

Dear Parent/Guardian

### **ADMISSIONS BILL and the negative impact on Sligo Grammar School**

The recent announcement by the Minister for Education and Skills proposes to introduce new rules on school admission to faith based schools.

These proposals will diminish or possibly remove the role of faith in determining admission to faith based schools. The proposed changes will impact negatively on minority faith schools and oversubscribed schools. Sligo Grammar School meets both of these categories and if the proposed changes are approved the negative impact on Sligo Grammar School and other secondary and primary schools under Church of Ireland Patronage will result in minority faith students being unable to gain admission to Sligo Grammar School. Furthermore the admission process for all other faiths will change and families will find that this may result in hitherto successful admissions being refused in the future.

S7 (3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000 allows faith based schools to make preferential provision on admissions for children of their faith - in other words, where a school is oversubscribed, The Board of Management may afford priority to children of families of a particular religious denomination.

Seeking to radically undermine the legal protections which support the provision of faith based education by religious minorities in Ireland will do little for equality or fairness in Irish education. There are other administrative approaches the Minister can take to address the challenges proposed in very limited areas where oversubscription in schools and lack of capacity are creating difficulties.

The Minister originally indicated that there would be a 12 week consultation period, he subsequently reduced this to four weeks. After a vociferous lobbying campaign this was altered to 8 weeks. The date for final submissions is 20 March 2017.

### **Students attending Sligo Grammar School have received 50% less funding towards ICT than students attending other faith schools or ETB schools.**

Recent allocations to schools for ICT funding have directly disadvantaged students attending Sligo Grammar School. Our children have been allocated 50% of the funding provided for children attending other faith schools or ETB schools. This is an inequality that must be reversed.

The Board of Sligo Grammar School will be making a submission. However, parents and alumni of Sligo Grammar School have asked how they can assist in making their concerns known. I would suggest the following:

Make personal contact with local T.D.s, Councillors informing them of how the changes will impact on the school community.

Send a letter or email to the Minister's Office and local T.D.'s etc. (A sample letter highlighting the concerns is enclosed).

Talk to other people in the community and make them aware of the proposed changes to the education system.

I cannot overemphasise the negative impact the proposed changes to the Admission Bill for Schools and the reduced funding for Church of Ireland and other Protestant managed schools will have on not only our schools but the communities we serve.

It is imperative that we make our concerns known immediately. I thank you in anticipation of your help and assistance.

Yours truly

Michael Hall  
Secretary to the Board of Management