

**FROM BANGLADESH TO BALGADDY**  
A CASE STUDY OF A CHANGING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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Finally we would like to express our gratitude to Phyllis Murphy who undertook the research and who compiled the final report.



## SECTION ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This report was commissioned by Clondalkin Partnership and Archbishop Ryan Junior and Senior National Schools in Balgaddy, South Lucan in Dublin. The aims of the report are to document the schools' experience of a significant growth in their numbers of international pupils and to examine the opportunities and challenges presenting to them as a result of the changes being experienced.

The research was also interested in examining the appropriateness of current responses within the schools and in making recommendations on how to further respond to:

- the educational needs of pupils in the school;
- the impact of international pupils on teaching and learning in the schools;
- the needs of parents in relation to supporting their children's education.

Although the report is mainly focused on educational issues, it also inevitably includes some examination and discussion of a number of social issues that are of concern for families living within the schools' catchment area.

#### 1.2 Research Methodology

The research took place within the two schools over a period of two weeks in May 2007. It involved all key stakeholders in the schools and was carried out in line with a research plan designed in consultation with a research steering group. This group was comprised of the Principals, the Deputy Principals and the Home, School, Community Liaison Teachers from both schools and it also included the Education Officer of Clondalkin Partnership. The research methodology was as follows:

##### (i) Literature and Document review

Review and analysis of relevant literature and documentation including: school data on student profiles; profile data on the school's catchment area; and data related to immigration into Ireland and relevant Government policy.

##### (ii) Consultations with key stakeholders in the research

These included the following:

- One to one interviews with the Principal of each school;
- Consultation with key members of the Boards of Management.  
A facilitated discussion with 6 Board members in the Senior School and one to one interviews with two Parent Representative of the Board in the Junior School;
- One to one interviews with the Deputy Principals in each school;
- One to one interviews with the Home, School, Community Liaison Teacher in each school;
- A facilitated discussion with a group of 11 parents, most of whom had children in both schools. One to one interviews were also carried out with 5 of these parents following the discussion group;
- A number of facilitated discussions with pupils attending the schools and past pupils (representing a mix of countries of origin). The groups were:
  - A past pupils group consisting of 7 young people who had attended the schools and were now at second level schools, St. Kevin's Community

- School in Quarryvale, St. Joseph's (girls) secondary school in Lucan and Colaiste Phadraig in Lucan;
  - 2 groups of pupils in the Senior School (11 across the classes);
  - 1 group of pupils in the Junior School (6 across the classes);
- Facilitated discussions were carried out with groups of class teachers in each of the schools. The groups were:
  - A mixed group of class teachers in each school, two teachers from each class level;
  - A group of language, support and special needs teachers in each school

An observation visit also took place to one of the language support classes in the Junior School;
- Interviews with Clondalkin Partnership staff: the Equality Coordinator, the Equality Officer and the Education Development Officer.

**(iv) Collation of all data and report writing.**

All data and information gathered was collated and a draft report compiled. The draft report was circulated to the research steering group and feedback incorporated into this final report.

**Notes on Terminology**

The focus of this report is on the impact on Archbishop Ryan Junior and Senior Schools of the rapid and recent growth in the number of children whose parents have moved to Ireland as immigrant workers or asylum seekers. These children will be called 'international' children, the term favoured by the schools, irrespective of whether their family status is asylum seeker, refugee or immigrant worker (see appendix for definitions of these terms). Although acknowledging the wide-ranging experiences for families of these different types of status, it is the schools' view that the numbers of pupils across the range (including those who have been born in Ireland) are of relevance to examining the challenges emerging in relation to the schools' capacity to provide a quality education provision to all of their pupils.

**1.3 Report Format**

This report is presented in 5 sections. Following this introduction, Section Two will outline the background and context for the research. Section Three will present a profile of Archbishop Ryan Schools and also present key features of the school's catchment area. This will be followed in Section Four by a presentation of the feedback gathered from the consultations. Finally, Section Five will present some conclusions and recommendations.

## SECTION TWO

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Immigration into Ireland

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports that the number of immigrants into Ireland in the 12 months to April 2006 is estimated to have been 86,900 which is the highest figure recorded since the present series of annual immigration estimates began in 1987. When emigration and births less deaths are taken into account, the population estimate based on 2006 census results is estimated as 4.235 million in April 2006 with close on 420,000 i.e. 10% of the population in Ireland classified by the CSO as 'non Irish'.

The majority of non-Irish nationals were from the EU (275,776) followed by Asia (46,952), Africa (25,326) and North and South America (21,124) (CSO Population and Migration Estimates, September, 2006)

Mac Eniri (2007) notes that it is not possible to say how many of those recorded as immigrants remain in the country and turnover is likely. He suggests that the fact that 133,258 social insurance numbers were issued to immigrant workers from the new accession states between the 1st of May 2004 and the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2005 provides an indication of the level of growth involved, especially when the families of these workers are also taken into account. Although it is not yet clear as to the patterns of permanency that will develop in Ireland in relation to immigration, it is likely to become a norm for Irish society. As Mac Enri notes:

*'At the very least, however, we can state with confidence that Ireland is no longer a country where immigration can be regarded as a short-term or transient issue. The country has now definitively joined the European mainstream as a society where a population of mixed ethnic backgrounds is the norm.'* (p. 215)

The extent of this dramatic growth is resulting in a major economic and social transformation of the country and this is presenting both significant opportunities and challenges to Irish society. While the focus is often restricted to the latter, there is acknowledgement nationally that immigrant workers have made major contributions to Ireland's economic success. Non-Irish workers now account for at least 1 in 8 of the Irish labour force. ([www.cso.ie/census](http://www.cso.ie/census))

At policy level, the challenges involved are underpinned by tensions arising in relation to questions such as: Who gets in? What should be conditions for entry? And also what is the role of Government in relation to the process of integration of new communities? In parallel with these theoretical pre-occupations, however, some local communities around the country are faced with the practical day-to-day challenges of being inclusive as they experience large-scale immigration into local areas already overstretched in terms of local infrastructure and services. Fanning notes that there is a 'profound disconnection between official Ireland and an increasingly diverse real one' (2007, p. 2).

It is beyond the brief of this report to examine the issues emerging and the debates taking place in any depth, but a number of summary points are drawn from recent

literature in order to set out the wider international and national context for this research.

## **2.2 Immigration and Social Inclusion**

Migration, although a recent phenomenon to Ireland, is part of a global process and Ireland's experience represents a pattern that is reflected all over Europe and the rest of the developed world. According to the United Nations, over 175 million people live outside of their country of origin. The presence of international migrants and the movement of workers have raised many contentious issues. It has posed a challenge to domestic and international policy-making and brought traditional notions of citizenship and national identity into question. (MCRI, 2006)

Throughout Europe and over time, there have been different approaches taken in response to the emerging multicultural societies. Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MCRI) sets out the three main models adopted (see Figure 2.1 below) and argues that interculturalism offers the most potential for the creation of an inclusive society based on equality of opportunity and respect.

**Figure 2.1 Approaches to Multicultural Societies**

*Assimilation means absorption, incorporation and digestion. The shedding of one's identity to become as if a member of the dominant group that makes up that society.*

*Multi-culturalism is a policy that has been pursued in a number of countries e.g. UK / France. It has often involved activities such as providing supports for cultural expression, multicultural events etc. but it says little about either the situation or the status of the members of the different cultures, it only implies their presence.*

*Interculturalism is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, understanding, equality of opportunity and respect. It is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for with inclusion of minority ethnic groups by design and planning, and not as a default or add-on.*

(MCRI, 2006, p.118-112)

At EU level, responsibility for the development of immigration strategies is essentially with Member States, although since the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999, the EU Commission has put forward several directives and publications on issues related to immigration. Over the course of these documents key ideas emerging included: the definition of integration as a two-way process with reference to a 'host community' rather than a 'state'; the need to adopt a 'holistic' approach to integration; and the need to reduce social exclusion among immigrants and ethnic minorities.

### **2.2.1 The Imperative for a Coherent Integration Policy**

MCRI suggests that integration policy in the Irish context remains a somewhat vague concept and it is important that the needs, challenges and opportunities involved in immigration are identified and named and a clear understanding of integration developed in relation to policy and practice. The Centre highlights the need for Government to create structures and policy responses and take a lead role in relation to setting out a vision of an inclusive intercultural society.

"While the process of integration will involve all actors, it needs to be State driven and State funded if it is to be successful; with clear structures and



objectives in order to ensure that it is given priority in the policy context.”  
(p.36)

Fanning (2007) notes that, aside from the social inclusion imperative, integration can be presented as a functional requirement of social policy, in a context where, for example, education is understood as a basis for future societal wealth and economic productivity or where immigrants reduce present or future dependence ratios. In a greying Europe declining birth rates and ageing work forces signal further potential crises in the provision of retirement age welfare. Such provision potentially depends on the children of immigrants as well as those of present day citizens. In spite of the potential value to Irish society generally he notes, however, that ‘the long-term advantages of successfully integrating immigrants have still proved difficult to sell’.  
(237 - 238)

### **2.3 Challenges for New Communities in Ireland**

Research on refugees and those given leave to remain in the state by Pearn Kandola (2003) identifies a multiplicity of barriers facing those attempting to integrate into Irish society. Among the barriers noted are:

- community and culture;
- language skills;
- housing;
- employment/training;
- education for children and adults;
- individuals’ vision for the future.

The research also highlights that intangible barriers to integration such as, public perceptions, lack of awareness, and lack of recognition of skills can sometimes result in racial discrimination, a major barrier in its own right.

Kandola’s report particularly notes the impact of the patterns of concentration that have developed in terms of the accommodation of asylum seeking and refugee families. His research points to significant concerns among some communities and service providers regarding the effects of these patterns both on sometimes already overstretched local provision and also in relation to the level of social inclusion and mixing of immigrant families in local areas. He notes:

*‘they will live near refugees from the same country and same ethnic origin to seek comfort, companionship and social support. They will attend the same churches as they attended at home and may never have the opportunity to meet Irish people in their locality or integrate fully into their host community.’*

### **2.4 Immigration and Primary School Education**

The effects of the changes outlined above are particularly felt in the school system. The challenges at policy level have been highlighted by the Minister for Education & Science. In one of her responses on the issue in the Senate (January 2006), she noted:

*‘One of the key features of the changing face of schools in Ireland is the profile of the school, the languages spoken in the schools and the backgrounds of the students in the schools, which makes them very different places to visit than perhaps they would have been in the past. That creates new challenges for schools and for me, as Minister for Education and Science. It is a policy that must be constantly changed and updated because of the degree to which the situation is changing’.*

It is, particularly, at local primary school level that the impacts of these trends are experienced. As the INTO notes in its report *Newcomer Children in the Primary Education System*:

*'The local primary school very quickly reflects the community in which it is now located and now primary classrooms include children of immigrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers alongside children whose parents and grandparents lived in the area.'* (2006, p.1)

The challenges noted in the INTO report particularly highlight those related to the supports needed by schools to meet the learning needs of children of immigrant families and also those related to communications with, and supports for parents of children attending the schools.

#### **2.4.1 National Educational Policy on Supports for International Pupils in Primary Schools**

Educational policy in Ireland is that all children between four and eighteen years of age, whatever their status - asylum seeker, convention or programme refugee or children of migrant workers - have a right to the same primary and post-primary education as the rest of the Irish population and are required to attend school between the ages of six and sixteen (INTO, 2006).

