiméad. Déan na pacaí ar leith a shuaitheadh agus a chur in iúl.
  - Taispeán do pháistí conas an focloir a fhoghlaim le spraoi.
  - Spraoi le Brí a chruthaigh Eoghan Mac Corama.

liathróid Spraoi
Liathróid bheag bhog atá sábháilte le caitheamh sa rang. Déanann an rang an ghníomhaíochta atá scíofa san áit ina dtítheann ordóg nuair a bheirtear air. Dúshláin éagsúla ar fáil – an ghníomhaíochta a phlé, é a dhéanann ar feadh tréimhse srl. www.clevermindtoys.ie

ÚsáidliathróidSpraoi

Smarty Cat Games
Réimeas cluichí teanga ar fáil, an lion is mó focal.
  - Focal a chruthú in ord aibtíre.

Caith cat cainteach
Caith cat cainteach; Cé Mhéad Cat – cluichí a dhéanann cleachtadh ar na briathra neamhríalta. www.smartycatgames.ie

Cluiche teanga

Cluichí Teanga

TIANCH – Tá an-chuid cluichí teanga ar fáil agus iad an-mhaith le páistí a spreagadh le Gaeilge a fhoghlaíomh le spraoi.

Láithróid Spraoi
Láithróid bheag bhog atá sábháilte le caitheamh sa rang.

Cad eile atá ar fáil?

Tá an-chuid cluichí teanga ar fáil agus iad an-mhaith le páistí a spreagadh le Gaeilge a fhoghlaíomh le spraoi.

Liathróid Spraoi
Láithróid bheag bhog atá sábháilte le caitheamh sa rang.

Caith cat cainteach
Réimeas cluichí teanga ar fáil, an lion is mó focal.

Caith cat Cainteach; Cé Mhd Cat – cluichí a dhéanann cleachtadh ar na briathra neamhríalta. www.smartycatgames.ie

Cluiche teanga

Úsáid sa rang
l Roinn na páistí i bhfoirmigh agus aonadh fad an cluiche m.sh. 20 nóiméad. Déan na pacaí ar leith a shuaithheadh agus a chur béil faoi i lár an bhfoirne. Casann páiste cártá agus deacair iarracht an bhri a chur in iúl.
  - Taispeán do pháistí conas an focloir a fhoghlaim le spraoi.
  - Spraoi le Brí a chruthaigh Eoghan Mac Corama.

Ar fáil
Tá an dá chluiche seo ar fáil ar www.udar.ie
What is appliqué?

The dictionary definition of appliqué is “ornamental needlework in which pieces of fabric are sewn or stuck on to a larger piece to form a picture or pattern”. In the primary school curriculum appliqué is seen as a technique that falls between simple fabric collage and more advanced fabric work such as embroidery, tapestry or quilting. In its simplest form it enables children to develop cutting skills, invent their own simple stitching techniques and to develop their awareness of the elements of art, especially colour, pattern, texture and shape. Working initially in groups with this technique encourages social skills such as negotiating and collaborating to create unique process oriented pieces of art and designs that lend themselves to vibrant and colourful classroom displays. Children’s own feelings and ideas about festival themes such as Christmas, Halloween or Easter can be explored using this technique, thus avoiding too much emphasis on the mass production of replicated decorations that teachers can often allow themselves to be tempted by.

Obviously it is vital that good quality scissors that can easily and accurately cut fabrics are available for this type of work. While working as a curriculum advisor I always recommended that each school should have a supply of scissors that were only to be used for cutting fabric. You do not need to purchase speciality adhesives, diluted PVE works well in nearly all cases. If you are worried about children using metal needles you can purchase plastic bodkins, although I personally think these are not effective, particularly with heavier fabric.

Materials/Tools

Supply of hessian fabric
Supply of fabric scraps and off cuts.
Good quality scissors.
Fabric glue / PVA.
Supply of threads, wools, string, ribbons, etc.
Pipe cleaners, thin wire, etc.
Bodkins or large darning needles.
Sewing needles for finer work.
Fabric crayons or paints.
Paper and drawing tools for planning work.

