



Polish Educational and Cultural Association
Northern Ireland

BOARD REPORT

Polish Educational and Cultural Association (PECA) September 2014 – November 2015

The Board of PECA/Polish Saturday School in Belfast was elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2014. Five members of the board were elected: Barbara Snowarska, Ewa Jadczak, Małgorzata Komander, Artur Kaczorowski and Mariusz Kłeczek. The following people were appointed as office bearers: Barbara Snowarska – chairperson, Artur Kaczorowski – vice-chairperson, Małgorzata Komander - secretary and Mariusz Kłeczek - treasurer. On 25th October 2014 at the Extraordinary General Meeting in supplementary election to the Board, the following people were appointed as Board members: Grzegorz Skibiński, Sylwia Szkopińska and Oskar Brandt. During the school year Oskar Brandt submitted his resignation. In the school year 2014/2015 the Board met at least once a month, both formally with minutes taking and informally, to take decisions concerning PECA/PSS Belfast's affairs. There were 32 resolutions passed altogether during that period (available on request).

The PECA Board responsibilities included:

- preparing, approving and overseeing the budget of PECA/PSS Belfast;
- assisting in organization of the School and the Association's events;
- co-operation with other Polish organizations and local institutions;
- applying for grants and other funding for the School and Association's statutory activities;
- publication and distribution of the magazine „Nasz Express” and the school bulletin (4 issues).

The Board faced a number of challenges during the year 2014/15:

- There were difficult negotiations carried out – both in person and via correspondence – with St Michael's Primary school Principal and The Board of Governors with regards to charges for hiring St Michael's premises on Saturdays by PSS Belfast. The charge has been increased during that year by 640%: from January 2015 by 75 pounds sterling per Saturday, and again from September 2015 by further 70 pounds sterling. Currently the hire charge stands at 170 pounds sterling per Saturday. This substantial rise in the premises hire costs resulted in the Board's decision to introduce an additional administrative fee of 20 pounds sterling per year per child enrolled into PSS Belfast.
- Throughout the year the Board was looking for a new location for PSS Belfast since conditions in St Michael's PS didn't meet the needs of Polish Saturday School – an important factor being an increase in enrolment numbers which deemed the number of available classrooms inadequate. Unfortunately, none of the schools contacted responded positively to our written and direct queries (Holy Rosary PS, St Bride's PS, St Kevin's PS, Strandtown PS, Elmgrove PS). Botanic PS responded showing interest in co-operation, but is too small for us. The Honorary Consul of Poland Jerome Mullen is going to make contact again with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to ask if they are able to offer to PSS Belfast suitable facilities. At the same time the Board has contacted with a similar query the Education Authority and is still awaiting satisfactory response.