English language support teaching is the main targeted support made available to pupils for whom English is not their first language. National policy is that a school is entitled to an additional full-time temporary teacher if it has 14 or more non-English speaking pupils. Pupils with this entitlement enter mainstream education with their own age cohort but are withdrawn (as individuals or in small groups) for periods during the week, to participate in language support classes with the special teacher. The Government funded agency, Integrate Ireland Language and Training provides in-service training and some teaching resources for special language teachers. Pupils can avail of special language support for up to 2 years, after which their educational progress is tested as part of mainstream testing for their classes.

The Micra T, standardised testing system is used in most primary schools in Ireland. This test is in the form of multiple choice questions and aims to test pupils achievement in relation to reading, writing and comprehension skills, and also provide data on how children are performing by comparison with other children in their age group so that difficulties and supports needed can be identified.

In relation to the achievement of international pupils in these tests, research indicates the potential for a number of issues to arise. These are explored by McSkeane in her recent study of Literacy and Numeracy in Clondalkin (forthcoming). Drawing from the literature reviewed and her interviews with all of the 16 schools in Clondalkin she notes the inadequacy of two years learning support for some international children and the potential for confusion as to whether low scoring among some children in the tests is related to literacy or language difficulties. She concludes however:

*'Whether they need help with language or with literacy, the fact remains that children from the growing community of international students in Irish schools often have difficulty in handling the reading, writing and numeracy demands of the wider curriculum, and run the risk of being disadvantaged in the long term in Irish society.'* (p.21)

She also notes that at the end of their two years, they may not have sufficient English to manage their learning and this educational disadvantage is likely to continue and be compounded as they go through the primary and second level school systems.

#### **2.4.2 Supports for Educational Disadvantage**

Issues of educational disadvantage for immigrant children are dealt with through the mainstream supports provided by the Department of Education and Science (DES). Over the years, a substantial range of programmes and supports have been put in place by the Department to tackle educational disadvantage.

These and others are outlined in detail on the DES website ([www.education.ie/](http://www.education.ie/)). Schools can benefit from one or a number of the following support programmes:

- Home School Community Liaison Scheme
- School Completion Programme
- Support Teachers Project
- Early Start Pre-School Scheme
- Giving Children An Even Break
- Breaking The Cycle
- Disadvantaged Area Scheme

Following a review of the range of measures available in 2005, the Minister for Education and Science concluded that while there are benefits in individual interventions and programmes, a more integrated and joined up response to the issue of educational inclusion was required. In May 2005, the Minister announced the introduction of DEIS, (Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools), an initiative aimed at tackling educational disadvantage and designed to ensure that the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a comprehensive package of supports, while ensuring that others continue to get support in line with the level of disadvantage among their pupils.

A number of key features of DEIS are outlined on the DES website:

(i) The DEIS plan focuses on the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3-18 years). Its core elements consist of:

- a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage;
- an integrated School Support Programme, which builds on existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage.

(ii) The Plan uses the definition of educational disadvantage defined in the Education Act 1998 Section 32.9 which states ‘ "educational disadvantage" means the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools’.

(iii) The action plan is grounded in the belief that:

- Every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate and benefit from education;
- Each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential; and
- Education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.

The Educational Research Centre carried out the task of identifying schools for inclusion in DEIS on behalf of the Department of Education and Science.

At primary level, although there is widespread recognition of the difficulty of requiring school principals to report levels of disadvantage in their own schools, there is as yet no centrally held data that can be used. Therefore all primary schools (n=3156) in the country were sent a questionnaire in May 2005. This questionnaire, which had been developed with the help of an advisory committee, included questions about the numbers of pupils in the school from families with a range of socio-economic characteristics that have been found to be associated with low levels of educational achievement (e.g., unemployment, medical card possession).

Completed questionnaires were received from approximately 95% of schools. Work then began on the development of an index of disadvantage that was used to produce rankings of schools, based on the index, separately for schools in urban and rural areas. The rankings were scrutinized, as part of a quality assurance exercise, by Inspectors and members of the Department's regional offices prior to making decisions about inviting schools to participate in the DEIS

Six hundred primary schools (300 urban/town and 300 rural) and 150 second -level schools were selected for involvement in the programme. This entitled these schools to a range of supports additional to the existing measures. These supports included, funding, staff development and inclusion in the new targeted initiatives being developed by the Department.

## SECTION THREE

### ARCHBISHOP RYAN SCHOOLS

#### 3.1 Local Area Profile

It is not possible for this report to provide statistics describing the socio-economic profile of the school's catchment area in view of the fact that the area comprises parts of a number of different DEDs. According to information sourced by Clondalkin Partnership the main estates in this area include, Foxdene, Meile an Rí and Buirg an Rí (with an estimated population of 1,353) and also many of the private estates in Lucan South / Lucan, e.g. Foxborough, Earlsfort, Colthurst, etc.). At an overall level it may be noted that the 2006 census figures show a massive increase in both the Clondalkin and Lucan areas generally.

In relation to the wider context of the Clondalkin area generally, a key point to note is that the 2006 census figures show that in the last fifteen years the overall population of Clondalkin has grown by over 57%. The corresponding percentage increase for the Greater Dublin area for the same period was 18.29% and for the whole country, just over 20%.

The most useful approach to setting the context for this research is to draw from the information provided by those consulted who have lived in the area for many years.

#### 3.1.1 Local Area Development

Archbishop Ryan schools are in the Balgaddy, South Lucan area of West Dublin, an area which has experienced significant development over the last 20 years. The area originally consisted of two small housing estates: Foxdene, a small Local Authority estate of approximately 200 houses, an even smaller private housing estate Rosewood and a Traveller site. Local parents, who have lived in the area for many years, speak of moving into an area consisting of 'a wilderness of fields' and 'a real rural place'. Over the past 10 years, the area has experienced 'massive' development with the on going building of houses and apartments, many of which are reported by local residents to have been bought for investment and renting purposes.

The primary schools in the area are Archbishop Ryan Junior School and Archbishop Ryan Senior School. There are two Educate Together Schools, Griffeen and Lucan, and also two Gaelscoils, Naomh Pdraig and Esker Riada in the area.

There is no second level school in the area. Currently pupils mainly move on to St. Kevin's Community School in Quarryvale, St. Joseph's (girls) Secondary School in Lucan or Colaiste Phadraig (boys) Secondary School in Lucan.

Local parents suggest that there has been no development of community infrastructure in the area and in view of the huge increase in local population the lack of facilities such as youth clubs and other social outlets is an issue of increasing concern. It was noted that the primary schools and the church continue to be the main focus in the area as they were 20 years ago.

A sense of 'being crowded out' is reported by parents who have lived in the area for a number of years as they now find themselves in 'competition' for places in their local primary school with the many immigrant families who have recently come to live in the area. Furthermore it is reported that many of the immigrant families who move into the area are living in short-term rented accommodation and tend to move on to other areas. This trend exacerbates the frustration for local people whose children have been refused places in the local school in favour of children from these families.

Strong feelings were expressed about the changing profile of the area. Parents consulted for this research reflected on the numbers of their original neighbours that had moved out of the area as well as those already planning to do so. This was summed up by one parent who noted:

"We've had too much change too quickly, We've lost the feeling of community and Irish people are moving out"

The changing profile of the area was also noted as an issue of concern of long-term importance to the local schools. A number of parents noted the phenomenal housing development in the area over the last 10 years and the lack of planning in relation to the facilities needed by new and existing families. A strong concern expressed was that the population is becoming transitional in nature.

As one parent, who has lived in the area over 20 years, and is now leaving, noted:

"It has really changed over the last few years. There is a whole new town development going on. The schools are being swamped. Even the football pitches have been taken for building. Irish families feel they are being pushed out a bit and to be honest, it could become a bit of a ghetto in parts. Families need supports and services. I don't know what the answer is, but some sort of a forum is needed to talk about what is happening."

A concern was also expressed at the potential for division and conflict between the older and newer communities.

"The fact is that the Government is not paying attention to the really radical changes taking place here as a result of this massive development. They need to understand what its like for us and what it means for our children's education. Do they have to wait for tensions to get out of hand and end up in riots like in other countries?"

### **3.2 Archbishop Ryan Schools Profile Information**

Archbishop Ryan schools are Roman Catholic schools under the Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. In line with Department of Education and Science policy, a Board of Management consisting of representatives of the patron, parents and school staff manages each school. The principals of each school are ex officio members of their school's Board and act as Board secretaries.

The original Archbishop Ryan School catering for junior infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class was established in 1985, in a rented accomadation, with an enrolment of eight pupils. In 1987 the school had a population of 215 children. Following the large-scale local development of the last twenty years, the school experienced a parallel surge in its pupil population. This has seen the school extended and expanded, and in 2004 the school was split into a Junior School (catering for pupils from junior infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> class) and a Senior School (catering for pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class). The senior school building opened in 2005. Plans to take down pre-fabricated buildings in the

Junior school and build 8 new classrooms have been approved by the Department of Education and Science and are due, at time of writing, to shortly go to tender

In line with National educational policy, all pupils in the schools are taught according to the national primary school curriculum. All pupils are also encouraged to get involved in the range of sports and other developmental activities provided by the schools.

The School's code of discipline sets the scene for respect for all students and although not explicitly set out it is intended to cover racism. The curriculum and SPHE are also used as opportunities to facilitate children from other countries to demonstrate and showcase their knowledge and culture. Other incidental opportunities within the curriculum are also used, for example sport, for strengthening the inclusion of international children.

### **3.2.1 School Enrolment**

School enrolment records for 2006/2007 show that the schools have a combined pupil population of 1031, 564 in the Junior School and 467 in the Senior School. A number of features may be highlighted in relation to the pupil population of the schools

- The schools have an average of 43% of international children. 237 in the Junior School (42% of their total numbers) and 209 in the Senior School (45% of their total numbers). Enrolment trends indicate that this proportion is growing.
- There are 21 Traveller children in the Junior School representing 4% of the total, while 5% (25) of pupils in the Senior School are Travellers.
- Enrolment trends indicate a growth in the numbers of children whose parents are Irish leaving the schools. In the Junior School up to 30 pupils (at the time of writing) have already notified that they are leaving next year and it is viewed likely that international children will replace most of them. Additional enrolment figures for the period October 1<sup>st</sup> to February 2007 for the Junior School show that 16 out of 21 newly pupils were international.
- It is common, especially in the Senior School to have international children joining the school throughout the year. These additional enrolments after September are not taken into account for Department resources and have an impact on the level of resources and staffing and scheduling. For 2006/2007, 21 out of the 27 additional enrolments were international pupils

**Table 3.1 Profile of Pupils and Classes in Archbishop Ryan Schools**

	<b>Numbers of Pupils</b>	<b>Numbers of Classes</b> (Numbers of classes at each level reflects the trends in enrolment).	<b>Numbers of International Pupils</b>	<b>Numbers of Traveller Pupils</b>
<b>Archbishop Ryan Junior</b>	<b>564</b>	Junior Infants 6 Senior Infants 1 <sup>st</sup> class 6 2 <sup>nd</sup> class 5	237 (42%)	21 (4%)
<b>Archbishop Ryan Senior</b>	<b>467</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> class 6, 4 <sup>th</sup> class 5, 5 <sup>th</sup> class 4 6 <sup>th</sup> class 4.	209 ( 45% )	25 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1031</b>		<b>446 (43%)</b>	<b>4%</b>

Class sizes across the schools range from 24 to 27 children.

