



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

**Patronage Assessment Report
Post-Primary Schools
(2020)**

**Report to the New Schools Establishment Group
Forward Planning Section
Department of Education & Skills
November 2019**

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1. Foreword

Chairperson,
New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG).

Dear Chairperson,

On the 13th April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next 4 years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the current and future need for primary and post-primary school places across the country, with 26 new schools announced at primary level and 16 new schools announced at post-primary level (see Appendix A for details).

The new post-primary school to serve the Kilcoole & Greystones school planning area as a regional solution was initially announced to be established in 2021. Due to increased projected enrolments and capacity constraints in the area, the school will now be established in September 2020 and is included in this patronage process.

On the 19th August, 2019, the Minister invited applications for the patronage of the six new post-primary schools due to be established in September 2020 in the following areas:

School Planning Area	School Size*
Enfield (Kilcock School Planning Area)	500 pupils
Blanchardstown_West_D15 & BlanchardstownVge_D15 (Regional Solution)	800 pupils
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W (Regional Solution)	1,000 pupils
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	800 pupils
Citywest/Saggart (Tallaght & Newcastle_Rathcoole school planning areas) (Regional Solution)	1,000 pupils
Kilcoole & Greystones (Regional Solution)	800 pupils

**based on current projected need but will be responsive to patronage or demographic demand*

The closing date for receipt of applications from applicant patron bodies was 28th August 2019. On 9th September 2019, the Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) website went live for parents to express their patronage preferences in respect of the new schools to be established in 2020 and closed on 4th October 2019 at midnight. The applicant patrons for each school are as follows:

School Planning Area	Applicant Patrons
Enfield (Kilcock school planning area)	An Foras Pátrúnachta Educate Together Le Chéile Schools Trust Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) Scoil Sínead Limited
Blanchardstown_West D15 & BlanchardstownVge_D15 (Regional Solution)	An Foras Pátrúnachta Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) Educate Together Islamic Foundation of Ireland Scoil Sínead Limited

School Planning Area	Applicant Patrons
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W (Regional Solution)	An Foras Pátrúnachta City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB) Educate Together Scoil Sinéad Limited
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	An Foras Pátrúnachta Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) Educate Together Scoil Sinéad Limited
Citywest/Saggart (Tallaght & Newcastle_Rathcoole school planning areas) (Regional Solution)	An Foras Pátrúnachta Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust (Ceist) Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) Educate Together Scoil Sinéad Limited
Kilcoole & Greystones (Regional Solution)	An Foras Pátrúnachta Educate Together Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) Scoil Sinéad Limited

Code of Conduct

In relation to the Patron Code of Conduct, a number of issues were raised with the Department by members of the public regarding elements of the campaigns of several applicant patron bodies. Having reviewed the issues raised as well as patron expenditure, there was one technical breach of the expenditure limit by one patron body in one area by less than €10. Further details in relation to the relevant issues is provided in Section 2 of this report for consideration and discussion at the NSEG meeting.

Given the benefit in engaging with Patrons in the Patron Workshop and subsequent improvements in relation to the adherence to the Code of Conduct, it is proposed that the Department will conduct a further workshop in 2020 to continue this useful stakeholder engagement and feedback process.

Update for NSEG on developments related to the patronage process

The Department arranged a stakeholder consultation event with patron bodies on 5th April 2019. Thirty representatives from 25 organisations participated. This consultation, which took the form of a workshop, was organised to provide an opportunity to work through a number of practical matters, including the Patron Code of Conduct, so that future patronage processes can be informed by both recent experience and input from patron bodies. Following the workshop, some changes, of which the NSEG is already aware, were made to the Code of Conduct.

The afternoon session focused on Irish-medium related matters. As the OPPS moves out of its pilot phase and further to the Department's consultation with the NSEG, An Coimisinéir Teanga, school patrons and other stakeholders, the Department has been working on how Irish-medium education can

be further provided for in patronage processes, having regard to national policy and objectives in relation to the Irish language.

In this regard, on 3rd September last, the Minister for Education and Skills announced measures to increase access to Irish-medium education as part of the patronage process for primary schools, including that five new primary schools being established from 2020-2022 are being designated for Irish-medium education. As part of the announcement, Minister McHugh confirmed that the Department has developed a framework to provide more opportunities to increase the provision of Irish-medium education at primary level through new schools and expansion of existing gaelscoileanna.

The framework includes:

1. Designating the language of the school as Irish in some circumstances, prior to running the OPPS;
2. Testing (on a pilot basis) the potential to cater for demand for English and Irish medium provision through, for example, delivering two 8-classroom schools (one English-medium and one Irish-medium) in a shared building/campus rather than delivering one 16-classroom school, subject to factors such as demand and site conditions;
3. Exploring the potential to expand existing Irish-medium schools to meet unmet demand in an area;
4. Providing opportunities for patrons of existing schools to change the language of instruction from English to Irish, such as is envisaged as part of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process.