Appliqué snowman and nativity scene

Fabric scraps and off cuts are often available from local businesses or retail outlets. It is an idea for schools to regularly appeal to parents for supplies of clean fabrics or for wools.

Classroom organisation / choosing topics

Appliqué can be very successfully explored initially on a large scale with children working on both the design and making stages in collaborative groups. The teacher might allow each group to select their own topic based on a given theme or he/she might allocate a more specific topic to each group. If this type of work is new to the class, the latter option is preferable as it provides more guidance and avoids the often overheard “Teacher, we don’t know what to do!” syndrome.

For Christmas I would generally brainstorm topics with the whole class, record this as a list and then discuss what broad theme and then topics might
Christmas

**INVENTED STITCHERY**

An interesting term that appears in the primary school curriculum is invented stitchery. What this implies is, that in the initial stages of working with attaching fabrics together using fibres, rather than using adhesives, children might be allowed to discover means of doing this instead of teaching them specific sewing techniques as was the tradition in craft education. It is actually the case that children can discover the basic stitches themselves through exploration – after all the most common methods exist worldwide because these are the easiest and most logical. There is no need therefore to provide some more formal training in sewing techniques until children have had lots of time to explore informal sewing through using techniques such as appliqué.

**HESSIAN BACKGROUND**

When working it is an excellent idea to use hessian (burlap) fabric as the main background fabric both because it works well with adhesives and its loose weave makes it easy to sew through. It is also notable that other materials (threads, strings, wools and ribbons) can be woven through it and colour, even poster paint or pastels, can be applied to it.

The following ideas can be brainstormed:
- Decorating the tree
- Toys and presents
- Carols and choirs
- Concerts and pantomimes
- The Christmas dinner
- The Christmas story

From this list we might make the decision that pantomime is a topic the class has not explored in the past. The teacher might then research the names of famous panto characters, put these in a box and ask each group to blindly choose one to represent. Alternatively, each group might be asked to come up with its own suggestion following some research into the topic. Or choosing the theme of carols from the original list, each group might be allocated a specific carol to illustrate for display at a carol concert for parents – carol concert and art exhibition, linkage and integration!

It is vital for success that each group be allowed time initially to both create a design for their proposed piece and also to gather materials that they might use in their work. A particular member of a group might already have a piece of art in his/her portfolio that any group might adapt or indeed each member of a group might create some digital images for proposal. Happy Christmas to all!

Written by MICHAEL O’REILLY, a retired teacher, has worked with the NCCA and PCSP on the design and implementation of the arts curricula. He has worked in a wide variety of schools and other educational settings.
Wonderful collection

Eoin Colfer has put together a wonderful collection of stories and poems in this book. The stories are a mixture of history, contemporary social issues and some very well crafted poems. The stories relate very closely to the lives of children and teenagers. Stories, songs and poems are a very useful key to the exploration of historical and social questions. This reviewer particularly liked the story entitled Stream Time by Oisín McGann. This surreal tale gives us a window into life in Norman time. McGann succeeds in giving us a pen-picture of some aspects of Ireland’s history, as the main character (who is dead!) sails down the Boyne River in a rickety boat, into which she has been placed by her by her “idiot” of a husband. Geraldine Mills gives us a “snail’s-eye view” of the world in her beautifully crafted poem Snail Pals.

It can sometimes be difficult for teachers to explain current affairs to children. Jane Mitchel’s story There and Here does just this very effectively. In this story we see the problems which children encounter in direct provision centres through the eyes of a child. It is a beautifully written and in my opinion one of the best stories in the collection.

This collection could be used as a supplementary reader in the Senior Classes, or selected stories/poems could be read aloud by the teacher to the middle classes. The line drawings by P.J. Lynch, with their vaguely threatening sinister atmospheric appearance add greatly to the collection.