There are currently 32 nationalities represented among the pupil population of the schools

International children are from a mix of backgrounds. Three main categories are identified:

- (i) European children, especially those from the countries recently acceded to the EU – Poland, Lithuania whose parents are typically working on contracts e.g. who are perceived as likely to return home.
- (ii) Children from Asian families, (India, Pakistan, Philippines, etc), whose parents also typically working on contracts. As with the group above, it is perceived likely that many of these families will return home.
- (iii) Children from Africa, mainly Nigeria, many of whom have come to Ireland via other countries and may have attended other schools.

### **3.2.2 School Enrolment Policy**

Pressure for places in the Junior School is currently an issue of critical concern for the school and for parents of young children in the local area. For 2007/08, the Junior School has had 206 applications for 125 places and so has a waiting list. In line with the Patron's policy, the school operates a School Enrolment Policy which is set out in Appendix 1.

This policy prioritises children who are Catholic and/or have siblings in the school and, in the case of an insufficient number of places available to meet the demand, prioritises children according to their age.

As will be noted in the following section 4.2 of this report the allocation of places has resulted in disappointment, frustration and a growing sense of anger for many local parents.

### **3.2.3 Staff Profile**

There are over 80 staff employed between the Junior and Senior Schools making it one of the largest employers in the area. In addition to the teaching staff, both



schools have a range of support staff involved in different aspects of support provision. Table 3.2 below outlines the number of staff involved in each role.

**Table 3.2 Profile of Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior School Staff**

Staff	Junior School	Senior School
Principal	1	1
Deputy Principal	1	1
Class teachers	23	17
HSC	1	1
Resource Teacher for Travellers	2	2
Language Support	3	4
Learning Support	9	5
Special Class	1	1
Special Needs Assistants	3	5 (4 full/time)

### **3.2.4 Education Links within the local Community and with other schools**

Both the Senior and Junior Schools have strong links to local community development education-related actions. In partnership with other local schools they are active participants in community-based activities targeting educational disadvantage in the area.

Among the projects and programmes the school is involved with are the following:

- **School Completion Programme (SCP)**

Archbishop Ryan Junior & Senior schools are in the Quarryvale / Balgaddy SCP Cluster. Along with St. Bernadette's Junior and Senior Schools they are feeder schools for St. Kevin's Community College. This programme targets the whole school for attendance and also provides targeted supports to children identified as most in need. Among the supports provided is Creative Arts Therapy for a number of emotionally disturbed children, some of whom are international pupils. Homework Clubs which include Traveller and international children are also provided. These have a waiting list of pupils wishing to join. Initially the schools selected only children from public housing areas for these Clubs – but now there is an awareness that many international pupils with a private housing address are actually in receipt of welfare benefits and so are eligible for the clubs.

- **Other Local Projects / Committees**

- **Get Ahead Club**

This is an after-school, before-school and holiday intervention for targeted families and involves close links with parents. It also includes home visits. Twelve children from each of the Junior and Senior schools attend the core programme, with ten of these being international students, as well as two Traveller students.

- **Dochas Family Support Programme (HSE)**

This project is a special after-school, before-school and holiday intervention for targeted families and involves close links with parents and home visits. (In the Junior School, 3 children were referred – one of whom was an international pupil)

### **Clover (Children Learn On Very Early Reading)**

This is a book gifting scheme that aims to improve the school readiness of children starting primary school, to involve parents in their child's learning from an early age and to stimulate reading within homes. The project is managed by a steering committee made up of Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinators, parents, and Learning Support Teachers from local schools, including Archbishop Ryan schools, the Visiting Teacher for Travellers and Clondalkin Partnership. The project distributes a total of approximately 950 gift packs to families in disadvantaged areas of Clondalkin each May / June.

### **H.S.C.L. Network**

This is a network involving St. Bernadette's Schools, Quarryvale, Archbishop Ryan Schools and St. Kevin's Community College. HSCL is a preventative strategy which is targeted at pupils who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of background characteristics which tend to adversely affect pupil attainment and school retention. The scheme is concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of children's learning. It focuses directly on the salient adults in children's educational lives and seeks indirect benefits for the children themselves.

### **Local Education Committee**

This committee includes representatives from: St. Bernadette's Junior and Senior N.S. Archbishop Ryan Junior & Senior N.S. and St. Kevin's Community College

### **C.A.P.E. (Clondalkin Area Parents in Education)**

CAPE is run between all schools in the North Clondalkin area involved in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme. Home visits by parents on behalf of the school are a key part of CAPE's work. It was set up in the 1990's. Over the last 3 years the project has identified the inclusion of international parents as a particular focus for its work. CAPE considered how training needed to be adapted to include international issues and delivered sessions on culture and cultural difference to parents. Initial feedback on CAPE training is that parents are delighted with the opportunity to explore their needs.

Within Archbishop Ryan Schools there is a strong sense of breakthrough in parent relations. At the moment 125 homes are being visited by the schools' CAPE parent team which includes one international parent, with a DVD on the new curriculum in primary schools. It is felt that it is particularly important for Irish parents to see a mix of parents involved in the schools.

### **Access Clondalkin**

Access Clondalkin is an initiative funded by the Higher Education Authority and coordinated locally by Clondalkin Partnership. It has involved the formation of a consortium of interests from the formal and community education sector with the aim of developing and implementing an effective and practical community-based approach to achieving equity of access to higher education. Archbishop Ryan Schools are members of this consortium and have been funded to operate activities under the programme.

## **3.3 The Academic Profile of Pupils**

The difficulties experienced by some of the international children in participating fully in school is evident in the Micra T test results that are performed on students throughout their school life from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class. A compilation of the results for June 2007 is presented in Table 3.3 below.

**Table 3.3 Micra T results for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Classes in Archbishop Ryan Junior and Senior Schools**

<b>Class</b>	<b>No of Pupils Tested in each class</b>	<b>No. of International Pupils tested In each class</b>	<b>No of Pupils in Class who are in the 1-12 Percentile</b>	<b>No Of International Pupils In The 1-12 Percentile</b>	<b>No of Traveller Pupils In The 1 –12 Percentile</b>	<b>No. of Pupils With Learning Needs In The 1 –12 Percentile</b>
<b>Senior School</b>						
6th	101	56	25	15	3	2
5th	86	41	20	14	3	1
4 <sup>th</sup>	115	57	29	17	3	3
3 <sup>rd</sup>	109	54	17	13	1	2
<b>Junior School</b>						
2 <sup>nd</sup>	112	43	16	8	1	1
1 <sup>st</sup>	125	67	19	10	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>

If the results from Archbishop Ryan Junior School (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes) and Archbishop Ryan Senior School (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> classes) are combined and analysed they show that the total number of pupils within the lowest 1-12 percentile range is 126. This represents 19.4% approx of the total number of pupils tested (648).

On examination of the sub-group of pupils who fell within this range, it emerged that the majority of these, 61% (77 pupils), are international pupils with 10% (13 pupils) being Travellers and a further 10% (12 pupils) having special educational needs.

The high number of international pupils in the 1 –12 percentile range is a cause for concern as International pupils make up 49% (318 pupils) of the total number of students tested. Indeed as Table 3.4 below illustrate in each of the class tested the international students are over represented in the lowest percentile range relative to their overall number in the class

For the Irish education system up to now the 1-12 percentile range has mainly been viewed as an indicator of serious literacy and/or learning difficulties for the pupils involved and of their need for additional literacy and learning support. However as will be highlighted within the research findings presented in Section 4.3, for international pupils, this testing process does not adequately distinguish between their need for literacy, language or learning support.

**Table 3.4 Percentage of international pupils in each class compared to the percentage of international pupils in each class who are in the 1-12 percentile and thus entitled to learning support following the Micra-T test in June 2007**

<b>Class</b>	<b>%. of pupils who are international pupils</b>	<b>% of pupils in 1-12 percentile who are international pupils</b>
6 <sup>th</sup>	55	60
5 <sup>th</sup>	48	70
4 <sup>th</sup>	50	59
3 <sup>rd</sup>	50	76
2 <sup>nd</sup>	38	50
1 <sup>st</sup>	54	53

### **3.4 Targeted Supports for International Children**

The only specifically targeted support available from DES specifically for international children is English language support teaching. As outlined in Section 2.4.1 children are entitled to a maximum of 2 years special language support. In the Archbishop Ryan Schools, pupils are provided with 30 minutes a day special language support in groups of approximately 3 to 4 pupils. The curriculum for the teaching is reported to be tailor-made and based on vocabulary and grammar.

Learning support is provided to 135 pupils in the Senior School and to 127 pupils in the Junior School and approximately 50 – 60% of these are international children. Senior school support involves individual children or small groups of up to three children attending for intensive instruction in blocks of 6/8 weeks for 45 -60 minutes each day. The school has tried various approaches to the provision of this support and this year are piloting 2 blocks of 6-week intensive instruction twice a year for each child attending learning support. The Junior school model involves learning support teachers working in the classroom along with the class teachers for large proportions of the school day in addition to withdrawing small groups of children for more intensive support as required.

A key event for both schools is Intercultural Week. Intercultural Week began as a one-day celebration in 2003 and developed into a week long festival of celebration the following year. It is a whole school event with significant parent involvement and provides an opportunity for each nationality to showcase information and cultural items through exhibitions, food tasting, music, dance etc. The event is intended to promote inclusion, respect for diversity and consolidate good relationships between the different communities represented in the schools and wider local community.

### **3.5 Profile of Families of Pupils who attend Archbishop Ryan Schools**

Indications of the profile of the schools' catchment area are provided by the results of recent surveys conducted by the schools among their pupils. As can be seen from Table 3.5 below, numbers of surveys returned were high in both schools (92% in the Senior School and 96% in the Junior School) so the profiles in both cases may be considered fairly accurate.

Survey findings highlight high levels of what are traditionally defined measures of disadvantage e.g. possession of a medical card, unemployment, family in receipt of FIS, educational level or family in receipt of rent allowance, among the pupils in both

schools. For example in the Senior School, 40% of pupils are from families who have a medical card, 41% are from families who live in Local Authority housing or whose parents are in receipt of rent allowance and 37% are pupils for whom neither parent reached Junior Cert level of education. The corresponding figures for the Junior School are 46%, 38% and 16% respectively.

However the survey also indicates new factors that now need to be taken into consideration when determining educational disadvantage including pupils who live in homes where English is not spoken as a first language and/or pupils with non Irish parents. For example 33% of pupils in the Senior School live in homes where English is not spoken as the first language while 49% have one or both non-Irish parents. In the Junior School 45% of pupils have one or both non-Irish parents. Both these factors have the potential to significantly impact on the children's ability to participate fully in the curriculum from an academic and cultural perspective.

