

ACCS NEWS

ISSUE 1 • 2023/2024

CPD
PULL-OUT
SUPPLEMENT
INSIDE

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Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheacha

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The 42nd ACCS Convention will take place on the **13th, 14th and 15th March 2024** in The Galmont Hotel & Spa, Lough Atalia Road, Galway.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:



Resolutions/motions and/or nominations for the Presidency must be submitted.



Draft agenda of business and nominations for Presidency – including resolutions/motions – to be issued to Member Boards and Executive members; amendments invited.



Deadline for submission of amendments to resolutions/motions.



Final agenda to be issued to delegates and to the Secretary, Board of Management.



Opening of ACCS Convention 2024.



Retirees 2023

ACCS offers its gratitude and best wishes to those retiring in 2023 or moving to pastures new. We hope you enjoy the next step in your journey and we hope our paths will continue to cross.

Ashton Comprehensive School
Anne Marie Hewison

Athboy Community School
Anthony Leavy

Gorey Community School
Stella Kehoe

Heywood Community School
Phil Bowe

Pobalscoil Neasáin
Pat McKenna

Scoil Mhuire, Clane
Padraig Nolan

St. Aidan's
Comprehensive School, Cavan
Maryann Smith

St. Caimin's
Community School
Alan Cunningham

St. Kilian's
Community School
Leah Bools

Tullow Community School
Alice Ashe

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Welcome to the 2023/2024 school year!

As we commence a new academic year, on behalf of all the team in the ACCS Head Office, I would like to wish our trustees, boards of management members, school leaders and school communities a successful and enjoyable new school year.

We extend a warm welcome to all of the newly appointed Principals and Deputy Principals whom we met earlier this month during the ACCS Induction Programme. We are excited for them in this new chapter of their lives, and we look forward to supporting you in these new roles throughout the year.

To all those Principals and Deputy Principals who retired this year, we thank you for your service and commitment to our schools and the wider communities and wish you all the very best as you look to different adventures in the future. We look forward to meeting you all at the ISM Conference in November when we can celebrate your contribution to Irish education and to all those communities which you have served over the years.

In this edition we have included the ACCS Continuous Professional Development Programme for 2023/2024 as a pull-out supplement for you to keep on your desk throughout the year. Taking into consideration your busy schedules, the increasing demands on your time and, in an effort to keep travel time to a minimum, you will see we are continuing to use the blended approach with a good mix of webinars and in-person events during the 2023/24 school year.

The monthly updates for Board members and senior leaders have proven both useful and popular and these will continue in the calendar for the coming year. We have some additional and new events in the CPD calendar this year including a regional approach to Managing Health and Safety Risks which will be delivered by the team in the State Claims Agency across three dates in the Autumn.

We will continue to advocate on the key issues including teacher supply and the increased cost of living, on your behalf in our negotiations with the stakeholders and the Department of Education in the coming year.

We continue to build on and to improve the website experience and we hope that you will regard this as your first port of call when you have a query or need to access DE circulars, ACCS Information bulletins or other guidelines. In particular, the Human Resource, Health and Safety and GDPR sections have lots of up-to-date and comprehensive information, templates, and other useful resources for schools. Please access these at www.accs.ie. In the event that you are unable to find an answer to your query, as ever, do not hesitate to contact Head Office or the relevant member of the team.

Finally, in the words of John O'Donohue from his blessing, **"FOR A NEW BEGINNING"**

**...Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.**

**Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you...**

Le meas,

John Irwin
General Secretary, ACCS



Incident Reporting in Community and Comprehensive Schools

Under the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2000, Community and Comprehensive Schools are obliged to report all incidents promptly to the State Claims Agency (SCA) and to facilitate any subsequent investigation.

All incidents reported to the SCA are recorded on the National data base known as the National Incident Management System (NIMS) which was rolled out to Community and Comprehensive Schools in 2022.

What is an incident?

An incident includes any unplanned or uncontrolled occurrence or sequence of occurrences that caused or had the potential to cause injury, ill-health, disease, and/or damage/loss to property/service. This includes incidents involving persons (Staff, students, visitors etc.), third party property or the school as a whole.

Why report incidents?

Incident Reporting is the starting point of the incident management process. It not only fulfils a statutory requirement to report incidents to the SCA but it can be the important record in the event of a statutory investigation or a claim for compensation.

We know that organisations that have higher levels of reporting are also likely to have improved levels of risk management. Also, there is merit in analysing aggregated incident data. It can show trends and hotspots not only within your school but for the SCA to identify learnings that can be shared across all 97 Community and Comprehensive schools.

Your school should have an established incident reporting procedure. This procedure will outline the steps to follow in relation to reporting incidents in your school and the requirements to report to any applicable third parties such as the State Claims Agency (SCA), the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) etc.

How to get access to NIMS

If you have not yet received access to NIMS or you wish to request additional users within your school, please follow the steps outlined below. We recommend that every school has 1/2 users for inputting incidents (typically clerical staff), 1/2 users for analysing and investigating incidents (typically the person with responsibility or delegated duties for Health and Safety) and finally the Principal, who may on occasion need to log an incident of a sensitive nature as the designated child protection liaison for the school.

