

# **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)**

**between**

**the Transferor Representatives' Council**

**and**

**the Controlled Schools' Support Council**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out the framework for co-operation between the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) and the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC).

## **1. PURPOSE & SCOPE**

The purpose of this MOU is to identify the respective roles and responsibilities of each party. This MOU is not intended to be legally binding and accordingly no legal obligations or legal rights shall arise between the parties from its terms.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) is an unincorporated council drawing its membership from the three main Protestant churches in Northern Ireland namely the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It was created to ensure the continuation of a united voice representing the churches as former owners of schools transferred to state control under the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 1923 and subsequent legislation.

In return for transferring their schools into state control the transferor churches were accorded statutory rights of representation. Schedule 4 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 details the provisions for Transferor representation on the Boards of Governors of Controlled schools. The Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides the Transferor churches with a statutory right of representation on the Board of the Education Authority in accordance with the provisions set out in Schedule 1, Section 2(c) (I) of the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

In addition to statutory rights of representation the Transferor churches secured legislative assurance in respect of the provision of Religious education and daily collective worship in controlled schools as detailed in Part III Section 21 of The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

The statutory rights accorded to the Transferor churches and the consequent responsibilities placed upon the state combine to ensure the continued existence of a Christian ethos within controlled Schools. The Transferor churches work together at policy level, through the TRC, in respect of all matters relating to education in Northern Ireland. The Department of Education recognises the Transferor Representatives' Council as the body representing the Transferor churches.

The Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC) was established in 2016 to provide support to individual controlled schools and to the sector as a whole, and to provide support to the Transferors in the exercise of their legal rights. The majority of controlled schools, from all phases, have opted-in to register with CSSC.

Membership of the CSSC is open to the TRC and the Board of Governors of each controlled school in Northern Ireland as approved by the directors of the CSSC.

Three of the thirteen directors of the CSSC must be representatives of the Transferor Representatives' Council. The Transferor Representatives' Council nominate a representative from each of the three constituent churches to sit on the board of CSSC.

### **3 TRANSFEROR REPRESENTATIVES' COUNCIL**

#### **a) Core values**

The TRC promotes an understanding of the world and the place of humanity in it within the context of belief in God and the Christian faith. This faith is founded upon God's self-revelation and the consequent response demanded of humankind and reflected in our concern for, and attitude to, others and the world in which we live.

The TRC, therefore, promotes education in its broadest sense to encourage the development of the whole person, intellectually, physically, morally and spiritually.

The TRC remains committed to free public education, open to all, and encourages core values and principles, based upon the Bible and shared Christian understanding to be included and exercised within the life of controlled schools and the community.

#### **b) The Purpose of the TRC**

The aims of the TRC are to:

- (i) Uphold and preserve the statutory rights of the Transferor Churches in respect of controlled schools, and to promote and maintain a Christian ethos in those schools.
- (ii) Monitor educational development in such a way that the rights and interests in education of the three Transferor Churches, and the communities they seek to serve, are maintained and enhanced.
- (iii) Foster a spirit of common purpose between the three Transferor Churches to formulate and express shared views on education.
- (iv) Facilitate and support the Transferor Churches in nominating representatives to relevant external bodies such as the Education Authority and the Controlled Schools' Support Council.
- (v) Support and encourage Transferor governors in their governance role in controlled schools.
- (vi) Work collaboratively to support and promote the statutory requirement to teach Religious Education (RE), provide daily Collective Worship in schools and improve the status and standing of RE within education.

## **4 CONTROLLED SCHOOLS' SUPPORT COUNCIL**

### **a) Vision**

The CSSC supports controlled schools in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together within the values of a non-denominational Christian environment.

### **Ethos and values of the controlled sector**

Whilst there is a wide diversity of controlled schools they all adhere to core principles and fundamental values, which ensure they have a unique ethos, an ethos which underpins and permeates the life and work of every controlled school.

The ethos is based on

- an agreed purpose for education, so that all our children and young people have opportunities to gain knowledge, understanding and skills to prepare them for adult and working life and allow them to contribute constructively to society.
- the provision to children and young people of an education service which is of the highest quality, open to all irrespective of background, inclusive and demonstrates respect for diversity.
- the values which underpin the Christian faith. These values include those associated with belief in dignity of every human being, in the responsibilities of living in communities and society and respect for self and others.
- support for the teaching of religious education, developing in children and young people moral values associated with the Christian faith and encouraging their spiritual development.

### **b) The functions of CSSC**

The functions of CSSC as agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive include:

- (i) providing a representational and advocacy role for controlled schools including advice and support in responding to consultation exercises in respect of education policies, initiatives and schemes and in regard to relationships with the Department, the Education Authority and other Departments
- (ii) working with schools within the sector to develop and maintain its collective and inclusive ethos, including, where appropriate, a role in identifying, encouraging and nominating governors and ensuring that ethos is part of employment considerations
- (iii) working with the Education Authority to enhance educational standards within the sector

- (iv) participating in the planning of the schools estate, assessing ongoing provision within the sector; participating in area-based planning coordinated by DE and the Education Authority, including membership of the Department's area planning steering group
- (v) engaging, where appropriate, in strategic planning processes, including community planning and
- (vi) building co-operation and engaging with other sectors in matters of mutual interest, including the promotion of tolerance and understanding.