Reviewed by DAN FINNAN

Witches’ brew

Nicola Colton is an Irish illustrator based in Bristol and this is her first picture book. It is a modern retelling of Little Red Riding Hood. Beautifully illustrated, it reflects her unique style which is colourful and playful. We embark on a magical journey across Dublin city with a little girl named Fiona. Fiona is sent to the witches’ market on Moore Street to get the ingredients for a special witches’ brew and take them to her Granny who is sick. Familiar landmarks e.g. St Stephen’s Green, Trinity College, Ha’penny Bridge and the Spire all feature in the story. At each landmark Fiona encounters a new character, all of whom will come to her rescue when she encounters the big bad wolf!

Mapping and sequencing skills could be explored after a class reading. Also children could compare and contrast this story to the original fairytale. This book is suitable for storytelling with young children and could be used in an Infant Classroom.


Reviewed by MARION CUMMINS, Scoil Muire, Dunkerrin, Birr, Co Offaly

Enchanting

The Lost Fairy, written by Marian Broderick and illustrated by Aileen Caffrey is an enchanting festive story book. The story tells of Flora, the proud Christmas fairy. For the past 90 years Flora has been placed at the top of the tree. This year however, she faces stiff competition from the Christmas star. In this instance, pride most certainly comes before a fall. Vain Flora tumbles from her perch at top of the tree. She has much to learn before she can regain her spot at the top of the tree. This charming story would be a valuable addition to a first/second class library. It would also be a very suitable book to read aloud to these particular classes also. The front cover of the book is designed by Shelagh-Jessica Gilbourne of Millstreet, Co Cork. Shelagh-Jessica won the ‘Design A Cover’ Competition in association with the 2014 Children’s Book Festival.

The Lost Fairy is a touching, feel good tale. It is published by O’Brien Press and is available for €5.99. ISBN 978-1-84717-739-1.

Reviewed by ORLA RYNG, Glasheen BNS, Glasheen, Co Cork

Insects of Ireland

Did you know that there are over 11,000 species of insects in Ireland? This beautifully illustrated, yet compact paperback, is a mine of information and introduces the reader to seven Irish insect groups: butterflies, dragonflies, ladybirds, bumblebees, shield bugs, grasshoppers and earwigs, a total of 128 species, most of which are easily identified without magnification.

Each of the seven sections gives a general description of the life-cycle of the particular group. For every one of the species described, there is a map showing the counties where they are found. Important details are magnified and larval stages are also shown. The actual size of the insect is often given beside the larger illustration. Occasionally there are two or more illustrations of the same type of insect showing variations where they occur.

At the beginning of the book there is short section which outlines the importance of insects to the ecosystem of our planet, how to find them and some tips for enticing insects into our gardens. This detailed book would assist teachers in preparing lessons on minibeasts and would also be a useful reference source for senior classes. For other classes, illustrations could be enlarged and displayed on the interactive whiteboard as required.

A beautiful book for all nature lovers.


Reviewed by CIARÁN BYRNE, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow
Liam Farrell is a children’s author and storyteller. This book is a compilation of three stories, ‘The True Story of the Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf’, ‘The Trial of the Big Bad Wolf’ and ‘The Return of the Big Bad Wolf’. The first chapter is featured in the C.J. Fallon third class reader, Get Set.

This story is a great read, it is a slapstick comedy about social and political intrigue. The reader becomes involved with false accusation, an incompetent police service and hysterical accounts from neurotic witnesses. The big bad wolf is on trial for the crime he allegedly committed against the three little pigs. However, his version of events is hotly disputed and debated by a host of famous nursery rhyme characters. The references to brown envelopes and bribery of judges will probably go over the heads of some children, but they will enjoy the ‘rough and tumble’ of the plot. Liam Farrell’s writing is child-friendly, the pace is fast and the imagery is modern and colourful. It is dramatically illustrated by Terry Myler, with at least one cartoon per page, which will appeal to the most reluctant reader. This book belongs in any library from first to sixth class and it would also be good choice for reading aloud to a class or as a stimulus for a drama lesson.

Mercier Press.

Reviewed by JULIE RYNG, Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh, Cork.

