

# PRIMARY DIOCESAN ADVISORS

**'Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.' W.B. Yeats**

September 2016

Dear Principal and Staff,

As once again, you face the daunting task of beginning a new school year, I wish to take this opportunity to wish you every success and fulfilment in all that you will be called to undertake in the coming months. I trust that you all had a relaxing and refreshing holiday that will serve to energise you to take on the challenge of beginning again.

As you are well aware, Primary schools are coming under increasing pressure due to the changes in society's attitude towards the practice of religion. Schools are challenged to address a diverse range of controversial issues such as inclusion, diversity, admission's policies and the proposed Government programme on religious beliefs and ethics.

In recent months, Primary schools throughout Ireland are coming under increasing pressure to ban Amnesty International from addressing their pupils given the organisation's support for the liberation of Ireland's abortion laws, under the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

In the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore any group campaigning for the legalisation of abortion in Ireland, which is completely contrary to a Catholic ethos, does not have the right to visit a school and attempt to gain support for their cause.

In general, we must ensure that any group invited into our schools' reflect the ethos of the school. The Waterford and Lismore Diocesan policy on guest presentation states: "all guest presentations in Primary and voluntary Catholic Post-Primary schools must comply with the Catholic ethos". In dealing with difficult and sensitive situations, the Catholic ethos and the Religious Education policy are the most important reference points for school personnel, pupils and parents.

As you are aware the 'Grow in Love' programme has replaced the 'Alive-O' programme for First and Second Classes. In-servicing of the new programme for First and Second Class teachers takes place during the second week of September. It is imperative that all teachers involved in Religious Education demonstrate their commitment and support of the new 'Grow in Love' programme through their participation and attendance at one of the in-services, scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> September. We rely on your full co-operation in this regard.

We are deeply grateful to all Junior and Senior Infant teachers for embracing and promoting the 'Grow in Love' programme with such energy, enthusiasm and commitment over the last


year. During our formal visits to the schools, it was uplifting to witness the children's depth of understanding of the various themes in the programme, their love of the songs and stories and to see their parent's active involvement with homework assignments.

Finally, our sincere thanks for supporting us in our role as Diocesan Advisors and for your commitment to passing on to your pupils our deep Catholic faith, so that they, in turn, can make our world a more just, loving and safe place for all.

As you embark on a new school year, may the energising Spirit of God guide you in all that you do and say, filling you with courage and perseverance when you grow tired and weary-resting a mantle of peace upon you to calm your heart and mind and to protect you.

May God bless you and the young lives you inform, nourish and help fill their potential.

With best regard,



Antoinette Dilworth rsj.,

*On behalf of the Diocesan Advisors: Sr. de Lourdes Breen, Fr. Ned Hassett and Fr. Richard O'Halloran.*

*Waterford & Lismore Diocese.*