## **5 COLLABORATIVE WORKING UNDER THIS MOU**

It is agreed that the TRC and the CSSC should work together in the best interests of all controlled schools in Northern Ireland, sharing an open and transparent relationship which recognises and respects one another's roles and responsibilities. This necessarily implies ongoing dialogue and exchange of information on matters of mutual interest. This MOU will be supported by protocols which will set out respective roles for agreed areas of collaboration:

- (i) Collaboration will at all times respect the individual responsibilities of the Transferor Representatives' Council and the Controlled Schools' Support Council.
- (ii) TRC and CSSC will work together to facilitate the effective delivery of the functions, roles and responsibilities of each organisation.
- (iii) Consultation between the TRC and CSSC will occur, as appropriate, on matters of mutual interest and concern in relation to education policy and practice as it affects the controlled sector.
- (iv) Collaboration between the TRC and CSSC will be approved by the Chair of the TRC and the Chief Executive of the CSSC in relation to any joint projects, initiatives or other undertakings.
- (v) CSSC will provide support to the Transferors in the exercise of their legal rights.
- (vi) TRC and CSSC will work with schools within the sector to develop and maintain its collective and inclusive ethos, embracing Christian values.
- (vii) TRC and CSSC will work collaboratively with the Education Authority to enhance educational standards within the sector, including supporting and enhancing these standards in relation to the statutory provision of religious education and collective worship.

## **6 IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BY AND BETWEEN PARTIES THAT:**

- (I) The TRC and the CSSC will review this MOU not later than three years after it has been agreed.

- (ii) This MOU will be amended as required to reflect changes in policy.
- (iii) The agreement will be terminated upon the agreement of both parties giving two months' notice in writing to the other party.

**7 EFFECTIVE DATE AND SIGNATURE**

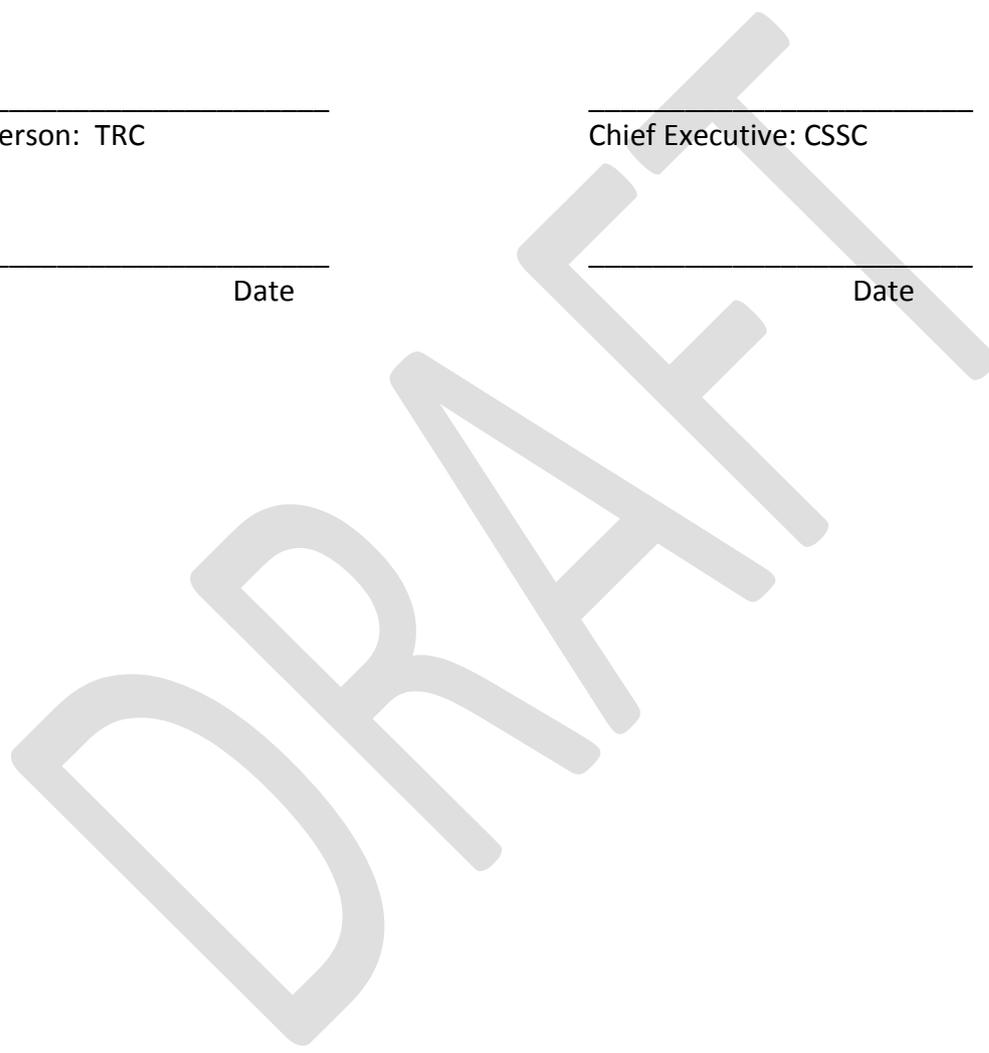
This MOU shall be in effect upon the signature of the TRC's and CSSC's authorised officials. It shall be in force from (insert).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson: TRC