Further Guidance

Further information on NIMS and incident reporting can be found on the ACCS Website - <https://www.accs.ie/ms/accident-reporting>

Katie Nugent

Enterprise Risk Manager, State Claims Agency



Save the Date

**ACCS Education
Conference 2024**
Wed 17 April 2024
Kildare Town
Community School

ACCS Education Conference on Creativity

Glenamaddy Community School 2023

When I was first asked to participate in the ACCS Conference on Creativity in Glenamaddy, I wasn't fully sure what to expect. However, I found it to be a truly interesting and enjoyable experience. While we were there, we met many representatives of the various Community Schools that make up the family of the ACCS - both students and teachers - and together we discussed and shared ways in which we were innovating with creativity in our schools.

Creativity was the focal point of this conference; it was fascinating to see how each school approached the job in hand. We were there to showcase our school's creative approach to boosting literacy, and I found many of the visitors to our stand responded very positively to our ideas.

There was a myriad of schools represented from Donegal to Cork, and each one had come to share their unique ways of fostering creativity, whether it was through art, music, cookery, woodwork or coding, to name but a few. We were thrown in the deep end answering probing questions from Principals and ACCS members at our stand. Lochlann and I had great fun conducting mini video interviews with students on their stands about what they had brought to share.

This conference has not only increased my understanding of creativity and the role it plays in all learning, it has also taught me a great deal about myself. I am more confident in myself and my abilities, especially when it comes to communication and presentation skills. It also challenged me with the opportunity to get to know my teachers and fellow students. As I am new to my year group, I haven't known that many people this year, so it was wonderful to chat and laugh with new friends, and to see a more human side (!) to my teachers away from a pedagogical setting.

But perhaps one of the most important lessons that I have learned from going to the conference in Glenamaddy is that our creativity, and by extension ourselves, is not limited or confined in any way, except by our own imagination. There is a plethora of ways that we can express ourselves as the borders of creativity are only as narrow as we make them.

Aoibhinn Cowan

5th Year PCS, Portumna Community School



Team Neptune Seafeed,

Rosses Community School

claim Blue Innovation Award 2023



The Blue Challenge is an entrepreneurship education programme, launched by Euronext in partnership with JA Europe, the largest non-profit organisation in Europe dedicated to preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship. The programme aims to inspire students aged 16 to 18 about sustainable finance and help them develop core competencies such as teamwork, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills.

Throughout the academic year, over 250 students from Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, the Netherlands and United Kingdom are able to learn about sustainable finance while working on their own business projects supported by mentoring and webinars from Euronext volunteers.

The Blue Innovation Award is given to the mini-company that best embodies a sustainable use of the ocean resources for economic growth. The 9 winning teams, selected from 250+ students in 9 countries, took part in the European final in May 2023 where students from Rosses Community School took home the Blue Innovation Award with their company Neptune Seafeed.

Neptune Seafeed developed seaweed products that create a natural and sustainable fertiliser, rich in nutrients and trace elements essential for plant growth. The liquid seaweed fertilizer allow reducing methane emissions by cows, while being rich in nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus which all contribute to a nutrient-rich and healthy grass for feeding the animals.

Congratulations to the Neptune Seafeed team, Michelle Gallagher, TY Coordinator/Year Head, Dylan Doherty, Conor McBride, Darragh Davidson, Louie Mort and teacher Deirdre O'Reilly.

Vetting Audit Update

To ensure registered vetting organisations are complying with vetting procedures, the National Garda Vetting Bureau regularly conducts audits on registered vetting organisations.

As part of ACCS compliance we will start the process of monitoring the compliance of our member schools.

This year we will start requesting the filed documents of past vetted individuals randomly.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the following;

- All copied documents (ID and proof of address) and the disclosure need to be filed in a secure location on the school premises until 7 years after staff have left and 2 years after students have left.
- Host families - Documents must be filed in the school in a secure location for 2 years after the vetting has been conducted.
- Finally, as disclosures are highly sensitive documents, the school principal is the only staff member permitted to receive disclosures by email. On occasion the principal can instruct ACCS to send disclosures to another member of staff, e.g. TY Coordinator or Director of Further Education. This can be discussed with ACCS.

If you have any queries please contact Jasmin at jaminger@accs.ie.

A New Home in Ireland

- My Journey from Syria

My name is Sedra Manaa. I am a 16-year-old student, who escaped the war in Syria to live in Ireland with my family. We are originally from Idlib City in Syria, and we are now living in Carndonagh, Co Donegal. I am currently studying at CCS and have just completed my Junior Cycle.

In 2011 life in Syria was calm. In Idlib City people were living happily with their families. Neighbours lived together, children went to school, men and women were happily working, young people were studying in universities for a better future.