**Table 3.5 Background Information on Pupils in Archbishop Ryan Schools as provided by questionnaires filled out by parents**

	<b>Senior School</b>	<b>Junior School</b>
<b>Questionnaires distributed</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>546</b>
<b>Questionnaires returned</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>524</b>
Pupils whose parents are Lone Parents	89	113
Pupils whose parents are Medical Card Holders	169	241
Pupils who live Local Authority housing or whose parents are in receipt of rent allowance	176	200
Pupils for whom neither parent reached Junior Cert level of education	156	86
Pupils who come from families with 5 or more children	69	61
Pupils whose parents are in receipt of FIS	113	82
Pupils whose Father is unemployed	179	148
Pupils whose mothers are unemployed or working in the home	312	297
Pupils who have non-Irish Parents/Mother/Father	209	237
Pupils who have received /are receiving learning support	135	127
Pupils who live in homes where English is not spoken as the first language	141	111

### **3.6 Application for Inclusion in DEIS Programme**

The schools applied to the Department of Education and Science for inclusion in the DEIS Programme in 2005 but was unsuccessful. No specific feedback was given for this decision. However, the schools suspect that the information they provided in their submission did not accurately reflect the level of disadvantage among the families of pupils, especially the high number of families living in rented private housing.

From the survey outlined in Section 3.5 the schools now realise that they had significantly underestimated the numbers of pupils who qualify as disadvantaged as their families are in receipt of welfare supports such as medical cards and rent allowance. Furthermore they are aware of the need to highlight the new factors of disadvantage for communities with high numbers of international families and how these factors impact on children's opportunities for 'deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools'. (DEIS 2005)

## SECTION 3

### KEY POINTS

#### Local Area Development

**2006 census figures show a massive increase in the Clondalkin and Lucan areas generally. The figures show that in the last fifteen years the overall population of Clondalkin has grown by over 57%. The corresponding percentage increase for the Greater Dublin area for the same period was 18.29% and for the whole country, just over 20%.**

Archbishop Ryan Schools are in the Balgaddy, South Lucan area of West Dublin. Over the past 10 years the area has experienced significant development with the on going building of houses and apartments. There is no second level school in the immediate Balgaddy area and parents report no development of community infrastructure.

**The changing profile of the area is a matter of concern to parents and the schools. The population is becoming transitional in nature with potential for division and conflict between older and newer communities.**

#### School Enrolment

School enrolment records for 2006/2007 show that the schools have a combined pupil population of 1031 – 564 in the Junior School and 467 in the Senior School.

**The Archbishop Ryan schools have an average of 43% international children (32 nationalities) and enrolment trends indicate that this proportion is growing. There is also evidence of a growth in the numbers of children whose parents are Irish leaving the schools and these pupils are likely to be replaced by international children. Additional enrolments after September have an impact on the level of resources required and on staffing and scheduling.**

Pressure for places in the Junior School is currently an issue of critical concern for the community – there were 206 applications for 125 places in Junior Infants 07/08. Parents who have lived in the area for a number of years feel that they are in competition for places with the many immigrant families who have recently moved into the area.

Both Senior and Junior schools have strong links to local community education-related activities and are active participants in targeting educational disadvantage in the area.

### **Academic Profile of Pupils**

**Micra-T results for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class 2007 indicate that international pupils are over represented in the lowest percentile range 1-12. The Irish Education system views the 1-12 percentile as an indicator of serious literacy and/or learning difficulties for the pupils involved and of their need for additional literacy and learning support. The testing process does not adequately distinguish between the need for literacy, language or learning support.**

**61% of pupils in receipt of learning support are international pupils. This figure does not include pupils in Junior and Senior Infants.**

A recent survey of parents indicates high levels of the traditionally defined measures of disadvantage. It also reveals new factors that now need to be taken into consideration when determining educational disadvantage including pupils who live in homes where English is not spoken as a first language and/or pupils with non-Irish parents. Both factors have the potential to impact on children's ability to participate fully in the curriculum.

**Application to D.E.S. for inclusion in DEIS was unsuccessful. The information provided may not have accurately reflected the level of disadvantage among families especially the high number of families living in private rented accommodation.**

**There is a need to highlight new factors of disadvantage for communities with large numbers of international families and how these factors impact on children's opportunities for 'deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools'. (DEIS, 2005).**



## SECTION FOUR

### FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATIONS

#### 4.1 Views of Pupils in the Schools

A total of 24 children were consulted for this research, 6 in the Junior School and 11 in the Senior School. A group of 7 past pupils from the Senior School were also consulted.

Feedback from all of the groups of children and young people on their experience in Archbishop Ryan Schools was unanimously positive. General comments made indicated a strong sense among all of the groups that the schools are viewed as places where children feel comfortable, secure and well facilitated and supported in their educational and personal development. A number of the past pupils reported how they cried leaving the Senior School and said that although they are happy in their new schools, they still miss their old schools and their teachers.

Comments typically made by the groups included the following:

‘It is a very friendly school. It has a nice atmosphere.’

‘The teachers are very nice and are fair. They take good care of us.’

‘They say hello to you when they meet you in the corridor and are always in good humour.’

‘The teachers here expect you to work hard and to do well when you leave here’.

In relation to the diversity of the Archbishop Ryan Schools’ pupil populations, general discussion with all of the groups provided strong indications of the degree to which the children normalise and value their experience. Throughout the consultations, a sense of comfort with each other, respect and acceptance of the diversity among them was clearly evident.

In terms of their educational development, all of the groups were very positive about the benefits of having such a multi-cultural school population.

As one 4<sup>th</sup> class boy whose parents were born in Ireland noted:

‘It’s a really interesting school. We get to learn all about other countries and their cultures. We even learn a lot walking home together’.

An international 5<sup>th</sup> class girl noted:

‘I think we would be bored if there was not such a mix’.

Intercultural week was reported to be a particularly interesting and exciting time for everyone in the schools. As one 3<sup>rd</sup> class girl whose parents were born in Ireland said:

‘Intercultural week is really great. We learn something new every year and its great fun. We have everything – food from different countries, different clothes, something new every year. I loved the dancing. The Garda Band was great.’

A culture of welcome and respect was very evident from the international children’s reporting of their experiences on arriving at the schools.

One international pupil from Nigeria reported how welcome he feels in the Senior School compared to previous schools he had attended in Cork and Mayo where he said he had been the only black pupil and was bullied a lot.

A girl from Lithuania said that she came to the Senior School with no English and was very scared and didn’t know how she would fit in. Two years later she has learned to speak English and has ‘never had so many friends’. She feels everyone in the school is ‘so helpful’.

The level of security and friendship within the schools’ diverse pupil populations was also evident from the openness with which the groups referred to and discussed some of the potential issues for some international children in the schools. A clear awareness of the potential for racism was evident within the discussions. This was particularly evident for the younger groups who had no reservations about sharing stories they had heard about black children in the area being bullied or picked on. One child reported that some children are teased in the playground or on the way home. Others (including the Nigerian children in the group) agreed with her when she said:

‘They get picked on because they are black. It’s not fair. Our teacher says that children should all be kind to each other’.

A sense of feeling ‘different’ was expressed by a number of the international children in the groups.

One young Indian girl noted:

‘I feel sad because my skin looks so dirty. I used to ask my mother did she eat dirt before I was born to make my skin so dirty. I wish I had white skin like other girls in my class.’

A young international pupil spoke of being upset because he would not be making First Holy Communion with the other children in his class on the following Saturday. He also remarked that his brother was not allowed to go to the homework club after school and they did not see their friends after school as his parents collected them from school and preferred them to play with their own family in their garden.

This sense of difference was also noted by some of the children whose parents were born in Ireland. A number of them particularly highlighted a sense of feeling excluded when some groups of international children speak in their own language. As one boy remarked:

‘I hate walking home with some of the boys in my class when they are chatting away to each other and I don’t know what they are saying.’

All of the children in the groups had relatively good English and none of them reported any difficulties either in general communications or in their class work. Remarks were, however made by a number of children that there were some international children in their classes who were having language difficulties and the teacher has to spend a lot of time with them. Some of the international children said that they loved Irish and learning about Irish history and geography. Although they could have a derogation in Irish at second level if they wished, none of the 7 past pupils consulted, had wished to take this option.

The past pupils consulted, reported that they felt they were well prepared for moving into second-level schools especially as they had visited the school before they had started. They were reluctant to engage in any discussion regarding their experience of moving into second level in relation to any multicultural-linked issues, It was noted, however, that they felt they had more experience of mixing with children from different countries than some of the other students in their schools and they had noticed some tendency for some black children to be picked on and bullied.

More generally, the past pupils' group felt that the teachers in Archbishop Ryan schools had always encouraged them to work hard when they got to secondary school and to go on to further education. Some said they already had a focus for their future careers with medicine, engineering and interior design being mentioned as targets by three of them. The main issue they highlighted was the fact they now have to go outside the area because there is no school close to them. As one boy noted:

'It makes it a very long day and you end up very tired. It's very different to when I went to school here and just walked down the road. You miss being with your own friends too. I just find it more difficult. I wish there was a school in the area.'

#### **4.2 Views of Parents of Children in the Schools**

Twenty parents were consulted, 13 in a group session and 7 in one-to-one interviews. Four of the parents were international parents. The feedback from the parents on Archbishop Ryan Schools was extremely positive. 'Excellent' was a common assessment of the schools made by them and all agreed that the schools have 'very good' teachers and facilities, small classes and a very good reputation.

Parents reported how they felt the schools promote a partnership approach with parents and are totally supportive of them in relation to their children's education. Comments made by parents in the groups consulted included the following:

'I know I can come here with any problems. They want to hear any issues.'

'The level of education here is excellent. The school has always had great teachers. A lot of them are young and enthusiastic and the kids love them.'

'The school has good resources and has always been great at involving parents. The principals and vice principals are friendly, easy to get on with and have an open door policy. Parents can come into the school anytime, not like in other schools where you have to wait to be asked.'

Parents also highly praised the 'energy', 'commitment' and 'hard work' of the Home School Community Liaison Teachers and the various activities provided to engage parents in their children's education. The activities parents in the group had been involved in and which they felt were particularly relevant to their children's education included: English and Irish classes (some had gone back to do Junior Certificate),

healthy eating courses, Maths for Fun and computer courses. They noted there were a range of activities and courses provided and said they also enjoyed the social opportunities, especially the coffee mornings, to help them meet other parents. As one woman (Irish, living in the area for 11 years) noted:

‘There is nothing else in the area except the school and the church. It might be changing a bit now with all the new houses and apartments. But there are still no social activities in the area. The activities put on by the school have been my salvation. I found it hard to get involved at first. I thought, how am I going to cope. I couldn’t believe how welcome I was made feel’.

Parents activities in the school were reported by all of the parents consulted to be vital both in terms of enabling their involvement in their children’s education, and also for their own social and personal development.

‘Kids love to see you in the school, when they’re young anyway. They love you to get involved in things like Maths for Fun, and you feel you know what’s going on as well. I was scared getting involved at the start and I think it’s great now that I can help other parents get involved through CAPE. I love going out and reassuring the parents of the new infants class.’

In relation to the supports for parents’ involvement in their children’s education and their own development, the two issues noted were the need for crèche facilities and the need for encouragement of fathers in sports and other after-school activities.

In relation to the high level of international children in the schools, parents were generally positive within the group discussion and made a number of comments.

Firstly it was noted that diversity is not new to the school population as there has always been a large number of Traveller children attending the school. Parents said that the community was generally a welcoming one and they felt their children had grown up respecting any differences between children in their class. There was a strong consensus among the parents that the diversity among the school population is enriching their children’s educational experience by providing them with the opportunity to learn about different cultures. They also felt the experience will help to develop their social skills and confidence regarding travel, or living in other countries, when they are older. As one Irish parent noted:

‘ Kids nowadays travel much more than in our day, they will be well ready for mixing in any part of the world they may want to work in later’.