In situations where there may be some unmet demand for Irish-medium education, albeit not at a level where the outcome of the patronage process would be a Gaelscoil, the measures outlined above provide a framework of factors to be considered and avenues to be explored in this regard. The Department intends to adopt this approach for the upcoming patronage process for the primary schools to be established in September 2020. See Section 4 of this Report for more details.

School Planning Areas

A matter for consideration has arisen in recent patronage processes, including in the current process, relating to school planning area boundaries. This issue arises predominantly in areas where the permanent location of the proposed new school is situated close to the boundary of an adjacent school planning area. Further details are provided at Section 5 of this report for consideration and discussion at the NSEG meeting.

The role of the NSEG is to oversee the patronage decision making process and to ensure that the process is implemented correctly and in line with the published criteria. Following consideration of the Department's patronage assessment reports, the NSEG is tasked with submitting a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision.

Consistent with the arrangements governing the patronage process for new schools announced by the Minister in June 2011, the Department has completed its assessment of the applications received for patronage of the new post-primary schools to be established in 2020. This is the resulting report for the New Schools Establishment Group, which is submitted for consideration by the Group. A detailed assessment of each individual area is attached and forms part of this report.

**Jill Fannin,
Principal Officer
Forward Planning Section - Department of Education and Skills
12th November 2019**

2. Patron Code of Conduct

Following on from the Patron Workshop, as set out in the Department's correspondence with the NSEG on 27th August last, a number of amendments were made to the Patron Code of Conduct (attached at Appendix D to this report). These included clarifying the position in relation to enrolment policies of schools and setting out that patrons should not make statements that might lead to an expectation by parents of access to a particular school. In addition, in relation to patron expenses, generic and general information have been excluded and expenses have been limited to those related to targeted promotional material or events.

Following the Patron Workshop and amended Code of Conduct, there has been a notable improvement in relation to adherence to the Code by Patron bodies. In the current process, the Department did not receive any notifications of breaches directly from individual patron bodies. A number of complaints were received from members of the public as set out in Section 2.2 below.

➤ 2.1 Patron Expenses

The Code of Conduct requires that patrons agree to maintain expenditure on promotional material within overall limits established for each identified area and provide statements of expenditure for the purpose of satisfying these requirements. The expenditure limits are €500 (incl. VAT).

One patron body in one area may have exceeded the limits set out in the Code of Conduct by a small amount i.e. less than €10. In addition, a number of patron bodies did not submit the supporting documentation and/or subsequent clarifications within the required timeframe. This led to a delay in preparation of this report to the NSEG.

Further details of the above will be provided to the NSEG for consideration.

➤ 2.2 Issues raised in relation to the Code of Conduct

The below issues were brought to the attention of the Department by members of the public during the course of the current patronage process:

Patron body	School Planning Area	Summary of Issues Raised
An Foras Pátrúnachta	Kilcoole & Greystones	The Department received e-mail complaints from parents in the area in relation to alleged breaches of the Patron Code of Conduct. The substance of the complaints received relates to An Foras Pátrúnachta allegedly advising parents that, in the event of securing patronage of the new post-primary school for Kilcoole and Greystones school planning areas, enrolment preference/priority will be afforded to pupils of Gaelscoileanna, regardless of whether the children attending such schools reside outside of the Kilcoole and Greystones school planning areas.

Educate Together	Kilcoole & Greystones	The Department received e-mail complaints from parents in the area in relation to alleged breaches of the Patron Code of Conduct. The substance of the complaints received relates to campaign activities by local campaigners / representatives of Educate Together.
Kildare Wicklow Education & Training Board	Kilcoole & Greystones	The Department received an email complaint from a parent in the area in relation to alleged breach of the Patron Code of Conduct in the above patronage process. The substance of the complaint received relates to door-to-door campaigning for KWETB.
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board	Citywest/Saggart	The Department received a number of e-mails from parents in the area in relation to a Facebook post by St. Mary's GFC. The post allegedly related to DDLETB having recently met with representatives of the Club and having advised them that, in the event of securing patronage of the new post-primary school, there is a potential of DDLETB assisting the Club to address their shortfall in facilities. Several of the complaints also make reference to a group "Future West" having met with a Minister which consisted of ETB campaigners only.
Educate Together	Citywest/Saggart	The Department received an email and a phone call complaints from a parent in the area in relation to alleged breaches of the Patron Code of Conduct in the above patronage process. The substance of the complaint received relates to campaign expenditure limits, benefit-in-kind and to campaign activities by local campaigners / representatives of Educate Together.
Louth and Meath Education and Training Board	Enfield (Kilcock school planning area)	The Department received an e-mail from a parent in the area, in relation to an alleged breach of the Patron Code of Conduct in the above patronage process. The substance of the complaint received relates to activities by a local campaign group in support of the LMETB model.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to discuss the above in detail with the NSEG at the meeting of the Group and will provide the relevant correspondence and responses received from the patron bodies in question. As set out above, the Department intends to hold a further Patron Workshop in 2020 to engage further with the relevant stakeholders in relation to the feedback received and learning from the operation of the Code during the patronage processes for the 2020 schools.

