



**CCMS Circular 2008 / 23**

**14 November 2008**

**TO: Principals of Catholic Maintained Schools**

**RE: DE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE STATISTICS**

COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

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Dear Colleague

At its meeting on the 9 October the Council considered an extract from the Department of Education annual statistics on school performance in GCSE (enclosed). Members of the Council acknowledge the outstanding performance of the Catholic Maintained sector by 8.1 percentage points in the measurement of 5 GCSE A\*-C grades. They recognise and paid tribute to Principals, teachers and governors of nursery, primary and post-primary schools for the enormous contribution they have made to the achievement of these excellent outcomes. A key feature of the discussion was the level of value added within the Catholic Maintained sector given that there is around 10% greater level of social deprivation in communities served by its schools. Members acknowledged that the distinctive Catholic ethos which underpins our systems of education not only adds value to young people's experiences but also raises standards and achievements.

The Department of Education of Education and other public bodies hold a range of data which indicated the quality of the Catholic Maintained sector and the substantially higher level of achievements secured by young people in Catholic education. I have appended a copy of my speaking notes to Council on this issue to give you a context for the discussion which took place.

In conclusion, I wish to personally convey to you, your staff and to your governors my deep sense of appreciation for the work that has been contributed to promoting excellence. Finally I would ask you to share the contents of this letter and the appendices with your staff and governors.

Yours sincerely

**DONAL FLANAGAN**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### DE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