It was generally noted that the schools have been faced with the challenges of such a rapid change in their pupil profile and have managed the challenges very well. As one parent noted:

‘I am amazed at how the schools have built such capacity for inter-cultural relations. I know this is so difficult from my own workplace where there are a lot of foreign national workers; it can be very difficult to get people really mixing. There always seems to be a ‘them’ and ‘us’.’

Differences in expectations regarding their children’s education were evident between Irish and international parents. Some of the parents of international children expressed some concerns at what they perceived as a more relaxed system of education in Ireland with no real focus on testing and informing parents on their children’s’ progress in comparison to other children in their classes. One mother in the parents’ discussion group, noted that her daughter ‘missed the challenge’ of the stricter regime of the education system in her home country. She reported that this had involved school hours from 8.30 am – 4.30pm, a much stronger academic focus,

a stricter code of discipline and more regular testing. She expressed concern regarding the focus on play and social activities in the Irish education system.

The Irish parents in the group, however, argued strongly for their preference of the existing approach in Irish schools and suggested that the focus on the development of social and creative skills is equally valuable to children as academic skills and knowledge. In commenting on their experiences of Irish education, another issue noted by some international parents was that they felt that discipline in the Irish school system tends to be more 'lax' than in their home country. As one Asian woman whose family had moved to Ireland before her noted: 'We heard that Irish discipline is very lax before we came here so we were expecting it.'

Although not mentioned in the group discussion, a number of strong concerns were highlighted by Irish parents within the individual interviews.

In relation to the impact on teaching and learning of such diversity among the schools' pupils, concern was expressed regarding a slow down of the 'pace of teaching'. As one Irish parent noted:

'The teachers are trying to manage classes where some of the children have no English at all, and others have very poor English. They are forced to slow the pace of their teaching. I think that standards are being lowered. Our kids are losing out. What does that mean for the bright kids in the class, and the Irish children who need some of the teachers' time?'

Another concern expressed by a number of Irish parents related to the use of the curriculum to teach basic English. As one parent said:

'I don't see why the curriculum should be used to teach basic English. This has to be having a very negative effect on the depth the subjects are being taught. The teachers are doing their best but they just don't have the time to deal with this. I think subjects like Irish and religion are suffering - and what about gifted children?'

This view was echoed by a number of parents. Another one noted:

'I'm not being racist but whose responsibility is it to teach English to foreign children? Should there be arrangements made outside the school for these children and their families to learn basic English so the school can get on with teaching the primary school curriculum and preparing children to make progress through the school system?'

Some parents also suggested that there is a 'dilution of Irish culture' in the school. As one said:

'It's not their fault but the school seems to be bending over backwards to make sure that all of the other cultures are not excluded. But I think our own Irish culture is being swamped out. International week is very interesting for the kids but I wonder if it's going overboard. Maybe a day would be enough.'

Other parents were more positive about Intercultural week but also stressed the importance of balance in relation to Irish culture. One parent said:

'I think it's great to celebrate different cultures and interesting to hear ambassadors from countries like Malaysia and Lithuania. But I feel there is a danger of losing focus on Irish culture. We were so busy planning to include all the others that we almost forgot our own. Although we now include Irish story telling and music I feel we need to give it more attention. '

A number of parents expressed the view that there is need for the parents of international children to be provided with information about Irish culture, especially facts on how the Irish education system is organised. As one parent said:

'I think some of their expectations need to be questioned and in some cases challenged. I don't like the attitude of some of the boys to my daughter. She was very upset by some remarks one boy passed. I've noticed some of the men's attitudes to female teachers are not very respectful either. I think people coming to the country need to understand the Irish views on respect and equality for women.'

Another parent suggested:

'Some sort of induction process is needed so people can see what they are buying into rather than expecting that things will be exactly the same as it was in their own country'.

A further issue raised by some of the Irish parents was that they believe that religion class time is sometimes minimised due to time pressures on teachers. Because of this perceived trend, and their concerns that the children of Irish Catholic families living for many years in the area are not getting places in the school, some parents also suggested that the Church's involvement in education is weakening and that there is a 'watering down' of the Catholic ethos of the school. Echoing the points made by a number of parents, one woman suggested:

'It is already beginning to feel like a multi-denominational school in all but name.'

A critical issue highlighted by parents living in the area for many years, in relation to the rapid and large-scale development taking place, was the issue of the allocation of places for children starting in the Junior School. The fact there is a waiting list this year with 83 names was mentioned consistently and a concern was also expressed that this list will grow next year and children of 5 years and 5 and a half years of age will not have a place. A number of parents commented that the choice as to what age Irish parents wish to start their children's schooling is no longer available to those in the area.

Very strong comments were made by most of the parents on the issue of places in the Junior School and the depth of emotion involved was evident. Among the comments made by parents were the following:

'Every year, this school is expected to act as a sponge and soak up new children. I had to aggressively fight for a place for my daughter. Local people are being refused places in school while non-nationals are getting places and then moving in and out. People don't want to be racist but there's a fine line between sounding racist and looking out for your own'.

'I feel we are a welcoming community but we are now in a position where Irish children are becoming the minority. I think at 50%, there should be a cut off in the number of foreign national children attending any school. In one class only 7 out of 23 children are Irish. We are so busy embracing new cultures that our children are starting to suffer'.

'I reckon in a few years time Irish children will be in a minority here. It will no longer be a Catholic school but will be more like an Educate Together school. The school is a Catholic school and has a care ethos. It is a not an Educate Together school or a Gaelscoil. '

Generally these parents noted that their views were representative of those of other parents in the area and this was also suggested by a statement of one of the Board of Managements' parent representatives who said that the 'phone is constantly ringing' lately in relation to parents complaining about the situation.

According to the Education Act, Section 29, parents have the right to appeal a decision made by the Board in relation to a refusal for a place in the school. However it was noted by one Board representative that this process involves a formal hearing, and in view of the tight enrolment policy now adhered to, there is relatively little chance for any change in the decision. As this Board member noted, a mediation process would be a useful alternative approach to resolving this issue.

Generally it was felt that an open forum is needed to discuss this situation as it is causing serious tensions in the area.

At a more general level, anger was expressed by a number of parents in relation to the approach to immigration at Government level, in particular regarding accommodation and service provision:

'I feel frustrated at the Government. There has been too much happening in 10 years in this one area and no time for local people and the schools to adjust. The Government don't seem to notice what's happening and we are just not getting the local resources we need. There are no social outlets and no youth clubs. Secondary school availability will be an even bigger issue over the next few years.'

#### **4.2.1 International Parents' Views**

From the perspective of parents of international children, feedback in the parents' group was very positive in relation to their sense of inclusion in the local community. However, in a one to one interview, one Asian woman suggested that although she and other immigrant parents would be very cautious in commenting on this issue, there are issues for them in relation to how welcome they feel in the wider community. In her view:

'A lot of Irish people, including the children, are friendly on the surface but on a deeper level they don't want to make friends. My daughter joined one of the clubs in the school and left it because she was so lonely. Irish people are friendly but they need to really open their minds to change and to different things.'

Reflecting this view another woman said that, while she was always made feel welcome by Irish people, she feels it is always as a visitor rather than 'an equal' in the community, no matter how many years she has lived here.

Another woman noted:

'I hate it when Irish people keep asking me how long we'll be here. I don't understand what they really mean, they always use indirect speech. What they say is not what they mean. I also think there is a power imbalance. They see themselves as the host.'

#### **4.3 Views of School Staff on the Diversity of the Pupil Population**

School staff were generally very positive in relation to the diversity of their pupil populations. It was evident that the general view is that the diversity is enriching the school environment both socially and educationally. A number of teachers said they felt that it is also bringing a range of new ideas to their classrooms.

However, the fact that every year the population of international children is growing in the schools is identified as an issue of concern for staff across both schools. As one member of staff noted:

‘At one level it is a rich and holistic experience for teachers and children but I think we are all getting worried now that Irish children are beginning to be outnumbered in many of the classes. The challenges are growing with the numbers. A different kind of teaching is needed than the one we were trained for. There will have to be a rethink about supports, not just for the school but the area generally.’

A number of challenges were highlighted by teachers within the consultations.

#### **4.3.1 Language and Communications Difficulties**

The main challenges highlighted across all of the consultations with school staff were those relating to communications difficulties and language support. It was reported that significant numbers of international children and their parents do not have English as their first language and either have poor English or none at all. In the Senior School for example survey returns indicated this was the case in 33% of homes (Table 3.5).

A number of general impacts were identified by the schools in relation to this situation

- **Recording of relevant profile / background information for enrolment and other documentation purposes**

Particular difficulties are reported in relation to enrolment of children whose parents do not have English as a first language. The fact that these parents are also likely to have limited, if any, knowledge of the Irish educational system often exacerbates this difficulty. The only response the school can make to this situation is to seek translation support from children already in the school who can speak the language in question. This is not an option the school favours as it clearly raises concerns regarding confidentiality. The school is also sometimes faced with a situation where gaps or inaccuracies in information remain because of difficulties of verification of information provided. As one teacher noted:

‘There are some children that we know very little about in terms of where they have come from or what their current family situation actually is. Sometimes we are not even sure if we have their age right. It makes it hard to get a picture of the child’s life outside of school which often helps to understand behavioural or emotional issues.’

- **School-parent communications**

More generally it was reported that communications difficulties with some international parents arise whenever information is sent out to parents, whenever they are required to fill out forms and also in relation to ensuring they understand school policies on important areas such as anti-bullying policy and health and safety. As in the case of enrolment, the schools sometimes have to call on some of the children to act as interpreters for them. A sense of unease about this is evident. As one school staff member noted in relation to communicating with parents regarding their children’s behaviour:

‘First of all there is the ethics of this and issues related to privacy and confidentiality. But also there is something unreal about getting a small child to translate your comments on their bad behaviour to its parent’.



The difficulty of phoning some international parents for general information purposes was also noted:

‘Trying to phone parents to give them information is very difficult. By the time you get the message across it has got lost in the explanation and their anxiety that the phone call is a complaint about their child.’

The view was that there is need for central or regional Interpreting services to be provided by the Department of Education and Science similar to those available to hospitals.

- **Classroom and behaviour management**

Challenges were also noted by teachers in relation to communications for classroom management. Teachers said that these sometimes arise in view of the fact that some children do not have the basic vocabulary to understand instructions including those related to core areas such as health and safety and using the toilet.

‘Basic words can be an issue and a teacher can’t take anything for granted. Behaviour management issues can arise. They get frustrated when they don’t know what’s going on and can’t explain themselves.’

In relation to dealing with behavioural issues for international children, it was noted that difficulties communicating the information to parents are often further compounded by the fact that international parents can have different and sometimes more aggressive approaches to disciplining their children and these are not always in line with the fact that physical punishment of children is not used in Ireland. As one teacher noted:

‘Behaviour can be an issue. It might be stubbornness or defiance but it can be hard to handle. When there are language difficulties, we also have to be cautious reporting to some parents as we know from experience, they may over-react and the child may suffer. It’s a very sensitive issue and we really need training on how to handle it. International parents also need education on what is acceptable’.

