

**THE COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**  
**MINUTES**

The one hundred and ninety-fifth Meeting of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools was held on Wednesday 18 June 2025 at 1.30pm in CCMS Lisburn/via Teams

<b>PRESENT:</b> Bishop D McKeown (Chair)	Fr G Fox	Mrs C Bradley
Mrs P Carville	Bishop M Router	Fr P Fleming
Dean K Donaghy	Mrs D McNally	Ms N Toman
Mrs A Scott	Dr P Corrigan	Mrs A Moriarty
Mrs M Smyth	Mr J McCormick	Dr B Cummings
Mrs H Quigley		

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Ms E Bremner, Chief Executive [CEO]  
 Mr M McConkey, Interim Director of Strategic Planning and School Provision [DPSP]  
 Mrs M Harvey, Interim Director of Education [DOE]  
 Mrs A Russell, Clerk to Council [AR]

**195.1 WELCOME** **ACTION**  
 The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

**195.2 APOLOGIES**  
 Mr E O'Neill, Director of Workforce Planning and Governance [DWPG], Mr M Keenan, Director of Education [DOE], Mrs D Russell, Mgr P O'Reilly, Fr L Boyle, Mr E McDowell, Mrs C O'Neill and Mrs M Murphy-Higgins.

**195.3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**  
 Members were reminded of the CCMS Conflict of Interest Policy. No interests were declared.

**195.4 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING OF 9 APRIL 2025**  
 Agreed and signed as accurate.

9 April 2025 - Proposed: Mrs P Carville. Seconded: Fr G Fox.

**195.5 UPDATE ON ACTIONS - MATTERS ARISING**  
 None to record.

**195.6 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**  
**195.6.1 – BEREAVEMENTS**

The Chair, Bishop Donal McKeown, on behalf of Council, offered the Council's condolences to the families of:

- Pope Francis, head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State, who passed away on Monday 21 April 2025;
- Patrick (Patsy) McAshea, father of Adrian McAshea, B&D Programme Manager, who passed away on Sunday 27 April;
- Jessica Glasser, Year 14 pupil at Limavady HS, who passed away on Saturday 3 May;
- Catherine Sheery, teacher in St Joseph's Convent PS, Newry, who passed away on Monday 12 May 2025;
- Paddy Quinn, father in law of Joyclyn Madden-Quinn, HR Adviser, who passed away on Thursday 15 May 2025; and
- Nuala Doherty, wife of Sean Doherty, former Council member, who passed away on Monday 16 June 2025.

Members joined in a short prayer.

## **195.6.2 – ANNUAL SKILLS AUDIT**

The CEO requested that all members returned their completed skills audit to AR.

**All  
Members**

## **195.6.3 – STAFFING UPDATE**

The Chair confirmed that the CEO had tabled her resignation and would leave post on 31 August. He noted this would be the CEO's last Council meeting before leaving and thanked Mrs Bremner for her leadership and support. The Chair also advised that Mr Eugene O'Neill, Director of Workforce Planning and Governance, was retiring from post on 30 June and thanked Mr O'Neill for his long service and contribution to CCMS.

The Chair advised that a special meeting of the Chairpersons' Committee took place regarding recruitment of a CEO and to ensure Accounting Officer responsibilities are met in any intervening period. It was also confirmed that recruitment for the Director of HR and Governance would commence shortly.

Finally, the Chair noted his thanks to the DE-appointed representatives, who would not be returning for another term, for their service and contribution to Council.

## **195.7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

The CEO thanked the Council for the trust they had placed in her and that it had been a privilege to lead CCMS for the past two years. She noted that she was looking forward to continuing to work with Catholic maintained schools in her new role and reflected on the factors that contributed to her decision, including the implications for an Accounting Officer of the ongoing funding challenges and the current progression arrangements. The CEO advised Council that she remained fully committed to the role in her remaining time and to securing a positive outcome on funding prior to leaving. The CEO confirmed she will leave post on 31 August.

