



10<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Executive Office Committee

The following response has been the position of TRC since 2019.

- The TRC is supportive in principle of furthering equality of opportunity in teacher recruitment and is generally opposed to discrimination on the grounds of religious belief unless the nature of the job requires it to be done by a person holding, or not holding, a particular religious belief.
- The TRC recognises that, historically, the FETO teacher exception has played an important role in helping to maintain a balance in the religious composition of the teaching workforce. However, the TRC notes the continuing concerns of Roman Catholic educational interests that without an exception for teachers, the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 could eventually result in a loss of Catholic ethos in maintained schools and thus their principled objections remain. For its part, the TRC would be similarly opposed to the removal of the exception if it were to result in a loss or diminution of importance of the warm, open and non-denominational Christian ethos which has been enshrined in legislation as a defining characteristic of controlled schools and which underpins their educational provision.
- The TRC supports the right of controlled schools to ensure that their Christian ethos is respected and promoted and also upholds the statutory requirement placed on the teachers in all primary schools to teach RE. Individual teachers may opt out of teaching RE but the school remains responsible for ensuring that the subject is taught, thus there is an overall occupational requirement placed on controlled schools in addition to their maintenance of a non-denominational Christian ethos.
- The TRC would not be supportive of the removal of the exception for controlled schools only as this would clearly disadvantage controlled schools and reduce the relative employment opportunities for Protestant teachers.
- The TRC would be open to considering for a narrowing or redefining of the exception but will be opposed to any proposal that it feels would place controlled schools and Protestant teachers at a disadvantage, or would impair the ability of controlled schools to ensure that those appointed to teaching roles agree to uphold the ethos of the school.

The Transferor Representatives' Council represents the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and Methodist Church in Ireland in matters of education policy in Northern Ireland.

**Hon. Secretary**  
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**Chair:** Miss S Rosemary Rainey OBE

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Peter Hamill**  
**Secretary, Transferor Representatives' Council**