During an ordinary day in March 2011, what began as a peaceful uprising developed into a war that caused the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, many of them children, and the total destruction of many cities. Families stopped sending their kids to schools, men and women stopped working, food became unaffordable and refugees fled the country for a better life. In Syria, Muslims, Christians and other religions used to live in unity but the war has left deep scars.

Around this time, I had just started 5th class but because of the war I had to leave with my family to find a safe place to stay. We had to cross a muddy hill, the only place that had no border guards, to get into Turkey. It was a seven hour walk to get there. If you were lucky, you might pass the first time. Unfortunately, we didn't succeed. We got caught six times by the Turkish border patrol and were sent back on each occasion. At this point we distrusted ourselves and thought we would never get through. We couldn't give up because back in Syria we had sold everything we owned - our house, furniture, car, land etc. We took the risk and went again. We passed! We finally arrived in Turkey after a long and difficult overland journey to reach the border.

There were people called 'smugglers' who would get us to Greece. We paid these smugglers to take us in a van to a beach where we found many families waiting to get on an inflatable boat. On the beach at Izmir the weather was wet and cold, the ground was muddy. The van driver dropped us off some distance from the beach and everyone walked for many kilometres. Someone on the beach received a call advising us that we had to wait until night time for the crossing.

Many flew overland while we had to face a dangerous sea journey across the sea from Turkey to reach Greece. Unfortunately, many people, including children, drowned when their small boats sank. On the beach at Izmir, in Turkey, night was coming near and our group of men, women and children were trying to remain calm but feeling afraid about what lay ahead. Children were getting very cold. We eventually clambered onto the raft, packed with people. I could not see anything because it was so dark. There were about 70 people crammed onto that boat. A 3 hour journey with no room to sit. Most people, young and old, stood upright for 3 hours without food or water. It was impossible to move in any direction.

We were constantly thinking about the many people who had died trying to make this journey and wondered to ourselves if anyone would help us when we reached the shore in Greece. At one point, when the sea water started to come over the sides of the small boat, we were frightened that we would all drown. As the boat reached the shore, we could see the beach and people waiting to help us. We lived in tents in the Lesbos refugee camps for about 3 months with about 3000 other refugees. It was hard living in a tent in Greece, as the weather was so hot in summer.

Later we were moved to a camp with better facilities and running water. Food was also provided for us twice a day, though we had to queue for hours. Then we got moved to a proper house, living on our own. It honestly felt great now. After 6 months living in the house, we got a call from the Irish embassy one morning to say that we had been accepted as refugees and we would be travelling to Ireland.

Once we arrived in Ireland, we stayed in a hotel in Dublin for 2 months. After that we were moved to Ballaghaderreen in Co Roscommon. We lived there for about 9 months until we were moved to a proper house in Carndonagh Co. Donegal. We have lived here ever since.

I am happy in Ireland with my family around me. Happy to be around Irish people, they never make us feel that we are strangers and always treat us with kindness and humanity. Happy to be living in a beautiful, peaceful place without war or terror.

Sedra Manaa
Student, Carndonagh Community School



Recent **ACCS Info Bulletins**

BULLETIN NO.	DATE	SUMMARY
ACCS/Info Bulletin 14/23	10/08/2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporary Changes to the Job-Sharing Scheme for registered teachers in the 2023/24 school year (Information Note TC/IN 0006/2023) 2. Temporary Changes to the Career Break Scheme for registered teachers in the 2023/24 school year (Information Note TC/IN 0007/2023) 3. Teacher Supply Post-Primary: Teaching Hours Extension Scheme for 2023/2024 (Circular Letter 35/2023)
ACCS Info Bulletin 13/23	29/05/2023	<p>Circular 0028/2023: Updates on the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, with particular reference to the school year 2023/24. (Published 25th of May 2023).</p> <p>Clarification notes for teachers of SPHE on the learning related to 3 sensitive topics within the updated specification - LO 3.6 (gender orientation and gender identity), 3.8 (consent) and 3.10 popular culture and the online world SPHE Communicating with Parents/carers about SPHE/RSE</p>
ACCS Info Bulletin 12/23	24/05/2023	State Examinations Commission Press Release - Leaving Certificate Examinations Results Date 2023.
ACCS Info Bulletin 11/23	23/05/2023	Independent Panel for the Interview Board for Post of Responsibility Appointments in Community & Comprehensive Schools.

Recent Relevant **DE Circular Letters**

CIRCULAR NO.	SUMMARY
CL 24/23	Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2023/2024 Special Education Component
CL 25/23	Voluntary Search and Rescue Leave for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
CL 26/23	Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2023/2024 school year
CL 27/23	NQF Level 9 Graduate Diploma in Social Personal and Health Education/Relationships and Sexuality Education (SPHE/RSE) Programme 2024
CL 28/23	Arrangements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to the school year 2023/2024
CL 33/23	Carer's Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
CL 34/23	DEIS (DELIVERING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOLS) ACTION PLANNING AND GRANT ALLOCATION FOR ALL DEIS SCHOOLS
CL 35/23	Teacher Supply Post Primary: Teaching Hours Extension Scheme for 2023/2024