### **195.7.1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT [CCMS/P/1A/195/25]**

The CEO took members through her report highlighting the key issues since the last Council meeting:

- Sector Highlights
- Finance and Senior Leadership Staffing
- Industrial Relations
- Governance
- Communications and Engagements

### **195.7.2 FINANCE BRIEFING PAPER [CCMS/P/1B/195/24]**

The CEO provided an overview of the finance briefing paper, including the 25/26 projected deficit, current actions to manage expenditure and proposed strategies for the short/medium/longer-term.

The CEO advised that further to the previous Council meeting, she had written to the Chair of the Education Committee, and the Chair had written to the Minister for Education to highlight the Council's concerns and request to meet. The CEO noted that she also reached out to the Trustees through the CEO, Mr Fintan Murphy.

The CEO met with Mr Mathison MLA on Friday 13 June and the Vice-Chair and the CEO then met with the Minister for Education on Tuesday 17 June. A briefing paper was provided in advance of each.

Mrs Carville and the CEO advised that these had been extremely positive meetings. The Minister recognised the level of commitment by CCMS to live within budget, the impact this had on the organisation and the scale of the current projected deficit. He undertook to engage with his officials to review budgetary decisions and revert to Council.

It was agreed with Mr Mathison that, if CCMS did not achieve a successful outcome, the Council would write to the committee requesting their consideration of these matters following recess.

The Vice-Chair, Mrs Carville, advised that the discussion with the Minister was a very open and frank conversation where he acknowledged the challenges that education faced. The meeting focused on the key areas of concern for CCMS such as the changes to employers' national insurance contributions, employee relations and HR cases, recruitment of leaders and SEN pressures. The Minister was particularly impressed at CCMS's leadership appointment process and acknowledged the high levels of performance in CCMS schools.

Members discussed this item at length and noted the systematic under investment in education which has had an impact on the services CCMS provides for children and school leaders and felt that action needed to be taken as Council is in a critical financial situation. Members again reflected on the perceived inequity of treatment while other organisations appear to be given an uplift in their budget allocation. Concern was raised around Council's governance/statutory duties in areas such as data protection and health and safety and sought assurance that Council is not in breach of our legal requirements. Members noted that the CCMS Risk Register would need to be updated to reflect the Council's critical financial position.

The CEO advised that this risk has been captured on the Corporate Risk register for some time, and that the increased 'likelihood' would be reflected in the Q1 review, alongside the CEO's resignation and long-term absences in the senior leadership team.

In conclusion the CEO advised that officers would continue to advocate on these matters and she was committed to securing a positive outcome for 2025/26 prior to her departure. The CEO noted however that there remain longer-term financial challenges and that the Council should consider commissioning an external, organisational review to baseline current form, function and resources against duties and need. This would also provide an opportunity to consider the opportunities and challenges presented by more recent legislation, sectoral body changes and the TransformED strategy.

#### **195.7.3 MOU FOR CSTS AND CCMS [CCMS/P/1C/195/24]**

Members considered and approved the revised MOU which outlines the respective roles of CCMS and CSTS in relation to a number of key policy areas.

Approved. Proposed: Mrs P Carville. Seconded: Mrs Anne Scott.

### **195.8 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

#### **195.8.1 – ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNT 2024/25 [CCMS/P/2/195/25]**

The Chair of ARAC, Mrs A Scott, introduced this item to members. Mrs Scott thanked the CFO and his team for the completion of the Annual Report and Accounts in a timely and professional manner and welcomed the modernised layout/presentation of the report. The members of ARAC met earlier in the morning to finalise the report, without modification, and Mrs Scott recommended that the Annual Report and Accounts for approval by Council.

Approved. Proposed: Mrs P Carville. Seconded: Mrs Martha Smyth.

The Chair and CEO will sign following the meeting.