The Secrets of Grindlewood by Jackie Burke is the first in a series of Grindlewood tales, where our young heroes Jamie and Jemima have a series of magical adventures and escapades accompanied by their pet dog Timber and a veritable menagerie of other pets and wild animals who inhabit the mysterious back garden of Grindlewood House. A war of magic in the nearby forest ended with the defeat of the good witch Wanda at the hands of the evil warlock Warfeus, who has vowed to destroy Grindlewood and all its inhabitants. The garden becomes the scene for fierce battles between the minions of the warlock and the animals that all possess individual magical powers which prove to be very useful in times of peril.

The story is aimed at the younger confident reader and moves along at a cracking pace, with plenty magic and mayhem to entertain. A strong sense of good versus evil pervades the story and creates a frisson that the younger readers will relish. However, a hugely overpopulated cast leaves little room for character development and the fact that the plot is not fully resolved by the end may leave a sense of frustration. The Secret Scroll and The Queen’s Quest also in this series are now available.

Kazoo Publishing Services.

Reviewed by DIARMUID KAVANAGH, Arklow, Co Wicklow

Bouncing Away is the first mental health book in Ireland created by children for children. The book, funded by the Mental Health Services HSE Sligo/Leitrim/W Cavan, gives insight into children’s own perspectives on how they stay happy and how they cope during tough times. Developed by children aged 8 to 12 years old in Sligo from the HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the HSE Community Psychology Service (PCCC) and a local primary school, the book provides an essential resource for other children, parents and healthcare practitioners who are interested in understanding and supporting children’s mental health.

Bouncing Away was developed through a collaborative process led by Kids’ Own Publishing Partnership. Artist Vanya Lambrecht Ward and writer Lisa Vandegrift Davala worked alongside the children over a two-month period, during which time they developed artwork and shared their own experiences, which guided the concept of the book. The focus of the project was on building confidence, fostering self-esteem and developing alternative ways for the children to express themselves through art and storytelling. Bouncing Away serves as a resource for all children, encouraging them to talk about their feelings, the ups and downs that life can bring, and how we cope and bounce with them.

The book will have nationwide distribution, to schools, libraries and HSE mental health services, in order to reach and support children, parents and healthcare practitioners everywhere. For more information visit kidsown.ie

Reviewed by JULIE RYNG, Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh, Cork.
An Post/INTO Handwriting Competition 2016


We are back in schools following the success of last year, when thousands of pupils took the challenge, entering their best handwriting to win great prizes. The competition partners An Post and INTO’s long tradition of schools’ competitions, with a focus on literacy.

An Post and the INTO are working on a special topic to mark the Easter Rising and there will be plenty of activities and chances to learn, with lesson plans and video downloads on the anpostschoolbag.ie website, which will be the home for the competition.

Children of all ages in primary school and special schools can take part. This year there will be regional and national winners and as always there is a chance to win lots of prizes for classes, teachers and schools.

Entry packs will be posted to schools at the end of January so keep an eye on the post.

Full details will also be announced on the INTO and anpostschoolbag.ie websites.

Head Office closure

INTO Head Office will close for Christmas holidays on Wednesday, 23 December at 5 p.m. and will re-open on Monday, 4 January 2016 at 9 a.m.

Copy date

Copy you wish to have considered for publication in the January/February 2016 issue of InTouch should arrive in Head Office by 11 January 2016. The deadline for the March 2016 issue is 8 February 2016.

Calling all primary teachers!

Do you currently teach (or have you recently taught) any children with incarcerated fathers?

If so, your views could prove crucial to this research project!

This qualitative study aims to describe, analyse and understand the experiences of primary school children (aged six to 12 years) who have a father in prison, exploring how these experiences have an impact on their academic lives. The term ‘academic lives’ is used to refer to children’s approaches to school work, their relationships with teachers and peers, their attitudes to school and learning (within and outside of the school setting) and their academic performance.

The researcher is seeking to interview primary teachers who currently teach (or have very recently taught) children with incarcerated fathers. All participants are guaranteed anonymity and no names or identifying details will be used as part of this study. The study seeks to provide much-needed insights into the issues/problems experienced by children of incarcerated fathers (and of incarcerated parents more generally) and, in so doing, to assist educators and other professionals working with these children. While teachers are the main participants being sought at this time, family members (e.g. mothers who have experienced incarceration of a partner) would be particularly welcome to volunteer also. If you are willing to participate in this study and/or would like more information, please contact the researcher directly at ryana51@tcd.ie.