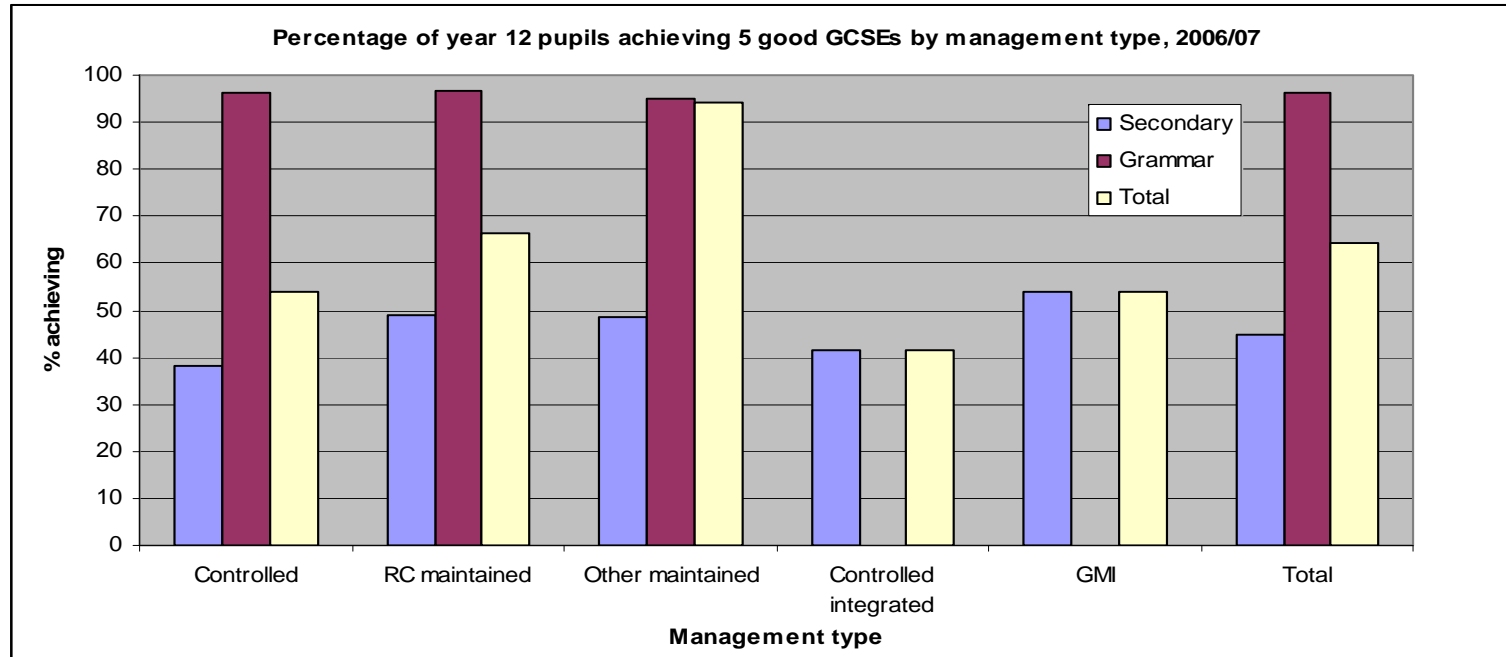
#### Management type comparisons

Key Indicator	2005/06			2006/07			05/06 - 06/07 change		
	Non-Grammar	Grammar	Total	Non-Grammar	Grammar	Total	Non-Grammar	Grammar	Total
<b>Catholic managed</b>									
% Achieving 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C	45.4	96.1	63.6	49.2	96.7	66.5	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>2.9</b>
% Achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent) at A-E	95.4	99.4	97.8	94.9	99.3	97.7	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>-0.2</b>
<b>Other managed</b>									
% Achieving 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C	40.6	96.1	62.5	41.1	95.7	62.8	<b>0.6</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>
% Achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent) at A-E	93.6	98.8	97.4	92.4	99.0	97.3	<b>-1.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>-0.1</b>
<b>Total</b>									
% Achieving 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C	42.8	96.1	63.0	44.9	96.1	64.5	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>
% Achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent) at A-E	94.6	99.0	97.6	93.8	99.1	97.5	<b>-0.8</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>-0.1</b>

Source: SAER

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#### Overall GCSE performance by gender, 2007/08

The table below shows overall performance in all GCSE entries by gender in N.I.

	All entries (JCQ)		
	Male	Female	Total
%A*	7	11	9
%A*-A	22	30	26
%A*-C	71	78	75

Source: JCQ

#### Overall GCSE performance by gender and school type, 2006/07

The table below shows overall performance in all GCSE entries by sector and gender in N.I.

	Grammar			Non-Grammar			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
%A*	12	18	15	1	3	2	6	10	8
%A*-A	37	49	43	7	12	10	21	29	25
%A*-C	91	96	93	50	61	56	69	77	73

Source: University of Bath

**Chief Executive – Speaking Notes – Council Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

The raison d'être for the establishment of CCMS was to raise standards and to close the differential in GCSE examination performance between the maintained and controlled sectors which in the early nineties stood at three percentage points in favour of the Controlled sector.

- In its early years of existence CCMS worked extremely hard to close that gap and in 1993 it established a working party under the chairmanship of Bishop Edward Daly to examine the underpinning reasons for underachievement and develop a long term strategy to address this issue.
- Slowly but surely the gap between the maintained and controlled sectors closed with the maintained sector maintaining its rate of improvement on a year on year basis.
- The statistics tabled highlight that in the last year there has been a further significant improvement within the Catholic Maintained post-primary secondary sector of 3.8 percentage points widening the gap between the maintained and other managed sectors to 8.1 percentage points.
- When you consider that there is up to 10% higher levels of social deprivation within the Catholic Maintained sector these results are nothing short of remarkable.
- This is one of a series of data held by DE which indicates that the Catholic Managed sector is out performing other sectors in terms of the quality of provision and outcomes for young people.
- Whilst these statistics demonstrate outstanding performance within the sector as a whole they do, because they are the sector average scores mask the exceptional performance of a significant number of Catholic Maintained Schools.
- Similarly (the) average scores suggest that some schools in the Catholic sector are underperforming relative to schools in similar circumstances and we must continue to challenge and support these schools to raise their standards. We cannot be complacent when the real issue is how each child is educated in our school.
- Whilst all statistics are open to interpretation and can be used to validate any particular perspective there is a number of indisputable messages which emerge from this year's performance.

However before I attempt to draw any conclusions I think it is important to pay tribute to those who have been responsible for this tremendous set of results. School

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Principals, teachers and governors are the people who have been in the front line, their leadership, professionalism, dedication and hard work are, for the most part, responsible for these outcomes. They have worked individually, and collectively as a sector, to produce these outcomes and they can be justifiably proud of their success.

### **Conclusions**

With regard to conclusions I think I can safely say:

- The fact that these improvements have been achieved supports the process which the Council has followed of empowering schools, through their Board of Governors, to set out a strategy for improvement and deliver on it. Council would want this approach extended under the ESA through the concept of Accountable Autonomy.
- A long term, joined up strategy which embraces the concepts of challenge, support and intervention does raise standards. A series of individual initiatives does not have the same impact.
- Ethos not only adds value to the students experience but also raises standards of achievement.
- Whereas once the Catholic Maintained Sector was characterised with weak leadership and poor performance it is now characterised as a sector which promotes quality and excellence where strong leadership is the norm rather than the exception.
- If the lowest performing schools were performing at the level of those schools with similar intakes and circumstances there is considerable scope for future improvement.
- There remains a significant differential between the achievement of boys and girls and this area requires further attention
- As a consequence of the year on year improvement within the sector there has been a growing number of children from ethnic communities enrolling within the sector. Also there is anecdotal evidence of a small but growing numbers of children from other denominations beginning to attend Catholic Schools.

### **To Conclude**

Raising Standards remains the primary focus for our politicians, the Department of Education and the range of education bodies. These statistics require interrogation and questions need to be asked and further strategies developed to ensure we continue along this path. Earlier this week CCMS was asked to appear before Assembly Committee to provide evidence on the CCMS process for the preparation of development proposals. I trust that the Committee will table the issues of raising standards with similar relish and enthusiasm.