#### **195.8.2 - ECC TERMS OF REFERENCE [CCMS/P/3/195/25]**

The Interim DOE, Mrs M Harvey, introduced this item advising that the revised TOR for ECC were presented for approval following the last committee meeting.

Approved. Proposed: Mrs H Quigley Seconded: Dean K Donaghy.

#### **195.8.3 – REVISED BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26**

The CEO provided a verbal update on the ongoing engagement with the department to finalise the Business Plan. The CEO advised an updated version will be issued via correspondence to members.

**CEO**

## **195.9 COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

### **195.9.1 EDUCATION PROVISION COMMITTEE [EPC/M/163/24]**

The Chair, Fr G Fox, referred to the minutes of 4 June 2025 for members information.

Committee received updates on the following:

- OP2
- Post-Primary Admissions
- Capital/SEP

### **195.9.2 AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

The Chair, Mrs A Scott, referred members to a meeting that took place earlier in the morning. It was noted that any actions from the last meeting would be deferred to the next committee meeting in September when hopefully new DE-appointed members will be present.

### **195.9.3 EDUCATION CURRICULAR COMMITTEE [ECC/M/165/25]**

#### **195.9.3.1 FIRST-TIME PRINCIPAL REPORT [CCMS/P/1/195/25]**

The Interim DOE, Mrs M Harvey, introduced this item. Members of ECC received a presentation from Mr Wallace at its last meeting on 19 May where it was felt that all members of Council be given the opportunity to hear about this excellent piece of work.

Mrs Harvey advised that the CCMS First-time Principals programme is a strand of the Empowering Effective Leadership programme, one of the priority workstreams established in 24/25. It is underpinned by a strong focus on the leadership and development of Catholic ethos and its impact on school improvement and raising school standards.

In September 2024, the CCMS Education Directorate commissioned an external review of the First-time Principal support programme to help CCMS refine and/or expand the programme and ensure it is relevant to the needs of newly appointed principals. Mr Wallace was appointed to take this piece of work forward.

Mrs Harvey introduced Mr Jackie Wallace, former principal and ETI Inspector, to take members through his report.

Mr Wallace took members through a detailed presentation on:

- the methodology used to evaluate the programme
- an overview of the support programme
- strengths of the programme
- final recommendations

Mr Wallace advised that there is clear evidence of the impact of the programme on new principals and the schools they lead. He noted that the workshops are excellent and well organised with themes that are relevant to the audience. He highlighted a particular strength was the adaptability of the programme, with sessions tailored to feedback from participants. Mr Wallace proposed five recommendations for improvement and that some of these have already been implemented.

Members felt that this was a very uplifting report and were appreciative of the support provided to new principals. Concern was raised regarding a lack of senior managers putting themselves forward for principal roles and that consideration might be given to expanding support to middle managers.

The Chair thanked Mr Wallace for his presentation.

**195.9.4 FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE [FPC/M/ 186/25 & FPC/M/187/25]**

The Vice-Chair, Mrs P Carville, referred to minutes of 19 May 2025 for members information.

Committee received updates on the following:

- Ratification Report
- Annual Report on Appointment and Redundancies
- Teachers Suspensions
- CCMS budget 25/26
- Draft Preventing Violence at Work Policy

**195.10 FOR INFORMATION**

**195.10.1 DEC MINUTES [CCMS/6/195/25]**

Minutes of DEC meetings were presented to members for information.

**195.10.2 DATES OF COUNCIL & COMMITTEE 2025/26 [CCMS/7/195/25]**

Members were requested to note the next set of meeting dates.

**195.11 DATE TIME OF MEETINGS**

The next meeting of Council is on **15 October 2025 @ 1.30pm**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Bishop D McKeown, Chair**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Wednesday 15 October 2025**

<b>Action – June 2025</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Annual Skills Audit	All Members	
Vice Chair to follow up in writing to the Department and Minister of Education regarding funding following meetings	CEO/Vice Chair	