

Mr Joe McHugh, T.D.  
Minister for Education and Skills  
Department of Education and Skills  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019

**Report of the New Schools Establishment Group on the Patronage of  
Post-Primary Schools to be established in September 2020**

Dear Minister McHugh,

As members of the above named Group, we are pleased to present you with our report on the patronage of six new post primary schools due to open in September 2020.

Our role was outlined in a Ministerial announcement of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011. That announcement also included the criteria and arrangements for the recognition of new schools and the role of the New Schools Establishment Group to advise the Minister on the patronage of new schools, following its consideration of an assessment report prepared by the Forward Planning Section of your Department.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019, an invitation was issued for applications in respect of the patronage of the 6 new post-primary schools due to be established in September 2020. The closing date for receipt of applications from applicant patron bodies was 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) website went live for parents to express their parental preferences and closed on 4<sup>th</sup> October.

The Forward Planning Section of your Department carried out an assessment in respect of each of the six areas, including an assessment of the parental preferences received. A meeting was convened on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 with the officials from Forward Planning Section to examine the initial draft assessments that had been forwarded to our Group for consideration.

The Group has considered the assessments made with regard to the patronage of the new post-primary schools to be established in 2020. The Group is satisfied to confirm its view that the criteria as set out in 2011 by your Department were applied in a fair and transparent manner to the applications received.

On that basis we are satisfied that the following recommendations regarding patronage of the new schools are in accordance with these requirements and criteria, including the extent of diversity regarding both ethos and language of instruction currently available/planned in the relevant/adjoining school planning areas, and give due regard to the levels of parental preferences received. The Group is satisfied to make the following recommendations to you in relation to the patronage and language of instruction of the new schools to commence in September 2020.

Area	Proposed Patron	Proposed Language of Instruction
Blanchardstown_West D15 & BlanchardstownVge_D15 (Regional Solution)	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB)	English
Citywest/Saggart (Tallaght & Newcastle_Rathcoole)(Regional Solution)	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB)	English
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W*	Educate Together	English
Enfield (Kilcock School Planning Area)	Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB)	English
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	Educate Together	English
Kilcoole & Greystones (Regional Solution)*	Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)	English

*\*The Department will engage with the patron to consider if the level of demand for Irish-medium education would be better catered for in existing Irish-medium Gaelcholáistí or whether an Aonad should be established in the new school or in a suitable location within the school planning area(s) concerned, and the timing of same.*

In the Blanchardstown report, the Group noted the significant demand for the denominational patronage model proposed by the Islamic Foundation of Ireland (some 29% or 145 parental preferences). The recommendation to award patronage to DDLETB is made by the Group, with appropriate regard to the sustainable levels of pupil input required for an 800 pupil post-primary school and cognisant that the ETB Community College model caters for the diversity present within a community in a single school setting and in a fully inclusive manner, welcoming students of all social, cultural, belief and non-belief backgrounds.

In relation to the Patron Code of Conduct, the Group was made aware by Forward Planning Section of a number of issues raised by members of the public with the Department in relation to the activity of campaigners on behalf of patron bodies. Having considered and discussed the issues raised in detail, including the responses provided by Patron bodies, and the overall operation of the Code of Conduct, the Group is satisfied that there were no breaches in the Code of Conduct.

There was a single instance in one school planning area of a minor overspend which breached the expenses limit, i.e. less than €10 in excess of the €500 limit set out in the Code of Conduct. While the Group did not consider it material to the outcome of the process, the Group is of the view that patron bodies should ensure that the limit is strictly observed in line with the revised parameters put in place for this process. The Group recommends that this matter and the importance of encouraging affiliated groups to abide by the spirit of the code of conduct be emphasised with patron bodies. Recognising that the failure of a number of patron bodies to submit the supporting documentation and/or subsequent clarifications within the required timeframe led to a delay in the current process, the Group recommends that this issue also be raised with the patron bodies.

In April 2019, the Department engaged with patron bodies on feedback and learning from the operation of the process and Code of Conduct in the pilot phase for the 2019 schools. It is proposed that the Department will conduct a further workshop in 2020 to continue this useful stakeholder engagement and feedback process. The Group welcomes and strongly endorses this proposed engagement by the Department with the relevant partners.

The Department brought to the attention of the Group an issue which has arisen in relation to the impact of the boundaries of school planning areas on patronage processes and future school enrolments in cases where the location of the new school is known and is close to the boundary of the school planning area. The Group considered the issue and a number of potential approaches that could be taken. While the matter of school planning areas is not technically within the remit of the Group's role around patronage processes, it is in agreement with the assessment of the Department that dealing with the issue within the planning phase or the patronage processes is not the preferred approach and could lead to a number of unintended consequences and be administratively difficult to implement.

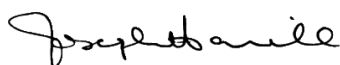
One of the approaches discussed was that a successful patron, once appointed, could consider whether, in circumstances where the permanent location of the new school is located in close proximity to the boundary of a school planning area, there is a case to be made to add an additional priority enrolment area which takes into account relevant geographical factors. The Group considers that the Department's proposal to raise this at the 2020 patron workshop for the consideration of patron bodies with a view to potential implementation of any changes in future processes should be pursued.

In relation to language preferences, the Group notes that in the case of all six schools, there were some parental preferences for Irish-medium education but none of these are considered to be at a level at which would indicate that a Gaelcholáiste should be established. In the four areas where the demand is considered low, the Group notes that the Department has examined existing Irish-medium provision at post-primary level in the school planning area(s) concerned and adjacent school planning areas and that the Department considers that this existing provision should be capable of absorbing the level of demand. In relation to the two areas where parental preferences as part of the OPPS is considered moderate or significant, the Group notes that the Department has examined existing Irish-medium provision at post-primary level and transfer patterns from gaelscoileanna to these schools and welcomes that the Department intends to analyse and review this further and to engage immediately with the patrons of the two new schools to consider whether the level of demand would be better catered for in existing Irish-medium Gaelcholáistí or whether an Aonad should be established in the new school or in a suitable location within the school planning area(s) concerned, and the timing of same.

The Group also notes that the Department continues to make good progress in relation to consideration of Irish-medium preferences and a number of measures were recently announced to increase access to Irish-medium education as part of the patronage process for primary schools, including the designation for Irish-medium education of five new primary schools being established from 2020-2022.

The Group would like to thank your Department's Forward Planning Section for its positive engagement on these matters and to again acknowledge the expert and professional manner in which it presented its assessments to the Group in the cases under review.

Yours sincerely



**Joe Hamill**  
**Chairperson**  
**New Schools Establishment Group**