- The Board had to decide whether to proceed with the project funded by OFMDFM Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF). The previous Board applied for this funding, but it was not released by MEDF during that period. The funding was to „provide better management structures to the Association and broaden the scope of its activities“. At the time the Board in 2014/15 was offered the released funding, there was only time for two months' long project (February-March 2015). With limited time and under pressure, the Board hired two part-time self-employed workers, Sylwia McAvoy (Development Worker) and Monika Turkiewicz (Administrator). The project schedule (February-March 2015) along with the final evaluative report are available on request.
- The Board decided to apply for further MEDF funding to OFMDFM for the period 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 and received a positive decision. We have been able to continue, on a larger scale, work started in February. The activities under the project include: advice work (schedule of activities and half-way report, April-September, available on request), representing the Association in contacts with statutory bodies and local organizations, support work during events (Open Community Day, Polish Independence Day).
- In August 2015 PECA acquired a separate logo (the logo of Polish Saturday School in Belfast remained the same) and also set up and is developing a new internet site, in Polish and English language versions. We are looking for people with professional skills who would like to contribute long-term to the development of the website. There is also a need for improving/developing new website for Polish Saturday School in Belfast.
- In the summer, we applied Lloyd's Foundation for Northern Ireland for a grant to cover additional costs not included in the MEDF project. The funding received in September from Lloyds FNI will help to part-cover the cost of the school rent, volunteer expenses, creating materials and updating contents of the Association's website: www.pecan-i.org and additional 5 hours of advice work per week for a period of 26 weeks starting in October 2015.
- Since 1st October PECA has been operating from a rented office at 54 Elmwood Avenue in Belfast, BT9 6AZ, the cost of this rent being covered by the grant from OFMDFM's MEDF. This allowed us to keep our organizational documentation in a safe locked location, to run advice clinics and since November 2015 the consular service could also be offered at this address (the first one took place 16-19 November).
- We have been actively developing volunteering and fundraising. Gradually, a group of people is forming who want to explore opportunities within these important areas and relevant programmes are being developed.
- During the course of the year, the Board members, PECA/PSS Belfast employees and volunteers took part in a numbers of training sessions, including: governance and finances, Risk Assessment, Fundraising, Advice training on „Welfare Reform“, Training and Presentation skills, First Aid, Child Protection, Health and Safety.
- Additional documentation was created required by our Funders (OFMDFM, Lloyds), as well as policies and procedures regarding Volunteering within our organization.
- Also this year PECA submitted application to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to be registered as a charity in Northern Ireland. We are near the end of the registration process and hope to receive the Commission's decision regarding our charity status soon. It was recommended to us that the name of the bank account is changed to: Polish Educational and Cultural Association, to reflect the main name of the Association as per our Constitution of 26th May 2012. The account should be activated in the next couple of days.
- During the course of the year we were contacting and co-operating with many institutions/organizations/groups, including:

- Polish Council - PECA participated in the meetings convened by Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh
- Polish Community Centre 'Cooltura
- Polfolk
- Konrad's Cut-Outs
- Polish Abroad
- Bangor PL
- Polish School in Banbridge
- STEP/ Language Clubs w Dungannon
- Polish Society Belfast
- Belfast City Council
- NICEM
- Housing Executive
- Polish Consulate General in Edinburgh – GC Dariusz Adler and Honorary Consul of Poland in Northern Ireland - Jerome Mullen
- Alternatives
- CraicNI
- QUB
- Stranmillis University College
- University of Ulster
- Barnardos
- Children Law Centre
- Chinese Welfare Association NI
- Russian-Speaking Community in NI
- Stronger Together Network
- Unite Against Hate

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is supporting PECA/PSS Belfast with their skills, an encouraging word and financially. Without involvement of all those people who try to pass the language and cultural heritage to the next generations and help the Polish community in Northern Ireland in various ways, we would not have achieved that much.

On behalf of PECA board

Barbara Snowarska
Chairperson

Available on request:

1. List of resolutions
2. Schedule of activities under MEDF funding (February-March 2015) along with Final Evaluative Report
3. Schedule of activities under MEDF funding (April-September 2015) along with 6-months' progress report



Summary Annual Report 2014/2015

By Principal of Maria Skłodowska-Curie Polish Saturday
School in Belfast
for AGM of PECA/PSS Belfast - **05.12.2015**

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I. AIMS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2014/2015

School organizational calendar for 2014/2015

As of 05.12.15, the date of this AGM, there are 202 pupils/students enrolled at PSS Belfast. On the first date of school, 05.09.2015 the enrolment number stood at 189. During September and October 2015 the numbers were fluctuating and peaked at 216. On 21.06.2014 – at the end of the school year 2014/15 there were 181 pupils/students enrolled.

Enrolment and organization

There were 155 pupils/students enrolled at the beginning of the school year, aged 3 to 16. On the whole, enrolment to class was according to a child's birth as per calendar year, e.g. a child whose 6th birthday was between 1st January and 31st December was enrolled in the class of 6-year olds. Exception was for 3 year olds who had to be 3 year old before they could be enrolled into class, but could join the class during the school year following their 3rd birthday.

The classes were organized at the start of 2014/15 as follows:

- 4 classes of Kindergarden/Pre-school:
 - 3 to 6 year olds; 3 year old group using Bethlehem Nursery (4 teachers, 1 classroom assistant, 3 volunteers)
- 3 classes of Early Years
 - 7-9 year olds – P1-P3 in the Polish educational system (3 teachers and 2 volunteers)
- 2 classes of P4-P5 in the Polish educational system (P6 completes the primary education in Poland) (2 teachers)
- 2 classes of P6/gymnasium I&II and III gymnasium (lower secondary) (2 teachers)

Mrs Beata Dąbrowska was employed on a part-time basis (7 hours per week) as the Principal of the school.