- **Impacts on teaching and learning**

In relation to teaching and learning, the key impact noted by teachers was how having a range of English language abilities in their class impacts on the pace of their teaching. A number of teachers prefaced their remarks about this impact by noting that some international children speak English very well, work very hard and achieve very high standards in their school work, thus having a very positive influence on the class standards generally.

School staff in both schools reported that language and communications difficulties among international children can range from mild, where a child is struggling to keep up with class work, to one where a child has no English at all and cannot communicate at all with teachers or other children in their class. All of the teachers consulted reported that the pace of class teaching is inevitably slowed in order to minimise the degree to which children with communications difficulties are ‘left out’ or ‘left behind’.

‘We now have to deal with opposite ends of the spectrum and also to differentiate lessons although this is not always possible with every lesson. This tends to slow down teaching, and we really have no choice but to slow down the overall pace even though this may mean the class standards slipping’.

It was reported that this issue is not so noticeable in junior infants as most young children need language development. However as children move up through school, the gap gets wider and the situation becomes more challenging.

While teachers expressed concern at the impact the high level of international children is having on different ability groups within the class they also pointed to the level of marginalisation for the children involved and the emotional impact this has on the class. As one teacher noted:

‘It breaks my heart to see a child sitting there who hasn’t a clue what is going on. They look so frustrated and so unhappy. Unless they are quick at picking up a new language, their marginalisation is only going to get worse.’

A further issue noted by class teachers was that they need to adapt the curriculum to the reality that a significant percentage of their pupils (over 50% in some classes) do not have any background in Irish culture or heritage which is at the core of much of the class work in the Irish primary school system. As one teacher noted:

‘A lot of the school curriculum in Ireland is built around Irish heritage and traditional events and stories like, Halloween, Christmas, St. Patrick. Maths and Geography are ok but other subjects – Irish, English and history can be very challenging. It is disappointing that there is an inevitable shift in focus from Irish heritage. As teachers, we are now struggling to explain what used to be taken for granted.’

And another teacher said:

‘We operate on a lot of presumed knowledge especially in areas like history and geography. We sometimes have a child who is very good in some areas but not in Irish History and Geography because they do not have the background that Irish kids have developed over the early years. This can be a serious disadvantage to them and can damage their confidence. It also means we are spending time trying to fill them in.’

The teaching of religion was also noted as a challenge both in terms of the fact that so many of the children are non-Catholic and also from the time-management point of view. As one teacher said:

‘Religion teaching can be difficult. At least half will not be making Communion next week. Sometimes we just don’t have the time we used to give to it. It’s the same with Irish, we just can’t use it freely in the classroom as we used to.’

In relation to Irish, it was also noted in the Senior School that in view of the fact that international pupils can apply for a derogation in relation to the learning of Irish, there is a notable increase in Irish pupils questioning why they have to study Irish at second level.

#### **4.3.2 Providing Special Language Supports**

The challenging nature of the work of language support was evident to the evaluator when a language support class was visited in the Junior School. In the group of 4 children, the competence ranged from one child having no English at all to one being able to engage in basic communications. It was clear that enormous patience and skill is required by the teacher to ensure that each child in the group is included and encouraged to engage in the lesson topics which have to switch regularly across different levels of language difficulty.

A range of issues were mentioned generally by teachers involved in special language support classes. These included:

- Higher numbers than intended in some of the groups;
- The difficulties involved for the group when children requiring language support arrive mid-way through the school year;
- The need for a more comprehensive pack of resources. It was felt that although some resources are available from Integrate Ireland, there are only 14 topics and these are not sufficient for children who don't have a grasp of grammar - they won't last for the year;
- Language support focuses on teaching English. It was noted that French Canadian research indicates that school effectiveness is also related to the children's development in their own first language. This is not supported.

The main issues highlighted by all of the language support teachers were however related to the restriction of language support to 2 years for international children. It was noted that English is not the first language in the homes of many children and many of them spend their school holidays back in their country of origin where they do not speak English. This minimises the outcomes of their 2 year language support. A concern was expressed at the fact that at the end of 2 years the children are tested using the Micra T test which is culturally based and highly dependent on English comprehension ability. It was suggested that earlier testing would assist in the identification of the support needs of different children.

'They only get 2 years language support and may not be ready to be put into a learning environment when the issue is language. They are not assessed until they have had two years of English and this can be very late if they actually have learning difficulties. Many of them are really enthusiastic, and their parents are really interested in them doing well. '

The teachers also noted that 2 years is sufficient time for some children but others need a 3<sup>rd</sup> and perhaps a 4<sup>th</sup> year in order to provide them with continuity of support while they move from basic grammar and vocabulary to comprehension. It is also suggested that a more realistic duration of support for children who need it would avoid the current situation whereby the only option available for children who fare badly in the Micra T test is learning support.

The serious consequence of this for the school overall was pointed out by one teacher who noted that:

'Even if their spoken English has improved, their written and understanding is not always good after two years. It is inevitable that they will do badly in the tests and once they are in the lower percentiles they have to have learning support. This is clogging up the works for the school. It's also lowering the overall standard in the school. Irish children between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentile are getting no support.'

In relation to the resources available to the school, the overall view of school staff is that the Department of Education and Science has been supportive in terms of resources provided. While it is noted that there is significant time and energy required, particularly at school management and administrative level, in relation to annual preparation and submission of proposals for specific resources and funding, it is emphasised that any available additional resourcing is vital for the schools. The fact that the schools did not qualify for inclusion in the DEIS programme is reported as disappointing for the school in view of the nature and scale of the challenges they are facing.

### 4.3.3 Engagement with Parents

As noted earlier, language difficulties result in a number of administrative issues in relation to parents' engagement in their children's education. Registration, information on children's backgrounds and discussions regarding their progress and behaviour were among the important areas noted. One of the main issues noted was the different expectations international parents sometimes appear to have of their children. This was reported to range from high expectations that they concentrate exclusively on their schoolwork and achieve high academic standards, to high expectations that they provide extensive help in the home even at a very young age.

At a more general level, the commitment to developing the engagement of international parents by the schools is seen as an integral part of the schools' general work with parents. Difficulties are acknowledged in relation to communications with parents for whom English is not their first language but as one teacher put it

'Building relationships is painstakingly slow but we have to keep at it'.

It was noted that up to recently, it has been difficult for school staff to understand the different attitudes and expectations from parents of different nationalities, some of whom are reported to have a tendency to confuse the schools with 'social services' and expect all of their informational and welfare issues to be sorted out by them. The schools are reported to be gradually developing an 'enabling' attitude whereby people are being referred to the appropriate services. As one teacher noted:

'In the beginning we felt sorry for people and were aware of their frustration. But the numbers grew so fast we didn't know what to do although we were aware of the social needs of the children's families. This is where the work of the Home School teachers is so important. It's about reaching out and building bridges for their integration.'

Overall the need was stressed for some parental intervention that provides support for international parents arriving in the area in relation to information and referral regarding housing, social issues and the general education system.

From the schools' perspective, the role of the Home School Community Liaison teachers is perceived to be crucial in terms of engaging international parents in their children's education. The teachers involved report significant changes in relation to the types of disadvantage now being experienced by international families in the area. For some poverty and overcrowding are evident but the main issue observed is the strong sense of marginalisation for some families who are living lives of exclusion from the local community and are nervous of callers at their doors and of dealing with any kind of perceived 'officialdom'. The importance of outreach to these families was stressed and it was reported that the efforts of the schools to encourage the engagement of international parents in parent activities are crucial. Although slow, they are now believed to be 'beginning to really bear fruit'. A number of activities are particularly highlighted.

- International Parents are now beginning to get involved with the weekly parents' Art group, set up by the HSCLs in the schools. This group is facilitated by an artist and has enjoyed a number of outings including a recent one to the Irish Museum of Modern Art.
- International parents have also got involved in some of the courses run by the Schools for parents. A group of African parents participated in a special parenting course set up by the HSCL teachers with the support of the Irish

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC). This course involved two stages; the first specifically provided the African parents with an opportunity to explore as a group, some of the cultural differences regarding parenting in Africa and Ireland, and the second part, the opportunity to work in a mixed parenting group with Irish parents.

- An international parent is also now a member of the Clondalkin Area Parents in Education (CAPE) and engages in home visits on behalf of the schools.
- International parents play a particularly important role in the preparation and running of Intercultural week in the schools and they support their children in showcasing their own national cultural heritage.

#### **4.3.4 Training for Teachers**

A strong view expressed by most of the teachers consulted was that there is now need for specialist intercultural in-service training to support teachers to deal with the more complex challenges teaching in a diverse classroom involves. Teachers noted that in view of the fact they are now teaching children from 32 different nationalities, they need knowledge about these different cultures and an opportunity to examine their own attitudes and to explore appropriate methodologies and pedagogies. It was noted that while currently there is an emphasis on special needs, there is no training on teaching in a multi-cultural classroom.

As one teacher noted:

'We were trained for a different kind of job. We now have children joining our classes who have no background in Irish culture and heritage and we know very little, if anything, about theirs. I'm teaching children now from countries I've never heard of. I need a proper in-service to be able to deal with the challenges.'

A further challenge noted by one teacher related to countering the perception among Irish children that all African children are poor and starving. She noted that

'There is a challenge for teachers to help Irish children understand African culture in view of the stereotypical images of poverty they are used to in major fundraising campaigns for famine areas'.

It was suggested that what is needed is workshop-based training led by representatives of international communities and teachers who have experience of the challenges involved. One teacher said:

'It should not be just an hour running through it, but an opportunity for those of us on the ground and experiencing the issues at first hand, to share ideas and practice. We need to be more reflective. Maybe we are now being challenged to change and ask ourselves what it means to be Irish. We have to start exploring our mindsets.'

The value of gaining insight into local experience was also highlighted. Some teachers noted that all of the teachers 'drive in and out of the area' and are therefore limited in their understanding of the experiences of people living in the area. As one teacher said:

'We all drive in and out of here everyday. We don't know what its like to live here. I am always conscious that we are in danger of being hermetically sealed from the realities of life in such a mixed community'.

#### **4.4 Some School Management Issues**

The challenges involved at management level were also highlighted within the discussions with members of the Schools' Boards of Management. In particular the effort and time involved for the principals in gathering information and preparing yearly submissions for the resources needed were highlighted. Also it was suggested that the current model of disadvantage used by the DES for inclusion in programmes such as DEIS does not allow schools like Archbishop Ryan to properly demonstrate their resource needs and should be reviewed in order to ensure the challenges involved in areas of high concentration of new communities are taken into account .

As one Board member said:

'Between the 2 schools there are about 500 international children. How can we be treated the same as a school with a handful of international children? There is no comparison between the work involved for the principals in gathering the information needed to apply for special supports. It's just not a level playing field'

Other issues highlighted by the Board were the difficulties of dealing with local tensions between the new and older communities in the area, particularly in relation to the allocation of places in the Junior School but also in relation to the impact of different cultural practices among different children and how these are sometimes perceived to be impacting on Irish-born children.

A number of Board members reported their surprise that there have been no racism issues to be dealt with at Board level. It was suggested that this is likely to be because the children are mixing together from such a young age and also because the school has had a very positive and successful experience of inclusion of Traveller children for many years.

However it was acknowledged that there is an awareness of the potential for racism to develop within the community and the schools. A consciousness is evident of the need to develop strong links with other groups working in the area to promote integration and ensure that racism is avoided.

