

CCMS Circular 2016 / 06

08 February 2016

To: Principals and Chairs of all Catholic Maintained Schools

Re: Unofficial / Unregulated Transfer Test

Dear Colleague

In the past few months it has been drawn to our attention on a number of occasions that some schools continue to engage in activity which is contrary to DE guidance on preparation for unofficial Transfer Tests. That guidance states that the responsibility of the primary school is to deliver the NI Curriculum and not to undertake any activity, during or after school hours, which could be interpreted as preparation for unofficial/unregulated Transfer Tests.

In addition, it is being reported that at parent meetings in some primary schools, principals are encouraging parents to enrol their children for the unregulated tests as this will increase the options for their children at post-primary level.

Finally, some primary principals are signing "Certificate of Verification" forms used by grammar schools to confirm the performance of children in the unregulated tests.

All of the above could be interpreted as some Catholic Maintained primary school principals supporting academic selection which is contrary to the Department's policy position and that taken by the Senior Trustees.

I feel it is necessary therefore to reiterate-that primary school principals should be adhering to the DE guidance and should not be contributing to any teaching, administrative or promotional activity which facilitates, or may be interpreted as facilitating, academic selection.

Furthermore, at the time of transition from primary to post-primary schools, principals/teachers for their own protection should concentrate solely on reporting the level of ability of pupils to parents and not be drawn into situations where they are recommending one post-primary school/sector over another.

All school leaders and teachers have a duty to support all pupils in realising their learning potential through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. School leaders, in particular, need to be aware of the implications of any action taken which is beyond this guidance, on their own school and on the Catholic Maintained Sector as a whole.

Yours sincerely

Malachy Crudden
Head of Education Standards

Cc: Chair of Governors/Trustee