The following teachers/volunteers were employed/helped in the school in 2014/15:

	TEACHERS	VOLUNTEERS
1.	Ms Aneta Gil (3 year olds)	
2.	Mrs Agata Kleczek – (3 year olds, classroom assistant; 11 yo)	
3.	Ms Klaudia Padykuła –(3 year olds, classroom assistant)	
4.	Ms Mariola Radkiewicz (4 yo) I term	Mrs Beata Donaj Grek + afterschools group 1.30-2.30pm)
5.	Mrs Beata Donaj Grek (4 yo) II term	
6.	Ms Małgorzata Frasiak (5 yo) + Dance and Drama workshop	Mrs Małgorzata Frącala
7.	Ms Agnieszka Domagała (6 yo) + Dance and Drama workshop	Ms Małgorzata Bonk Ms Edyta Czerwionka
8.	Mrs Ewa Bajorek (7 yo) class I + afterschools group 1.30-2.30pm	Ms Weronika Głowacka Ms Paulina Cieślak
9.	Ms Paulina Marzeda (8 yo) class II + arts workshop	
10.	Ms Monika Rządowska (9 yo) class III + arts workshop	
11.	Ms Monika Lewandowska (10 yo) class IV + drama workshop	
12.	Ms Joanna Kuchta (11 yo) class V + history workshop	
13.	Miss Andrea Dymus (12-13 yo) Geography and Polish language teacher/ journalism/photography workshops/Polish GCSE preparation class	
14.	Miss Katarzyna Derenowska (14-16 yo – gimnasium/lower secondary) History and Polish language teacher/ Polish lng and history club	
15.	Mr Marek Kolakowski Eurhythmics/gymnastics for 3-yo to P3/ Football club coach	Mr Mariusz Bielik – P.E. activities
16.		Ms Marlena Sekula.– afterschools group 1.30pm-2.30pm

During term II there were changes in the teaching staff. Ms Joanna Kuchta had to return to Poland and Mrs Agata Kleczek replaced her as a form teacher in class V. Ms Klaudia Padykuła replaced Mrs Agata Kleczek as a classroom assistant in a class of 3 year olds. Also the teacher for the group of 4 year olds changed –on 23.05.2015 Mrs Beata Donaj- Grek taking over from Mariola Radkiewicz as a class teacher. Mrs Radkiewicz moved to Germany due to personal reasons.

Altogether in the school year 2014/2015 (I and II term) there were 15 paid teachers and a principal and there were 8 volunteers (during I term).

Altogether there were 16 teaching staff in the school year 2014/15.

From the beginning of the school year the teachers had to keep records in register books for the form classes as well as for extra-curricular activities. All documentation related to discussions and decisions taken during Teaching Staff Meetings as recorded in the minutes can be found in the Book of Minutes of Teaching Staff Meetings. During school breaks there were arrangements in place for teachers and parents to oversee the children for the sake of safety.

II. Extracurricular activities

Our school ran a number of extracurricular activities from 1.30pm to 2.30pm:

- journalism/photography workshops** – young people learnt how to create articles for the Polish magazine ‘Nasz Express’ published by PECA /PSS Belfast (Andrea Dymus)
- Music-Movement-Drama workshops** – for 7-13 year olds (Monika Lewandowska and Mariola Radkiewicz)
- Football Club** – for over 7-year olds (Kołakowski and Paulina Cieślar)
- Art workshops** – for over 6 year olds (Paulina Marzęda, Monika Rządowska)
- Remedial activities** – for P1-P3
- Dance workshops** – for 5-year olds (A.Domagała)
- Afterschool club** (3-5 yo) – (B.Donaj-Grek, M.Radkiewicz, A.Gil)
- Afterschool club** (6+ yo)– (E.Bajorek, Marlena Sekula)
- Children and Youth Club** – led by Belfast City Council workers (co-ordinator E.Bajorek, once a month)

We were able to offer a number of different extra-curricular activities to our pupils which reflected the need expressed by both parents and form teachers - there were classes aimed at developing children's skills and talents as well as additional remedial work classes for pupils who needed some catching up with the rest of the age group.

