



COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

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To: Trustees, Chairpersons of Board of Governors
and Principals of Catholic Maintained Schools

Dear Colleague

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SCHOOL PREMISES BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The attraction of our schools for community use has greatly increased in recent years as we, working on behalf of the Trustees, have seen a significant improvement in the quality of our school buildings. In addition with the demographic downturn, schools have available to them accommodation which is surplus to their needs. CCMS would wish to encourage the school Trustees to embrace community use of school buildings as an opportunity to make a contribution to their local community. In embracing the community in this way the school Trustees can make a significant contribution towards moving our society forward.

In "Building Peace Shaping the Future" the Northern Bishops stated, "Schools in the Catholic managed education sector have been and continue to be fully committed to building a new society".

Schools and Trustees should be mindful of the contribution which community use of the school buildings can make in the realisation of this goal through embracing not only one section of the community but through involving the wider community.

Many of our schools have already advanced this issue through providing facilities for groups such as cross community playgroups – through the Preschool Expansion Programme and also through initiatives such as Extended Schools, Surestart and the Big Lottery Fund PE and Sport Programme.

While encouraging schools to enter these arrangements we would also wish to ensure the rights and responsibilities of the Trustees are protected.

CCMS would therefore request that consideration is given to the following points prior to entering into any arrangements:

- The Trustees are the legal owners of the school and must approve all such use of premises (which should be in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school).
- Any decision to offer the school premises to other organisations should only be taken after ensuring that the needs of the school have been given priority.
- In entering into any arrangements it is important that there are agreed working protocols between the school and the facility user.
- A formal Memorandum of Understanding should be drawn up in conjunction with the Trustee's solicitor, signed by all parties which addresses areas such as those set out below:
Duration of agreement, definition of the parties to the agreement, the area for usage, days and times when community will use building, access and time of handover, child protection, staffing structures, pricing structures and financial payment mechanism, security, named key holder, insurance, maintenance/cleaning, equipment, indemnity, termination, variation, review of terms and signatory to agreement.

CCMS is available to offer further advice to schools and Trustees on all such arrangements and we would recommend that prior to entering into any agreement contact should be made with Briege Arthurs at the Holywood office or your local diocesan office.