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive: CSSC

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **PROTOCOL OUTLINING COLLABORATIVE WORK BETWEEN THE TRC AND THE CSSC**

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the MOU which sets out a framework of co-operation between the TRC and the CSSC and the collaborative working practices which will enable both organisations to fulfil their respective functions in the interest of schools in the controlled sector.

*For the purposes of these protocols “where appropriate” relates to the functions of the CSSC as outlined in the MOU.*

### **General Principles**

The Transferor Representatives’ Council and the Controlled Schools’ Support Council will:

- (i) promote the development of constructive working relationships for the mutual benefit of both organisations (Representatives of both organisations will meet together at least four times a year.)
- (ii) develop and implement arrangements for the exchange of information in areas of common interest as appropriate within legal requirements
- (iii) ensure that representatives are nominated to meet the formal requirements of the Board of the Education Authority, and Board of Directors for CSSC
- (iv) work together to encourage opportunities for shared education and the promotion of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding
- (v) review these protocols on an annual basis and add or amend protocols as is deemed appropriate and through the agreement of both parties.

The Transferor Representatives’ Council will:

- fulfil its function to provide a unified voice to represent the interests of the Transferor churches including the provision of four nominees, as designated by the constituent churches, to serve as Transferor representatives on the Board of the Education Authority.
- provide nominees from each of the three Churches to serve as Directors on the board of the CSSC and encourage school affiliation and collaboration with the CSSC
- participate in formal meetings with the CSSC and at other times provide for a transparent exchange of appropriate information through delegated representatives.

The Controlled Schools’ Support Council will:

- act as an advocate for the interests of controlled schools and support the TRC in the fulfilment of their representative roles in respect of controlled schools through the provision of data as appropriate within legal requirements and other informed contributions

- establish and maintain effective and transparent communication links with the TRC and its representatives.

### **School governance**

The Transferor Representatives' Council and the Controlled Schools' Support Council will:

- work together to support school governance.

The Transferor Representatives' Council will:

- encourage suitably skilled, gifted and committed individuals to volunteer to become school governors
- facilitate those churches with Transferor rights to nominate suitable persons to the Education Authority to become "Transferor" school governors, providing support and guidance to Transferor governors as appropriate to their Transferor role
- work collaboratively with the Education Authority and CSSC to fill vacancies and preserve Transferor rights
- work collaboratively with the CSSC and the Education Authority to support and encourage Transferor and other governors in their governance role and in promoting a Christian ethos in controlled schools.

The Controlled Schools' Support Council will:

- work with the TRC to encourage, identify and nominate individuals who may be formally appointed by the Education Authority to be governors of controlled schools, protecting Transferor rights where these exist
- Work collaboratively with the TRC to support governors of controlled schools to improve and enhance the quality and effectiveness of school governance.

### **Improving educational provision and raising educational standards**

The Transferor Representatives' Council and Controlled Schools' Support Council will:

- work together with the Education Authority and other stakeholders to improve educational provision and raise educational standards in controlled schools
- will work together to advocate that every child is offered equality of opportunity and that school staff are properly supported in the execution of their duties.

The Transferor Representatives' Council will:

- advocate on behalf of controlled schools and participate in Department of Education and Education Authority consultations and respond, as appropriate, to area planning and school development proposals
- promote opportunities to improve educational standards through Shared Education opportunities including Jointly Managed Church schools where appropriate
- Encourage and support the work of the TRC representatives on the Education Authority to champion excellence and equality in educational provision to meet the needs of all children across the broad spectrum of Education Authority responsibilities.
- Collaborate with the CSSC in encouraging innovative practices to improve educational achievement generally and amongst working class Protestant boys in particular
- support and encourage improvements in teaching and learning in general and in particular work to improve the teaching and status of Religious Education and Collective Worship experience in controlled schools.

The Controlled Schools' Support Council will:

- liaise with the TRC on responses to pre-publication consultation and public consultation on development proposals relating to controlled schools and those with the potential to impact on controlled schools
- work with the Education Authority and other sectoral bodies to improve the quality of controlled educational provision through participation in the area planning structures and share informed contributions with the TRC to assist them in their responses to formal consultations
- work with the Education Authority and other sectoral bodies to raise educational standards and share with the TRC informed contributions to assist with their advocacy and representational role
- support the TRC in raising the standard and status of Religious Education and quality provision Collective Worship in controlled schools
- liaise with the TRC representatives on Education Authority to ensure that they are well informed of issues relating to the controlled sector.