I believe those activities were organized properly. There was great interest among the pupils to participate in those additional activities and they had many opportunities to showcase what they had learned during the sessions. Extra-curricular classes were open to all children aged 5 and over. The youngest children – 3-4 year olds – who had older siblings in the school could avail of afterschool care. Regular remedial classes were arranged by teachers depending on the needs at a given time. In this way every child had an opportunity to take part in additional activities, everything was under control and parents were happy. Teachers were using methodology which activated the pupils. The positive outcomes helped to build good reputation of the school and encouraging feedback was received. Wide differentiation in the educational levels of the pupils/students due to family environment, parental level of education, individual abilities, talents and interests required creativity in the choice of methods of work employed during core class time as well as extracurricular classes. Also homework assigned had to be adjusted to the level of individual pupils/students. Teachers often had to devise individual educational plans with separate sets of exercises and tasks. This approach paid off by raising the level of attainment among pupils/students and had a positive pedagogical impact.

III. School development plan – teaching and pastoral care progress

In the school year 2014/2015 PSS Belfast was carrying out its tasks according to the established and approved concept of work. The tasks were performed on four main levels:

- creating conditions conducive to collaborative work among teaching staff,
- management and organization,
- teaching and learning and educational care action plan,
- school activities in the local area, including promotion work.

The goal of PSS concept of work is to create conditions and to undertake steps promoting continuous and comprehensive development of our pupils. In the course of the year the concept had to be re-evaluated and modified according to the needs arising. To ensure the educational standards of the school remain high are high, teachers' work was overseen and monitored. Core class work (9.45am-1.30pm), school events and extracurricular activities were observed and monitored.

IV. Collaboration work

We have collaborated, among others, with:

- Polish Saturday Schools in Northern Ireland
- Family Support and Intervention Team
- Polish Youth Club „Kameleon”/ Polish Community Centre “Cooltura”
- PSNI
- Polish Consulate General in Edinburgh
- Belfast City Council
- Bests Hill Community Association
- Belfast Waterfront Community

V. Parental involvement

1. We were introducing parents to educational tools and methods of work with their children.
2. We included parents in voluntary work for the benefit of pupils and the School.
3. We were organizing events with parents such as school performances, school fairs, outings in order to foster better integration, relationship building and exchange of experience.
4. We were encouraging parental participation in cherishing Polish traditions – “Shared Christmas Eve Meal” during Nativity performance.

VI. Events and projects as per school organizational calendar for 2014/2015

PECA/ PSS Belfast organized many special events and activities throughout the year:

School events and celebrations constitute part of care and educational work, through which cultural and academic heritage is directly promoted. It has a positive impact on emotional wellbeing and is appealing to an aesthetic sense. It activates children and young people, develops their talents and interests, shapes their beliefs and opinions, encourages creative and imitative attitudes and abilities and consequently prepares them to be informed recipients of culture. Organization of such events inspires pupils and students to be active. It serves an important role in educational work. Children and young people are keen on preparing artistic programmes and performing both at events at school and outside the school. In this way they promote Polish culture and traditions. Most events organized in the year 2014/2015 are result of collaborative work of teachers, pupils, parents and volunteers. Our pupils have many gifts and talents – in art work, recitation and singing to name but a few. Participation in such events boosts children's

confidence and provides opportunity for achieving success – it can satisfy one of fundamental emotional needs. The School strives to nourish and develop children's skills and abilities. School's cultural activities also contribute to shaping courteousness and good manners in the young people, manifested in the language they use, way they dress, their behaviour, including adherence to proper basic courtesy titles.

