

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PATRONAGE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS DUE TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER 2017 & SEPTEMBER 2018

NEED FOR NEW SCHOOL

The following essential conditions apply to the establishment and approval of a new post-primary school to meet demographic need:

- The demographics of the area must support the need for the establishment of a new school - a new school would not impact negatively on the enrolment of schools in the catchment, other than perhaps the establishment of an all-Irish school and the impact of this on an existing Aonad.
- If the demographics require the establishment of a school, then the process for the selection of the type of school should allow for different patrons/bodies to be considered as the patron of a new school.

NEW SCHOOL PROCESS

The process will involve the following steps for a new post-primary school:

- Identification of locations of new schools and sizes of new schools by the Department. Most new second-level schools must have a student enrolment capacity of 800 – 1,000 students. A lower threshold of 400 students may apply to Gaelcoláistí, having regard to the alternative of establishing an Aonad within a school.
- Written applications from prospective patrons addressing all of the criteria.
- Consideration of the applications by Department officials and report drafted for consideration by the New Schools Establishment Group.
- Consideration by Group of report and endorsement by Group or identification of need for further analysis by Department and subsequent consideration by Group.
- Report from the Group submitted to the Minister for consideration.
- Decision by the Minister.

CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN THE PATRONAGE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The main criterion for the decision on patronage in an area where there is already at least one second-level school will be the following:

- Whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision in the area (having regard to neighbouring areas) where there is demand for such diversity and plurality. In this context individual patron bodies from the one faith group will be regarded as representing the same school patronage type for assessing plurality.

As part of the examination of this criterion regard would be had for:

- Whether there is a school of the same or similar patronage in the same catchment area (having regard to neighbouring areas) and whether there is additional demand for such patronage
- The extent to which the establishment of the school would result in greater diversity and plurality of patronage in the area (having regard to neighbouring areas) where there is demand for such plurality and diversity
- Effectiveness of mechanisms planned to ensure that the proposed school will expand to the size range of 800 to 1,000 pupils, including
 - planned possible measures if expansion is not happening as fast as planned
 - Planned collaboration with existing second-level schools in the catchment area.

Where an area is to be served by a single new school, the key criteria will be the following:

- Whether the school can cater for the needs and requirements of all of the pupils in the area.
- Having regard to neighbouring areas, whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision where there is demand for such diversity and plurality. In this context individual patron bodies from the one faith group will be regarded as representing the same school patronage type for assessing plurality.

As part of the examination of these criteria regard would be had for:

- The effectiveness of the manner in which the patron proposes to determine the requirements of all pupils / groups of pupils regarding pupils of a particular faith; pupils of no faith
- The extent to which these requirements are to be met
- Effectiveness of the manner in which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered during the start-up phase
- Effectiveness of the manner in which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered when the school is past the start-up phase
- Effectiveness of the manner to which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered to all students, e.g., supporting gender integration into all subjects
- The extent of demand in the area for the applicant patrons
- Having regard to neighbouring areas, whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision where there is demand for such diversity and plurality

Most new school provision will be co-educational in nature and patronage decisions will be made on that basis. There may be a small number of instances where single-gender provision will need to be made if there is an identified imbalance between the capacities of single-gender schools. Any such identification would be made in advance of seeking applications from patrons.

PARENTAL PREFERENCES

Patron bodies proposing schools will be asked to provide evidence of parental demand. Patrons will be asked to sign up lists of parents of children who will be due to commence their second-level education in the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022 and who indicate interest in having their children educated in their new school. These lists are to include the child's name, date of birth, address and their year of proposed entry to school in addition to a preference for the medium of instruction. A template for submission of parental demand will be provided for this purpose. All information must be presented in this format only and must be confirmed by the applicant.

PATRONAGE COMMITMENTS

Agreement to each of the following requirements must be specifically confirmed in writing by prospective school patrons:

- That the prospective patron is willing to operate by the rules and regulations laid down in various Department of Education and Skills circulars and operating procedures and to follow the prescribed curriculum;
- That the prospective patron is willing to operate the school within the resourcing and policy parameters established by the Department of Education and Skills.
- That the prospective patron is willing to enrol children in the area(s) for which the Department has identified the need for a school
- That the prospective patron is willing to accept and open special education facilities;
- That the prospective patron is willing to expand/operate the school in the size range of 800 to 1,000 pupils;
- That the prospective patron is willing to establish an Aonad where there is a demand for it (for a school where the primary medium of instruction is to be English)
- That the prospective patron is willing to enter into the appropriate standard lease agreement with the Department of Education and Skills.
- That the prospective patron is willing to share school buildings with other schools as may be determined by the Department should the school building not be in full use
- That the prospective patron is willing to be part of a campus development with other primary or second-level schools as identified by the Department;

Please note that failure to comply with the foregoing patronage commitments will result in an application being deemed invalid and invalid applications will not be assessed further as part of the process.

An applicant who is not already an existing school patron will need to ensure they have put certain requirements in place in advance of making an application for patronage under the new school process. In this regard, the APPENDIX attached outlines general information for prospective patrons on the requirements to be put in place.

Department of Education and Skills
April 2016

APPENDIX

General information for prospective patrons

PATRONAGE RESPONSIBILITY

A school patron has significant responsibilities which relate to the whole school community comprising teachers, students, parents and the wider community served by the school. A prospective school patron therefore needs to be able to demonstrate sufficient structure, continuity and reliability to conduct the responsible functions of a patron:

PATRONAGE FUNCTIONS

- Appointment of the school's board of management
- Suspension, if necessary, of the board of management
- Responsibility for the school's characteristic spirit, for which the board of management is accountable to the patron
- Ultimate responsibility/liability for industrial relations
- Responsibility for school property (and insurance)
- Financial matters – annual budgets and reports
- Decisions on school status such as extension, amalgamation, closure

STATUS OF PATRON BODY

A prospective patron needs to be able to demonstrate a capability to conduct the patron responsibilities in an ongoing way.

For an individual or group that is not a statutory body or otherwise formed with a constitution providing satisfactorily for succession and continuity, it would be considered necessary to establish a corporate entity, such as a company limited by guarantee. The patronage body should articulate its educational philosophy and educational objectives in a memorandum and articles of association, or other constitutional documentation. Three persons should be provided as directors or trustees. A patron body should be registered for charitable status with the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Meeting the requirements above does not confer any automatic right to become a patron of a new school.

EDUCATION ACT, 1998

The role of the school patron is referenced throughout the Education Act, 1998 and prospective patrons should ensure that they are familiar with all aspects of the Act, in particular, Parts 2 and 4 of the Act, which relate to schools and to boards of management respectively.

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/1998/a5198.pdf>

Disclaimer:

Please note that this information is not intended as a legal interpretation of the Education Act 1998. It is intended as general information only.