

# DRAFT ETBI Brief on Protocols for Handling Media Queries re Community National Schools

## Context

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and many CNS Schools are being approached by various media outlets in relation to different aspects of the Community National School model. While ETBs should agree protocols with their Community National Schools on dealing with local media concerning local school events, there is a need for a standardised approach across all ETBs for dealing with all media queries concerning the CNS model, the operation of CNS schools, and all sensitive issues.

The patronage of CNS schools transferred from the Minister for Education and Skills to ETBs from September 2016. As ETBI is the representative body for all ETBs, **it is imperative that ETBI is informed of all such media requests to ensure a co-ordinated approach.**

Although all CNS schools are now officially under the patronage of ETBs, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) still has a strategic role in their development, and in matters related to *Goodness Me! Goodness You!*, in particular. Therefore, ETBI may liaise with the DES in relation to media queries on these issues.

## Protocols

Generally speaking, it is not necessary to follow this protocol in the case of local Community National School news, such as local sports events, concerts or fundraising events; however it is advisable to keep your ETB's Director of Schools and Communications Officer<sup>1</sup> informed of such events in case they wish to publicise or otherwise assist.

In the event of an individual CNS school being approached by a local or national media journalist or agency concerning the CNS model, the operation of CNS schools, or any sensitive issue, the following protocol should be adhered to:

- Any employee or representative of a school, other than the principal, who is approached by a media journalist or agency, should not engage with them, but refer the matter immediately to their principal.
- The principal of the school should make it clear to the journalist or agency that their ETB has in place protocols around media that they must adhere to and therefore they are **not able to comment at this point.**
- The principal should then direct the media request to the designated person(s) (the Director of Schools and/or the Communications Officer) in the ETB.
- The designated person should discuss the request with the Director of Schools (if not already advised) and Chief Executive.
- The designated person should then discuss the request with the ETBI Primary Support Officer<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Each ETB Head Office will provide the contact details for the ETB's Communications Officer to each CNS school

<sup>2</sup> Currently the Primary Support Officer is Séamus Conboy.

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- The ETBI Primary Support Officer will discuss the request with the General Secretary.
  - Advice may be sought from the press office in the DES.
  - If it is decided that the school should engage with the media, the ETBI Primary Support Officer will make direct contact with the relevant school and support them in devising a plan for engaging with the media.
  - If the decision is for the school not to accommodate the media request, a decision will be made whether the ETBI Primary Support Officer or the Director of Schools should communicate this decision directly to the journalist or agency in question.
  - These protocols should be read in conjunction with each ETB's Communications Policy.

In the event that ETBI is approached by a media journalist or agency concerning the CNS model, the following protocols should be followed:

- The ETBI General Secretary and Primary Support Officer will discuss the media request. They will, if necessary, consult with the DES and/or other relevant person(s).
- The Primary Support Officer will contact the relevant Director of Schools if the request is in relation to a particular school(s) in their ETB.
- If the request pertains to the CNS model as a whole and the media's request to work in one or two CNS schools is approved, the Primary Support Officer will seek volunteer schools from all Directors of Schools.
- The Director of Schools or designated person in the ETB should discuss the request with the Primary Support Officer and if they are happy to accommodate the request, they should decide on the school(s) that might be most appropriate to work with the media.
- The Primary Support Officer will then make direct contact with the relevant school and support them in devising a plan for engaging with the media.
- If the decision is not to accommodate the media request, the ETBI Primary Support Officer should communicate this directly to the journalist or agency in question.

Generally, time is of the essence in relation to media requests. The above protocols should be followed and completed within two days after the initial request is made.

Deviations from the protocols can be made at the discretion of an ETB Director of Schools / ETBI in relation to a request that requires more immediate attention. Any such action made should be communicated to the Primary Support Officer in ETBI as soon as possible.

Dated: [ENTER DATE]

Note: this protocol is subject to further amendment.