

START OF 2025/26 SCHOOL YEAR



SSEO NEWSLETTER



"It is not enough to love the young;
they must know that they are
loved."

St. John Bosco (Don Bosco)

Dear Principal & Chairperson,

A warm welcome back to this new school year. A special welcome to our newly appointed principals and deputy principals. I hope you enjoyed the summer break, particularly the recent spell of glorious sunshine. I am aware that many of you will have spent time over the summer months preparing for the opening of a new, or additional, special class in your school, whilst others will have been immersed in summer works and other building projects, but I do hope that you took some time out to rest and re-charge for another busy year ahead.

As we embark on this new academic year, amidst all the busyness, I invite you to pause and reflect on the sacred role you hold as leaders of our schools. Each decision you make, each conversation you lead, each challenge you navigate — all are opportunities to build a school culture rooted in Christ.

This year, let us renew our commitment to leading with **faith, courage, and compassion**. In a world that often values performance over purpose, Catholic education stands as a beacon of hope — not only forming minds, but shaping hearts for a life of service, justice, and discipleship.

Our schools must continue to be places where every pupil is known, loved, and called by name. As principals, you are the custodians of that mission. Lead with integrity. Serve with humility. And above all, keep Christ at the centre of your school community.

May the Holy Spirit guide your decisions, strengthen your vocation, and bless the lives of all entrusted to your care.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Aislinn Foley



PRAYER TO BEGIN THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Heavenly Father,

As we begin this new school year, we come before You with grateful hearts.

Thank You for the gift of learning, the opportunity to grow, and the chance to become the people You call us to be.

Send Your Holy Spirit to guide our minds, strengthen our wills, and open our hearts.

Bless our teachers with wisdom and patience.

Bless our classmates with kindness and respect.

And bless us all with courage to face challenges and humility to seek help when needed.

May our school be a place of peace, joy, and growth.

Help us to live our faith in all we do, to serve others selflessly, and to always seek Your truth.

We entrust this year to the care of Mary, our mother, and ask for the intercession of all the saints.

In Jesus' s name we pray.

Amen.



BOARD MEETINGS, CONFIDENTIALITY & CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A Board of Management must meet a minimum of five times per year, scheduling at least one meeting per term. To protect the integrity of board proceedings, the Chairperson must regularly remind board members of the need for absolute confidentiality in relation to all matters discussed at these meetings. The beginning of the new school year is an opportune time for schools to ensure that school-specific email addresses have been allocated to all board members. This measure will also assist in maintaining confidentiality.

Board members should be reminded that where a conflict of interest arises regarding any matter before the board, the relevant member must recuse him/herself for the duration of the board's deliberations on the matter.

Further information on these matters can be found on pages 31 & 41 of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2023–2027.



CHANGE IN BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Where there has been a change in the membership of the BOM, the new board member must sign Form 2 (*Declaration of Acceptance of Membership of the School Board of Management*) at, or before, the first meeting which s/he attends.

In addition, the details of board membership recorded on the Charities Regulator website must be updated to reflect the change.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT FINANCES

The deadline for submission of the certified school accounts for the 2023/24 school year to the FSSU was Friday 28th February 2025. You are reminded that schools are also obliged to submit a copy of their accounts to the Patron each year. Quite a few schools have not yet submitted a copy of their certified school accounts for the 2022/23 school year to our office. If your school has not yet done so, you are kindly asked to submit the accounts for both school years without further delay.

Schools in the Dioceses of Killaloe and Kerry should submit their accounts to linda.fleming@limerickdiocese.org

Schools in the Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly and the Diocese of Limerick should submit their accounts to gwen.osullivan@limerickdiocese.org

FSSU has recorded a webinar to assist schools in preparing a budget for the 2025/26 school year. The webinar and accompanying templates can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.fssu.ie/primary/training/budget-webinar-recording/>

FSSU has also recorded a webinar to support newly appointed principals in understanding the essential internal financial controls within their school. This webinar and a very helpful checklist can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.fssu.ie/primary/training/fssu-live-webinars/newly-appointed-principals/>

A gentle reminder that schools wishing to avail of credit card or overdraft facilities must seek patron approval in advance. The most recent approval form can be accessed via our website: <https://www.stsenansed.ie/>

If your board of management has any concerns regarding school finances, please contact the FSSU for advice at: primary@fssu.ie or 01 9104020. Any suspected irregularities in the school's finances should also be notified to the patron immediately, by contacting Aoife or Kevin.



