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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Teacher settles sex discrimination case with Assumption Grammar School**

A schoolteacher whose sex discrimination case was supported by the Equality Commission has settled her case against Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch, for £5,000.

Catherine McCormick, who still teaches at the school, said that she was overlooked for the post of Temporary Head of English because she was working reduced hours, amounting to indirect sex discrimination.

Ms McCormick says: "The school had been very accommodating of my flexible working arrangements, which I needed because of my child care responsibilities. I have been teaching at Assumption since 2007. Following my return from maternity leave, I availed of a temporary reduction in hours, working three days per week instead of five.

"So when a colleague was appointed Temporary Head of English, and I was not considered because I was working part time, I thought it was unfair to be denied the opportunity to be considered for this temporary promotion and the chance to gain that experience. I understand that the demands of the post would mean working full time, but I wasn't given this option.

"I love my job and am happy at the school, so I'm pleased that a new co-option policy has been put in place which will ensure that opportunities for career enhancement are dealt with on a formal and procedurally correct manner."

In settling the case, Assumption Grammar School has recognised that it did not give Ms McCormick an opportunity to apply or be considered for the position and has disadvantaged her as a part time/flexible worker. The Board of Governors regrets the upset felt by Ms McCormick and looks forward to continued good working relationships with Ms McCormick, confirming that there will be no disadvantage to her due to the fact that she was unable to avail of the acting up experience, nor will she be victimised in any way. The Board of Governors will liaise with the Equality Commission on appropriate training in recruitment and selection with specific focus on part-time workers.

Anne McKernan, Head of Legal Services, Equality Commission, says: "This is a good result all round - one of the main reasons we support cases is to effect change. While Catherine missed out on this opportunity, she has been able to secure a change in policy and practice that will benefit other teachers into the future. It's good that this has been resolved productively and amicably. We're publicising this to remind all employers of the difficulties and dangers of disadvantaging people on flexible or part time working arrangements, even unintentionally.

"In Northern Ireland 39% of female employees work part-time compared to 9% of male employees and 82% of part-time employees are women. Because of the high concentration of women in part-time jobs, any measure which excludes part-timers from a particular post or promotion is likely to have a more adverse effect on women and that's why it may amount to indirect sex discrimination."