In the year 2014/2015 the following events, school and class celebrations were planned and took place:

1. National Education Day (in classrooms)
2. Bilingual Project BILBO
3. **Recitation Contest** J.Tuwim + raffle and second-hand book stall
4. Equal&Safe – Ewan Suttie – a talk
5. Polish **Independence Day** - celebrations in Belfast City Hall - performances by PSS children and Falk Dance group „Koniczyna” from Dublin
7. **Annual teachers' training weekend** for all Polish Saturday Schools in Northern Ireland
- LEGO LOGOS
8. **St Nicolaus' Day** – w Ulster Transport Museum
9. **Nativity** at school – traditional carol singing concert
10. Participation in Belvoir-Bests Hill Community Association Multi-Cultural Christmas Party
11. Meeting for parents – information session by Asia Kuberczyk –NICEM's Hate crime liaison officer - part of „**Equal & Safe**” project
12. Class outings
13. Open Community Day and “You've got Talent” Contest
14. National Flag Day, Constitution of 3rd May
15. **Children's Day** at St Michael's for the younger children, for the older ones trips to W5 and Jungle NI
16. **Art competitions** – My holiday, Easter, Christmas
17. **Play Poland** –Polish film festival events co-ordinated by Andrea Dymus
18. Celebrations of Granny Day, Grandpa's Day, Mother's Day, 1st Day of Spring

VII. Applications for funding- funding received for 2014

PSS Belfast participated in the projects financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland:

- Racism Prevention and Help for Victims of Racism in NI – „Equal & Safe” £6,090
- Teacher Training for Polish Saturday schools in NI – „Logo Logos” £1,800
- Polish Independence Day in Belfast City Hall £1,200
- Open Community Day and Children's Day £2,500

All the projects required financial reporting to Consulate General of Poland in Edinburgh. All calculations were done properly and were accounted for and PSS Belfast received grant monies into the school's bank account.

PSS Belfast also participated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs project in 2014/2015 and currently in 2015/2016 „Supporting schools teaching the Polish language, in the Polish language and about Poland in the UK”. The project was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subject to competition entitled „Co-operation with the Polish Diaspora and Polish nationals Abroad in 2014”, in collaboration with the Polish Educational Society (Polska Macierz Szkolna).

A hard effort made to fill in the application for the grant in 2014/2015 paid off and on 09.10.2014 we received from “Polish Community” Association (“Wspólnota Polska”) financial support at an amount of £3,887.07.

On 22nd November 2014 PSS Belfast was inspected by a representative of The Polish Educational Society (Polska Macierz Szkolna) as part of verification procedure for the grant applications submitted to “Polish Community” Association (“Wspólnota Polska”). The verification process was successful and PECA received commendation from the auditing body.

- Continuation of the project for the school year 2015/2016
The funding will be available for two areas:
 - rental charges for premises for the school or utility charges for the period Jan-Dec 2015 + Insurance. The reimbursed amount will depend on the size of the school (on average PLN 15,000). PSS submitted receipts for £4,282.85.
- Purchase of coursebooks and educational aids. The reimbursed amount will depend on the size of the school (on average PLN 1,500). PSS submitted receipts for £2,009.81.

VIII. Summary

Summing up the activity of the Maria Skłodowska-Curie Polish Saturday School in Belfast in the school year 2014/15 we have been going in the right direction, taking into account the needs and expectations of the pupils and the parents. However, to enhance the provision and the standards of our work in various areas, we need to focus in the coming year on improving co-operation with the governing body of St Michael’s Primary School as well as finding new premises for PSS Belfast, which would allow the school to widen its offer to activities during week days, in addition to Saturdays, and create attractive activities and classes also for parents.

All school events taking place in PSS Belfast during the year took a form of creative and original lessons, both entertaining and educational, during which our pupils and students deepened their knowledge on a number of important subjects, e.g. the road to the independence of Poland, Polish national and cultural identity, healthy eating habits, important Polish religious holidays, safety during leisure activities, good behaviour and manners at school, discovering talents and hobbies.

All the actions undertaken in the school year 2014/2015 were executed in accordance with the plan of the Calendar of School Events which had been approved at The Teaching Staff Meeting at the beginning of the school year. (enclosed).

Beata Dąbrowska
Principal of PSS in Belfast

More info on current PECA activities on www.peca-ni.org and www.pssbelfast.com