## SECTION FOUR

### KEY POINTS

#### Children's Views

**Feedback from all of the groups of children and young people on their experience in Archbishop Ryan Schools was unanimously positive.**

**The majority surveyed were very positive about the benefits of having such a multi-cultural school population.**

**A number of children noted that there were some international children in their classes who were having language difficulties and the teacher has to spend a lot of time with them.**

All of the groups viewed the schools as places where children feel comfortable, secure and well facilitated and supported in their educational and personal development.

A clear awareness of the potential for racism was evident within the international children's discussions.

Some of the international children said that they loved Irish and learning about Irish history and geography and although they could have a derogation in Irish at second level none of the 7 past pupils consulted, wished to take this option.

#### Parents' Views

**Feedback from the parents on Archbishop Ryan Schools was extremely positive. 'Excellent' was a common assessment of the schools made by them**

**There was a strong consensus among the parents that the diversity among the school population is enriching their children's educational experience by providing them with the opportunity to learn about different cultures.**

**In relation to the impact on teaching and learning of such diversity among the schools' pupils, some concern was expressed regarding a slow down of the 'pace of teaching.**

**A concern expressed by a number of Irish parents related to the use of the curriculum to teach basic English.**

**There is need for the parents of international children to be provided with information about Irish culture, especially facts on how the Irish education system is organised**

**Feedback in the International parents' group was generally very positive in relation to their sense of inclusion in the local community though with the proviso that they feel they will be perpetually perceived as "new comers".**

Parents also highly praised the 'energy', 'commitment' and 'hard work' of the Home School Community Liaison Teachers and the various activities provided to engage parents in their children's education also for their own social and personal development.

It was noted that diversity is not new to the school population as there has always been a large number of Traveller children attending the school.

Differences in expectations regarding their children's education were evident between Irish and international parents.

Some parents also suggested that there is a 'dilution of Irish culture' in the school.

Concern was expressed that there is a 'watering down' of the Catholic ethos of the school.

The allocation of places for children starting in the Junior School is a critical issue highlighted by parents living in the area for many years, in relation to the rapid and large-scale development taking place.

Anger was expressed by a number of parents in relation to the approach to immigration at Government level, in particular regarding accommodation and service provision.

#### **Staff Views**

**The general view is that the diversity is enriching the school environment both socially and educationally but the fact that every year the population of international children is growing in the schools is identified as an issue of concern for staff across both schools.**

**It was reported that significant numbers of international children and their parents do not have English as their first language and either have poor English or none at all which creates huge challenges for the school.**

**Challenges were also noted by teachers in relation to communications for classroom management. Some children do not have the basic vocabulary to understand instructions including those related to core areas such as health and safety**

**In relation to teaching and learning, the key impact noted by teachers was how having a range of English language abilities in their class impacts on the pace of their teaching. The pace of class teaching is inevitably slowed in order to minimise the degree to which children with communications difficulties are 'left out' or 'left behind'.**

**Class teachers noted that they need to adapt the curriculum to the reality that a significant percentage of their pupils (over 50% in some classes) do not have any background in Irish culture or heritage which is at the core of much of the class work in the Irish primary school system**



**Language support teachers highlighted the difficulties related to the restriction of language support to 2 years for international children.**

**Concern was expressed at the fact that at the end of 2 years the children are tested using the Micra T test which is culturally based and highly dependent on English comprehension ability. Though they will have improved their oral English they often do badly in the tests and once they are in the lower percentiles they have to be offered learning support while Irish children who score between the 12th and 25th percentiles are getting no support.**

**The Home School Community Liaison teachers involved report significant changes in relation to the types of disadvantage now being experienced by international families in the area. The main issue observed is the strong sense of marginalisation for some families who are living lives of exclusion from the local community.**

**The assessment criteria used for inclusion in DEIS needs to be reviewed as it does not allow schools like Archbishop Ryan to properly demonstrate their resource needs. They should be changed to ensure the challenges involved for schools in areas of high concentration of new communities are taken into account.**

**Specialist intercultural in-service training is needed, to support teachers to deal with the more complex challenges teaching in a diverse classroom. This should involve opportunities to examine their own attitudes and to explore appropriate methodologies and pedagogies.**

**There is need for central or regional Interpreting services to be provided by the Department of Education and Science similar to those available to hospitals.**

The enrolment of children whose parents do not have English as a first language causes many difficulties and teachers questioned the ethics of the practice of children acting as interpreters in the school. The school is also sometimes faced with a situation where gaps or inaccuracies in information remain because of difficulties of verification of information provided.

International parents can have different and sometimes more aggressive approaches to disciplining their children that are at odds with the norm in Ireland

Special language support teachers noted the difficulties involved for the group when children requiring language support arrive mid-way through the school year and they highlighted the need for a more comprehensive pack of teaching resources.

### **B.O.M Views**

**Issues highlighted by the Board were the difficulties of dealing with local tensions between the new and older communities in the area, particularly in relation to the allocation of places in the Junior School but also in relation to the impact of different cultural practices among different children and how these are sometimes perceived to be impacting on Irish-born children.**

## SECTION FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusions

The research findings presented in this report have highlighted how the growth and changing profile of the local community within their catchment area have impacted on Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior Schools. The increasing diversity of the pupil population has presented significant challenges for teaching and learning in the schools and also for the schools strong ethos of communications with parents. Furthermore, it is clear that for some parents who have lived in the area for many years, the rapid growth of the area and the increasing concentration of a diverse population of immigrant communities have resulted in a sense of being overwhelmed.

The findings also provide strong indications that Archbishop Ryan Schools are playing a pivotal role in relation to the local capacity to respond to the changes in the area, not just in relation to educational provision but also in view of the fact that, in the absence of any significant local infrastructure, the schools are viewed as a key social 'centre' for the area.

From the consultations, it is evident that Archbishop Ryan Schools are held in very high regard across all stakeholders, in terms of:

- The quality of education provision;
- The effectiveness of their response to the educational, social and cultural needs of their pupils;
- Their creation of strong links with parents and the local community in order to support their pupils' educational progress; and
- The way they have managed to respond to the diversity of needs among their pupils.

It was particularly notable that the high level of cooperation within and between the staffs, Principals and Boards, of the Senior and Junior Schools is pivotal in this response. Pupils and parents from diverse backgrounds consistently rated the schools as excellent. Furthermore, a visit to the Archbishop Ryan Schools quickly confirms the level to which they have succeeded in creating environments of welcome and inclusiveness which are likely to be highly conducive to children's learning and also to new families feeling welcome in the area.

However against this very positive backdrop, a strong conclusion of the research is that the Archbishop Ryan Schools are now approaching a situation where they are becoming overstretched in terms of their capacity to respond to the ever-growing demands of the local area. Issues emerging for Archbishop Ryan Schools relate to educational capacity but also to wider social and cultural issues of capacity within the local community. While the focus of this report is on issues of educational relevance, it is not possible to ignore the latter issues, and both these areas will be explored briefly below.

### **5.1.1 Educational Capacity Issues for Archbishop Ryan Schools**

The research points to a number of critical issues in relation to the capacity of Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior Schools to continue to provide a quality response to the educational needs of their pupils.

The key issue is the availability to the schools of the level of resources required to respond to the needs of their diverse pupil populations. Although it is clear that to date the schools have managed to maintain high standards in relation to meeting the educational needs of their pupils, increasing pressures are being noted. From the consultations it is evident that the large numbers of international pupils in Archbishop Ryan Schools are having a significant impact on teaching and learning and also on operational aspects including administration, discipline management and communications with parents. Increasing pressures are being felt in relation to capacity for:

- Adequate levels of special language support;
- A freeing up of learning supports that the schools recognise are often taken up by international children who actually have language support rather than learning needs;
- Expanded HSCL outreach to support the inclusion of international parents;
- Translation assistance to ensure that international parents are fully informed about matters related to their children's education and that the school are fully informed on relevant profile information on all international children being enrolled with them.

For school staff, the challenges of the increasing diversity of the school has meant significant extra work in relation to the creation of an inclusive environment, the adaptation of the curriculum and the constant trial and error of ensuring the diverse needs of all their pupils are met. For the principals, significant extra time is involved in engaging with parents arriving in the area who have little information regarding any of the services they require, including the education for their children. The time and effort involved in this situation and in the general communication with parents for whom English is not their first language is significant and additional to the usual time requirements that might be expected for managing schools of this size. The time pressure is compounded by the requirement that the schools gather data and prepare detailed submissions on an annual basis for application for discretionary resources. In view of the high proportions of international pupils in the Junior and Senior Schools, these additional pressures are being felt across both schools.

The schools acknowledge the level of resources already made available from the DES and various local funding sources. However the time involved in annual applications is clearly an issue for the schools as is the fact that the existing system of educational disadvantage used by the DES in relation to admission of schools to programmes such as the DEIS programme does not take into account the new types of disadvantages now being presented to schools such as the Archbishop Ryan Schools. Among the new factors omitted in the current criteria are the high numbers of families living in rented private accommodation rather than local authority housing, as well as the many significant deprivations related to information gaps, language deficits and social isolation. While the original criteria for disadvantage were mainly economic, it is suggested that there is now need for a more embracing definition of disadvantage that will also include social and cultural aspects of people's lives. In general it is suggested that a model of disadvantage must be about the context of children's lives including their experiences in school.

In a submission to the Minister for Education and Science in 2005, the Educational Disadvantage Committee, (a committee that advises the Minister on matters relating to educational disadvantage), set out their views as to how to address some concerns that have been expressed about previous proposals to target resources and other supports to those who are most affected by educational disadvantage. The paper acknowledged the complexity of identifying the appropriate selection criteria (and indicators related to these criteria), and that these may relate to children (or their families), schools, or geographic areas; to educational performance and to the degree to which schools are located in areas such as RAPID and Clar. The challenge for schools to gather relevant data was also acknowledged.

Arising from this discussion of issues, conclusions drawn included the following:

- There is a need for procedures to identify schools that are experiencing changes in their socioeconomic profiles and to monitor the changes.
- Research on the social context effect and on differences between disadvantage, as it is experienced in urban and rural areas, should be included in a wider programme of research on the nature of disadvantage.

Such conclusions are of particular relevance to schools like Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior that are in an area that has experienced massive and radical changes in relation to their socio-economic profile in the last 10 years that are presenting them with a set of new challenges quite different to those experienced in most other Irish primary schools. From an observation point of view, a visit to the area provides strong indications that the schools are to the forefront of responding to new forms of disadvantage which have not yet been taken on board by Irish education policy and are not recognised within current resource allocation models. A consistent point made by teachers in the feedback for this report was that they feel they are now being required to teach in a very different way than that for which they were trained and that they feel they are in many ways '*fire brigading the front-line response*'

In relation to the capacity of the school, the need for training for teachers in multi-cultural issues emerges as a strong concern from the research. Teachers highlighted the fact that teacher training does not include any focus on multicultural issues. They also identified the need for teachers to have on-going professional development opportunities to develop their knowledge on these issues and develop the new skills they believe they need to respond to the new challenges presented to them in a multi-cultural classroom. They also highlight the value of them having an opportunity to explore their own attitudes to the changes taking place in Irish society and Irish classrooms. A strong suggestion was that this training should be of a practical nature and should be delivered by representatives of new communities in Ireland and by teachers with experience of teaching in multi-cultural classrooms. The idea that language support and classroom resources could be developed as part of the training was also suggested.