INTO/STSG Separated Teachers’ Support Group

Next meeting: Saturday, 16 January 2106. Time: 11 a.m. Venue: Sligo Town. Venue to be decided.

Separated, divorced, widowed, lone parents from INTO, ASTI, TUI and IFUT welcome. Annual subscription €20. For further information please contact: Chairperson: Trudy Carroll Miller, 0044 7931609313 or 042 9383670. Secretary: Iseult Bourke, 085 2394661 or 01 5162069.
Winners of Comhar Linn draw October 2015

Comhar Linn Crossword no 168

A draw for 2 x €100 will be made from all correct entries.
Simply complete the crossword and send it to ‘InTouch Crossword’, INTO, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, before Friday, 15 January 2016.

ACROSS
1. Consumed some water. (3)
3. Edna’s client can be secretive. (11)
8. Return the cauldron, friend - it has chips in it. (6)
9. The Bale home, perhaps, is where you’ll find Mimi and Rodolfo. (2,6)
10. As tremendous as Alexander or Peter? (5)
11. Copying something pointed in silver. (5)
13. Is Mr Farah first to get damp? (5)
15 & 23d. The directors of the laundry? (7-5)
16. Could such a tummy-settler be described as formic? (7)
20. Obliterate the Southern master? Be quiet! (5)
21. The cardinal is not informally a holy person. (5)
23. Buffalo found even if neither A nor C is willing? (5)
24. See a chap by the cash register with a piece of headgear. (8)
25. Did his famous theory survive because it was fittest? (6)
26. Sent out tinted trams. (11)
27. Soak the flax in part of a stretcher. (5)

DOWN
1. Claims made by a novice placed before consulates. (11)
2. One perhaps sees pros making such coffee. (8)
3. Credit frequently given a small farm. (5)
4 & 5. Mar a ghuímid daoibh go léir ag an am seo. (7,5)
6. European peninsula that finishes off the country of Monrovia. (6)
7. Sheep found in a sewer. (3)
12. The classical problem set by my namesake was a bit ropy, perhaps! (7,4)
13. Sign for a takeaway? That’s grand in America. (5)
14. Get some fish? Right, leave the excavation! (5)
17. Marxist struggle, or conflict between standards at school? (5,3)
18. With the courtyard, the worker put on the costume drama. (7)
19. Anne the Fourth has turned up? Capital. (6)
22. Works given to one beside Laois. (5)
24. It’s grand at floor-covering. (3)

WINNERS OF CROSSWORD NO 166
Maura Enright, Ballybunion, Co Kerry and Collette Colleran, Quin, Co Clare

COMHAR LINN INTOUCH BUMPER CROSSWORD NO 167
Solutions and winners will be announced in the Jan/Feb 2016 issue of InTouch

COMHAR LINN INTOUCH CROSSWORD NO 168
Solutions and winners will be announced in the Jan/Feb 2016 issue of InTouch
Nature sound map

Hear the world like never before

A group of professional nature recordists from around the globe have collaborated to develop Nature Soundmap (www.naturesoundmap.com), an enjoyable and interactive way of exploring the natural sounds of our planet. Combining high-quality field recordings with the latest satellite imagery, the project brings together some of nature’s most beautiful, interesting and inspiring sounds.

Currently the website has 400 recordings from 81 countries. Hear the dawn chorus in Ballyfad Wood, listen to a thrush nightingale in Estonia or wolf pups howling in Sweden. Immerse yourself in a pulsating insect chorus in Borneo’s tropical rainforest, or climb the Himalayas and relax to the melodies of birdsong in an alpine meadow. You can use Nature Soundmap to discover the wonderful soundscapes and wildlife sounds of our planet.

The recording techniques imitate the natural experience you would hear with your own two ears and provide a realistic representation of all of the sounds in a particular habitat or location. While the main focus is on whole soundscapes, also included are selected recordings of individual species which are particularly outstanding or interesting examples of sound in the animal kingdom.

Find Nature Soundmap at www.naturesoundmap.com