3. Parental Preferences

Parental preferences for patronage and language of instruction, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process. The OPSS website allows parents to access the appropriate survey for their area, to input the details of the eligible child(ren) and to select their preferred patron and language of instruction.

➤ 3.1 Eligible Cohort

In the 2018/19 school year, there were some 22,500 children in the eligible cohort i.e. first to fifth class in the primary schools across the relevant school planning areas. However, not all of these will wish to or be eligible to express a preference. In most cases, parents may intend sending their child to an existing post-primary school in the area and as a result would not have considered it necessary to express a preference with regard to patronage of the new school.

The Department is satisfied that the percentage of valid preferences expressed in relation to the six new post-primary schools to be established in 2020 (ranging from some 8% to 30% of the eligible cohort) is of a comparable level to valid preferences expressed in relation to the previous primary patronage processes for schools that were established between 2014 and 2018 (ranging from some 1% to 44% of the eligible cohort).

In the current patronage process for the six post primary schools to be established in 2020, there were between 203 and 834 valid preferences for each of the six areas.

➤ 3.2 Verification of Preferences

The Department has put in place a verification process based primarily on data held in the Department's enrolment databases. Invalid preferences in each of the areas were discounted where:

- The parent submitted duplicates of preferences in relation to an individual child (in which instance the last complete preference was considered the final preference in respect of that child).
- The PPSN was not a valid PPSN and/or was not a valid PPSN relative to the information provided;
- The parent did not actually complete and submit their preferences;
- The parent did not select a preferred patron; and / or
- The child was enrolled in a class group outside of the eligible cohort i.e. not enrolled in 1st to 5th class in a primary school in the 2018/19 school year.

4. Language

➤ 4.1 Stakeholder Consultation

At the workshop which took place in April 2019, Irish-medium related issues at primary and post-primary level were the focus of the afternoon session.

The themes discussed were as follows:

- Parental preferences for Irish-medium education in patronage processes, and how these can be further considered in future patronage processes;
- Balancing parental preferences for Irish-medium education and the analysis of existing provision;
- Scope for expanding existing Irish-medium provision where demand is not sufficient to warrant a new Irish-medium school;
- Interaction between language of instruction and ethos of Irish-medium schools; and

- English-medium applicant patrons indicating a willingness to provide Irish-medium schools.

There were varying views expressed on the matters explored. It was clear from the discussion and from the feedback, that there are no clear-cut solutions which all parties considered would address the various matters to the satisfaction of all. What emerged from the workshop was a sense that there is no ideal solution and that a one size fits all approach would not be appropriate. The context of each area needs to be taken into account and factors such as demographic projections, parental views, existing provision, value for money and long term sustainability, including avoiding schools having too much capacity, need to be balanced, along with providing sufficient choices for parents where feasible.

➤ 4.2 Assessment

As referenced in the patronage process reports for the 2019 post-primary schools, following consideration of feedback from patrons on previous patronage processes, the Department incorporated the language of instruction of a proposed new school as part of the assessment process. This makes parental preference for Irish-medium instruction at post-primary level an integral part of the patronage assessment and recommendation process. It serves to inform decisions concerning a school's language of instruction and brings greater visibility to consideration of the level of demonstrated demand for education through Irish.

It is open to all applicant patrons to propose provision of English or Irish-medium education. Applicant patrons are also required to confirm their commitment to provide an Aonad where there is demand for it in an English-medium school. Parental preferences for each patron, together with the extent of Irish provision, if any, currently available in the area, are key in relation to the outcome of this process. In this regard, parents, in expressing their preferences, were requested to indicate their preference for the language through which they would prefer their child(ren) to be educated.

The assessment process analyses existing Irish-medium provision in the area and also takes into account existing Irish-medium provision in the adjacent school planning areas. Consideration is given to demonstrated demand and long-term sustainability, including provision of a sufficient range of subjects. This assists the consideration in terms of whether a new post-primary school should take the form of a Gaelcholáiste (a post-primary where the language of instruction is Irish), an English-medium school or an English-medium school with an Aonad (Irish-medium Unit).