Finally the need for training for parents of international children in relation to the education system in Ireland was strongly recommended in the consultations. Many of those consulted pointed to the difficulties inevitably facing parents arriving in a new country without any knowledge of the educational system, and suggested that there is an urgent need for accessible supports to be made available to help them understand, and access services and supports they require including education for their children.

### **5.1.2 Social and Cultural Issues within the Local Community**

At school level, a sense of welcome is evident among the local community for international families moving into the area. Most of the parents consulted were keen to emphasize this. However the concerns highlighted within the one to one interviews with parents suggested that there are increasing tensions within the local community regarding the growing number of immigrant families moving into the area, the pace of the change involved and the impact this is having, not just on the schools, but on the local community generally. These tensions appear to be compounded by the observation made by a number of the parents that many Irish families are moving out of the area and it is possible that the immigrant families will soon be the majority population in the area. The main issue of concern noted by most of those consulted appears to be related to the lack of, or inadequacy of, facilities in the area generally and the impact further numbers of people will have on this situation. Particularly highlighted in this regard are pressures on social services and adult education, as well as on schools, and the need for urgent action at Government level to respond to these pressures.

For some parents, however, deeper concerns were evident and it is likely that they were reflecting some of the anxieties that are not yet openly discussed in the area and indeed in many other communities in the country. These concerns relate to the perceived impacts that the new cultural mix will have on the area, particularly in terms of a perceived threat to Irish identity. From the consultations it is evident that a strong suggestion emerging from the consultations with Irish parents is that they fear that there will be an erosion of the values and culture of Irish society. A number of parents reported that they are now experiencing a desire for greater clarity regarding their 'Irish' identity and also a determination to ensure that their children's education facilitates them developing a strong sense of this identity and the core values and traditions involved. The fact there has been very little explicit discussion in Irish society about how immigrants are integrated into local communities, and how this process might affect Irish people, compound the difficulties for those wishing to raise questions regarding national identity, citizenship, inclusion and belonging. Although Ireland has now joined the European mainstream as a country where a population of mixed ethnic origins is the norm, it is possible that, in the absence of this debate, the current vacuum in relation to the establishment of the institutional supports needed to address the issues emerging is likely to continue. Challenging questions need to be explored including the understanding of concepts such as integration, assimilation, equality and difference, and opportunities for open dialogue are needed across the new and older communities of Irish society.

Within the above context a key local issue, and one that is clearly an increasingly emotive one among original parents in the area, is that of the availability and allocation of places in the Junior School. The scarcity of places for children starting school is an issue of concern to parents in many parts of the country and tentative steps are being taken by the Department of Education and Science in relation to the introduction of new models of patronage for primary schools in order to address this issue. As such it is an issue of concern beyond the scope of this report. However, a strong conclusion emerging from the consultations for this report is that this issue has the potential to become a focal point for channelling other concerns among the original local community, in particular fears regarding the increasing concentration of immigrant families in the area and the departure of Irish families from the area.

The role of the school is seen as central in this regard there is the potential for this situation has the potential for the school to become a focal point for any conflict that may arise. Serious consideration is needed as to the most appropriate way for

dialogue on this issue between local parents, representatives of Archbishop Ryan Schools Patron and the Department of Education and Science

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the context of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

### **1. For the Department of Education & Science (DES)**

1.1 In line with its commitment to equality of educational opportunity for all children and the entitlement of children of international families to the supports they need to achieve this equality, DES should review the current system for providing support to schools with large numbers of international children. This review should be carried out in consultation with schools such as Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior Schools with a view to developing a coherent policy framework for providing the range and level of supports children of international families need to benefit fully from their education. This review should have regard for needs assessment as well as planning, structuring and resourcing the delivery of effective whole-school systems of supports in schools including appropriate levels and duration of language support and translation and interpretative services where needed.

1.2 As a follow on from recommendation 1.1, the DES should review the current definition of 'disadvantage' used for the allocation of resources and supports targeting disadvantage with a view to recognising and including the needs of schools providing for areas with large populations of international families.

1.3 The DES should work with schools such as Archbishop Ryan Schools to develop a comprehensive information pack on relevant educational issues for international parents.

1.4 The DES should set up a special support service along the lines of the existing Home School Community Liaison or Visiting Teachers for Travellers Service, for parents of international children .

1.5 The DES should review the current school curricula and testing processes with a view to assessing the level to which they take account of the diverse cultural backgrounds of children of international families.

1.6 The DES should ensure that a module on intercultural education is a core part of all teacher training courses. Regular in-service training on multi-culturalism should also be available to all teachers. This should be workshop-based training providing an opportunity for teachers to share ideas and practice and to be more reflective.

1.7 At a wider policy level, there is need for discussion regarding the implications of schools such as Archbishop Ryan's reaching a situation of critical mass in relation to intake of international students and of the schools being seen as schools for international pupils only. The potential dangers of such a situation in terms of community tensions and possible ghettoisation of new communities need to be acknowledged and examined in an appropriate forum.

## **2. For Archbishop Ryan Senior and Junior Schools**

2.1 Archbishop Ryan Schools should acknowledge their relatively unique experience in relation to the changing face of Irish society and seek support from the DES Social Inclusion Unit to document their learning in order to contribute to national guidelines on good practice in intercultural education. This project should include the development of anti-racist guidelines for the schools as well as a comprehensive information pack on relevant educational issues for international parents moving into the local community. Support should be sought to provide the relevant translations for this pack.

2.1 The schools should work with other relevant local agencies, in particular Clondalkin Partnership, to develop a 5-year education plan to support local integration of international families in the area. Key stakeholders in this plan should include members of international communities in the area, statutory service providers such as South Dublin County Council, Department of Social and Family Affairs, VEC and HSE, as well as relevant local community agencies such as Clondalkin Partnership. The plan should include an audit of the education needs of international families and also actions focused on information provision, basic English language learning for adults and children, as well as social and culturally-focused developmental actions. This plan should be presented to the Minister with Responsibility for Integrating the Immigrant Community and support requested for its implementation.

2.4 The Schools should develop a locally-based in-service workshop on multiculturalism for their staff and invite inputs from teachers in schools with similar experiences and from local representatives of immigrant communities in the area. A follow-on from this workshop could be the establishment of a 'cultural' centre across the schools which might include relevant reading material, resources and information on practices teachers in the schools have found to be effective.

2.5 The schools should reconsider their reliance on children as interpreters and translators for communications with parents. As noted there are ethical issues involved in this practice. The schools should liaise with other schools in the area that also have high levels of international children and investigate the possibility of setting up a localised translation service for the area. The input of international parents should be encouraged into this project and the possibility of extending the service to the development of support groups for helping international children to maintain their proficiency in the language of their country of origin could be explored.

2.6 The Board of Management of the Junior School should seek an urgent meeting with the DES and representatives of the Patron of the school with a view to exploring possible ways of responding to the increasing local tensions regarding the school's increasing waiting list for places for junior infants. Ideas proposed during the consultations for this research such as a local discussion forum or a mediation process prior to Section 29 hearings could be considered.

2.7 The schools should consider engaging in community-linked projects that could assist international children in their integration into the area by building their confidence regarding mixing within their wider community. 'Visits' to the local community e.g. to local community centres to meet local people, followed by discussion on the experience could be considered.

2.8 The schools should consider providing regular information parents' nights in some of the main languages of local international families.

### **For Clondalkin Partnership**

Clondalkin Partnership should support the schools in the preparation of a five-year education plan to support local integration in the area. The Partnership should assist in the bringing together of key local and national agencies in responding to the issues highlighted in this research. Clondalkin Partnership should also continue to bring its own personnel and financial resources to bear in developing innovative local responses to some of the issues. This approach has yielded dividends to date in the support that has been provided by Clondalkin Partnership to Archbishop Ryan schools in relation to the successful inter-cultural weeks that have taken place.



## APPENDIX 1

### Explanation of Terms used

The term 'refugee' is commonly used by the public to refer to any individual who has entered the Country seeking asylum, irrespective of their legal status. For clarity, a comprehensive list of terms is outlined and defined below.

#### **Asylum seeker**

An asylum seeker is someone who applies to the State to be recognised as a refugee under the terms of the 1951 UN Geneva Convention and its supplementary 1967 New York Protocol relating to the status of refugees.

#### **Convention refugee**

A Convention refugee is defined in section 2 of the Refugee Act, 1996 as,

'a person who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality and membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his or her former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.'

The term 'Convention' relates to the 1951 UN Geneva Convention and its supplementary 1967 New York protocol relating to the status of refugees.

#### **Programme refugee**

Section 24 of the Refugee Act, 1996 defines a programme refugee as

"... a person to whom leave to enter and remain in the State for temporary protection or resettlement as part of a group of persons has been given by the Government ... whether or not such person is a refugee within the meaning of the definition of a "refugee" in section 2 (of the Act)"

Over the last two decades, groups of programme refugees have been admitted from Chile, Iran, Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo, and a small number is admitted under Ireland's resettlement quota. In general, they have been afforded the same rights as Convention refugees.

#### **Individuals granted leave to remain**

This status is granted at the discretion of the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to persons whose claims for asylum are not considered to meet the criteria set out in the 1951 UN Convention but who are not returned because their country is at war or for some other compelling reason. In general terms, persons granted leave to remain have similar rights to persons granted refugee status.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Enrolment Policy for Archbishop Ryan J.N.S.**

Archbishop Ryan Junior National School is a Roman Catholic school under the Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

As a Roman Catholic school, the school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith.

Children will be enrolled in the following order of preference.

1. Catholic children of the parish (including children of Travelling Community resident within parish).
2. Brothers and sisters of children in the Junior and Senior Schools.
3. Children of teachers teaching in Archbishop J.N.S. or S.N.S. at time of enrolment.
4. All children who live within the parish boundaries but are not Catholic applying for placement are entitled to a place if there are vacancies after the groups from (1) to (3) have been allocated places.
5. All children who apply to the school and are not Catholics and not residents within the parish boundaries are entitled to a place in the school if there are vacancies in the school after the groups from (1) to (4) have been allocated places.

Junior Infant Enrolments:

If there are more applicants than there are places available in any of the above categories places will be allocated in order of age.

In order to accommodate groups (1) and (2) Boards may have to operate a cut off in age of applicants to give places to groups (1) and (2) if there is pressure for places in the school.

## APPENDIX 3

### Enrolment Policy for Archbishop Ryan S.N.S.

Archbishop Ryan Senior National School is a Roman Catholic school under the Patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

As a Roman Catholic school, the school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith.

Children will be enrolled in the following order of preference:

1. Pupils who are transferring from 2<sup>nd</sup> class in Archbishop Ryan J.N.S.
2. Brothers and sisters of children in the Junior and Senior Schools.
3. Catholic children of the parish.
4. Catholic children who live outside the parish and do not have a Catholic school in their parish.
5. Children of teachers teaching in Archbishop S.N.S or J.N.S. at time of enrolment.
6. All children who live within the parish boundaries but are not Catholic applying for a placement are entitled to a place if there are vacancies after the groups from (1) to (5) have been allocated places.
7. All children who apply to the school and are Catholic and not resident within the parish boundaries are entitled to a place in the school if there are vacancies in the school after groups from (1) to (6) have been allocated places.
8. All children who apply to the school and are not Catholic and not resident within the parish boundaries are entitled to a place in the school if there are vacancies in the school after the groups from (1) to (7) have been allocated places.

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