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Fr. Donal O'Neill
Chairperson, National Association of Post-Primary
Diocesan Advisers/Co-ordinators
Catechetical Offices
John II Pastoral Centre
Rock Road
Killarney
Co. Kerry.

2 June 2001

Our Ref : 0009339/DG

Dear Fr. O'Neill,

I wish to refer to your correspondence in relation to your concerns regarding the resources allocated to religious education in Post-Primary schools.

I am pleased to note that a meeting between members of your association and officials of my Department accompanied by a representative of the NCCA and the co-ordinator of the Junior Certificate Religious Education support programme has addressed many of the concerns expressed in your letters to me.

My Department acknowledges the work undertaken by your association in the promotion of religious education in post-primary schools. Arising from the meeting, the Religious Education support programme will provide regular briefing for members of your association on a regional basis on developments in the Junior Certificate Religious Education curriculum and provide access to resource materials. While recognising that the association is represented on the syllabus committee through the Episcopal Commission nevertheless my Department will be pleased to invite your association's views on the sample papers and the assessment proposals for coursework. I understand that it was appreciated and accepted by members of your association why it is not possible to have Diocesan Advisers at inservice courses for Junior certificate Religious Education and why funding for local inservice by Diocesan Advisers is not possible. This is in line with the position at primary level. There is a general issue regarding the release of teachers across the board for inservice at second level and while my Department would encourage the release of teachers for your own inservice courses it is ultimately a matter for school management.

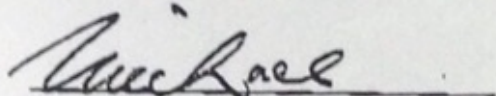
My Department acknowledges that there is a need for more trained teachers of Religious Education and would welcome proposals from your organisation regarding the training of non-specialists in Religious Education.

While my Department has given indicative guidelines in relation to the time allocation for the examination subject Religious Education in all schools and suggested time allocation for non examination Religious Education for Vocational Schools, Community Schools and Community Colleges it is a matter for the School Management, Trustees, Board of Governors or VECs on how the curriculum is timetabled.

My Department is assisting schools in school planning as part of the School Development Planning Initiative. Guidelines in relation to curriculum provision are being prepared in co-operation with the NCCA. Provision for Moral and Religious Education will be specifically mentioned as part of the guidelines. However it will be the responsibility of individual schools, in the context of school ethos, to make specific provision for Religious Education.

I look forward to fruitful dialogue and communication between my Department, the religious Education support programme and your association in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Michael Woods T.D.

Minister for Education and Science.