APPROVAL OF BUILDING WORKS & USE OF SCHOOL PREMISES BY OUTSIDE OPERATORS

Schools are reminded that they must seek patron and trustee approval for any proposed building or improvement works in advance of making application to the Department of Education and Youth for grant funding in respect of same. Once the Department has sanctioned the works and granted the funds, schools must contact our office again for patron approval to proceed with the works.

SCHOOL INSURANCE: SUMS INSURED

Along with this newsletter, you have received a letter regarding the need to ensure that the school premises are adequately insured. Please include this as an item on your next BOM agenda and if you have not already done so, contact your local Allianz representative, Martin Mc Keogh/Jennifer Folan, to arrange a review of the sums insured.

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Special schools and mainstream schools with special classes will also receive an email regarding amendments to their Admissions Policies which are necessary to reflect the requirements of Circular 0039/2025 *"Approach and Key Measures to Support the Forward Planning for Special Education Provision."* Admissions Policies for these schools will need to be amended and approved prior to the publication of this year's Admissions Notice. Please be advised that this may, of necessity, result in a delay in the publication for your Admissions Notice for the 2026/27 school year. Schools which do not have special class are kindly requested not to submit their Admissions Policy for review at this time.

SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

Please notify our office of any change in contact details in respect of your school so that we can update our records. This applies particularly in schools where a new or acting principal has been appointed.

Math Tutorials



COMMUNICATING WITH ST. SENAN'S EDUCATION OFFICE

Our office is open from Monday to Friday offering support to chairpersons and principals by email and over the phone. Our phone line is open from 9:30am – 3:30pm daily. If there is no reply, please leave a message giving the school's name, your name and role, and a brief outline of the issue at hand. The quickest and most efficient way for us to deal with your query is for you to submit an email giving a brief outline of your query. If you are unsure as to where to direct your query, please submit your email to: sseo@ldo.ie Please include your mobile phone number in case we need to speak with you by phone for further clarity on your query.

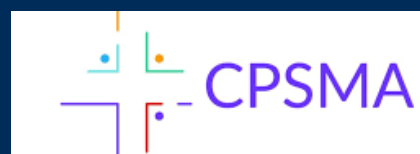
A reminder, especially for newly appointed principals, that the purpose of our office is to offer advice and support to chairpersons and principals on patron-specific matters. Queries regarding general management issues should be directed to CPSMA. (Please see below for guidance on when you should contact CPSMA)

Please ensure that all teaching staff and special needs assistants employed in your school understand that the correct point of reference for them, when seeking advice or support, is their respective unions, INTO & Forsa.

Queries relating to recruitment, buildings, and board membership should be directed to Gwen or Linda according to your diocese. Please submit your query by email in a timely fashion, allowing reasonable opportunity for consideration and response.

WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT CPSMA?

Schools which have queries relating to the following issues should contact CPSMA for advice:



- Guardianship/Custody & Access
- Contracts of Employment
- Employment/Terms & conditions of school secretaries, caretakers, and bus escorts.
- Health & Safety
- Supervision of Pupils
- School Transport
- School Calendar/Closures
- Special Education
- School Plan
- Retention of Pupils in the same grade
- Reduced School Day

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- **Parental Complaints:** Please notify our office once the Chairperson BOM becomes involved in the process.
- **Staff Grievances:** Please notify our office once the Chairperson BOM becomes involved in the process.
- **Disciplinary Procedures for teachers/SNAs:** Please notify our office once the Chairperson BOM becomes involved in the process.
- **Disciplinary Procedures in respect of the School Principal:** Chairpersons should always contact our office in advance of initiating any disciplinary procedures regarding the school principal.
- **Critical Incidents:** Please contact both CPSMA and our office.

WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT ALLIANZ?

The school insurer, Allianz, should be contacted in relation to the following:

- *Slips, trips, falls, & accidents on the school premises*
- *Any building project, plans for additional accommodation, change of purpose of school property*
- *Administration of Medicines*
- *Requests for cover for the cost of legal advice (Please note that where cover is granted by Allianz, the BOM is liable for the excess amount stated on the policy document, currently €300). Where schools have been advised by CPSMA to seek legal advice on a particular issue, the school must also notify the Patron, through our office. A brief email giving an outline of the subject of the advice will suffice. Please include a phone number so that we can contact you for clarity where needed. This requirement applies regardless of whether Allianz is willing to cover the cost of this advice.*

Under no circumstances should a Board of Management engage the services of any solicitor to act on behalf of the school without first speaking with its local Allianz representative and notifying the Patron.

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PROPOSAL OF AMALGAMATION/CHANGE OF STATUS

In recent months, several schools have engaged with our office with a view to exploring the possibility of (a) amalgamating with a neighbouring school or (b) a change of status for their school from single sex to co-education. Where a school wishes to explore either of these options, the proposal should, in the first instance, be discussed at board of management level. It is imperative that all board of management discussions remain entirely confidential at the early stages. Once the board of management has decided that it wishes to further explore one of the above options, the chairperson should contact St. Senan's Education Office. Any initial engagement with the Patron's office will be strictly exploratory in nature as the ultimate decision rests with the Archbishop/Bishop, of the relevant Diocese, in consultation with the Department of Education and Youth.

It is essential for schools to understand that these processes can be complex and take time to come to fruition. Therefore, there is a limit to the number of projects which can be undertaken by our office in any one school year. Schools should be aware that current Department of Education and Youth policy on amalgamation is that a new school building will not be provided to accommodate such a change. Rather, schools wishing to amalgamate must, in the first instance, be willing to do so on a dual campus site, using their current accommodation.

BÍ CINEÁLTA POLICY

Circular 0055/2024 *"Publication of Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools"* requires all schools to communicate the content of their new policy to the Patron. If your school has not yet included the recommended wording from the Bishops' Conference in your new policy, you are requested to do so without delay. This wording and guidance issued to schools by email from our office on 3rd June 2025. Once ratified by the BOM, a copy of the new policy should be submitted to kevin.kelly@limerickdiocese.org



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TRAINING IN CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES FOR ALL BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEMBERS

In May 2025, the Department of Education and Youth published revised Child Protection Procedures for Schools. St. Senan's Education Office will deliver training for all board of management members in the procedures later in this first school term. Board members are urged to attend this training to ensure they have a full understanding of the oversight role of the board of management in this important aspect of school life. **Registration links for these events will follow in the coming weeks.**

Tuesday,
11th November
2025

The Rose Hotel, Dan Spring Road,
Tralee, Co. Kerry, V92 HKA4

Thursday,
13th November
2025

The Anner Hotel, Dublin Road,
Thurles Co. Tipperary, E41 X789

Tuesday,
18th November
2025

Castletroy Hotel, Dublin Road,
Limerick, V94 YOAN

Thursday,
20th November
2025

Longcourt House Hotel. St Mary's Rd, Newcastle West,
Co. Limerick, V42 TD72

Tuesday,
25th November
2025

The Anner Hotel, Dublin Road,
Thurles Co. Tipperary, E41 X789

Thursday,
27th November
2025

The Brehon Hotel Math Tutorials
Muckross Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry, V93 RT22

Tuesday,
2nd December
2025

The Inn at Dromoland, Newmarket on Fergus,
Co Clare, Ireland, V95 EPF5

Wednesday,
3rd December
2025

Abbey Court Hotel and Leisure Centre, Dublin Rd,
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, E45 KA99