In many cases, there can be some parental preferences for Irish-medium education but these preferences may not be at a level at which the outcome of the OPPS would be to establish a Gaelcholáiste. This is the case in relation to all six new schools which form part of this patronage process. The details in this regard are set out in the individual reports. In four of the areas, the demand as part of the OPPS is considered low, (examining the percentage and the actual number of parental preferences). In one of the areas, the demand is considered moderate (15.9% - representing 130 parental preferences) and in one area the demand is considered significant (32.7% - representing 172 parental preferences). In all cases, the Department has considered the existing provision in the area: the Irish-medium primary schools (gaelscoileanna) and potential output from these and the Irish-medium provision at post-primary level, whether in an Irish-medium Gaelcholáiste or in an Aonad.

In the case of the four schools, where the OPPS parental demand expressed is considered low, following an examination of existing Gaelcholáiste and/or Aonaid in the school planning area(s) concerned and adjacent school planning areas, the Department considers that the existing Irish-medium provision at post-primary level should be capable of absorbing this level of demand.

In two of the areas, the Department considers that further analysis and engagement with the patron of the new school would be beneficial in considering whether the level of parental demand as indicated by the OPPS can be catered for in existing Irish-medium Gaelcholáistí in the area 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 Department acknowledges the views of some stakeholders in relation to the challenges with Aonad provision. However, the Department considers that Aonaid remain part of the solution in relation to providing Irish-medium post-primary education for students who wish to avail of such education, where parental preferences for Irish-medium education are not at a level to support the new post-primary school taking the form of an Irish-medium Gaelcholáiste. The Department has had engagement with stakeholders in relation to the development of Aonaid and such engagement is continuing.

While the aim of an Aonad is to provide second-level education through the medium of Irish, in practice, the subjects and education provision in an Aonad and the extent of immersion in the Irish language can vary from school to school, reflecting local circumstances. While operational matters relating to Aonaid are a matter for school authorities to manage in the first instance, in accordance with available resources and any relevant regulations, the Minister for Education and Skills has acknowledged that it is desirable that, where possible, full immersion education would be provided in Aonaid.

5. School Planning Areas

As indicated in the foreword to this report, queries have been raised in relation to the impact of the boundaries of school planning areas on patronage processes and future school enrolments.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, the Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise.

The school planning areas are used in the demographic exercise as a basis for the assessment of areas of growth and to inform recommendations on the establishment of any new schools required in that school planning area.

New schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required, in the first instance, to prioritise pupil applications from within the designated school planning area(s) which the school was established to serve. This does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the designated school planning area where they have sufficient places. The Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in the area.

➤ 5.1 Issues Raised

The Department has received a number of communications from parents and campaign groups about the impact of school planning area boundaries on the eligibility of parents to express a preference in patronage processes and on future enrolment of children, given the requirement on patron bodies to prioritise enrolment from within school planning areas. These concerns arise primarily where the permanent location of the proposed new school is close to the boundary of an adjacent school planning area and in circumstances where children are resident close to the permanent location for the school but will not be afforded priority over those who may live further away from the permanent location of the school but are resident within the designated school planning area.

For example, the new post-primary school to serve the Kilcock School Planning is to be located in the Enfield area which is located on the western side of the Kilcock school planning area. While it is likely that the new school will be more attractive, generally, to those living in proximity to it, as opposed to those living in/near Kilcock or further away in the school planning area, children within the school planning area will be afforded priority for enrolment. In this scenario, children who are resident in the

Enfield area, but are located within, for example, the adjacent Longwood school planning area would not be prioritised for enrolment over those children resident in Kilcock town which is some 12km from the permanent location of the school in Enfield. This issue has arisen in a number of other areas, such as in the case of the new schools to be located in Harold's Cross, which is very close to areas of the Dublin_8 and Dolphin's Barn_D12 school planning areas.

The Department does not consider that the revision of school planning areas nationally will necessarily resolve the issue as the impact would be significant, the process would be cumbersome and in any event, would likely still result in families living outside redrawn school planning area perimeters seeking access to a new school.

It is proposed that the NSEG would consider the issue and explore some potential approaches and that, subject to the NSEG's views, certain approaches could be raised with patron bodies at the 2020 Patron Workshop with a view to potential implementation in future processes.

6. Summary of Assessments

The criteria considered in the patronage assessment process was notified to applicant patrons in Enclosure 1 of the Patron Invitation Letter (included in Appendix B to this report). This criteria includes *inter alia* consideration of parental preferences as well as the extent or range of diversity of patronage, including ethos and language of instruction, offered across existing schools in the area. An assessment of each area is attached to this report and a summary of the outcome of each assessment is set out in the table below:

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

**It is proposed that 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.*

Forward Planning Section
Department of Education & Skills
November 2019