Clarification of patronage models for the new second level schools.

As part of the recent process of briefing patrons in relation to applications for patronage of the new schools, a number of queries were raised with the Department about possible applications for patronage which involve partnerships between two or more patrons. These issues chiefly concerned the particular patronage model that would apply where two or more patrons intended to have a joint or co-patronage role or arrangement in any of the new schools. The Department undertook to examine the issues further and then issue clarification on the matter. The policy position in this area has now been clarified for the patrons and this is set out below. It will be noted that the policy does not preclude applications from any potential patron and it clearly sets out the model of patronage that VECs can enter into on a partnership basis with other patrons.

1. Patronage model applicable where there is no involvement by a VEC in the patronage of the school:

The position where the patrons are all private bodies (i.e., none of them is a VEC) is straightforward in that the joint patronage model would be under the existing voluntary secondary school model.

2. Patronage models applicable where one of the patrons involved is a VEC:

The patronage models applicable where VECs are engaging in a partnership role in the patronage of any new second-level schools are specific to the particular partnership arrangements as set out below.

VECs may make applications for patronage on a partnership basis as follows:

(a) Partnership with a national patron body such as either Educate Together or An Foras Patrúnachta will be through the use of either a development of the existing designated community college model or a new community school model (the current community school model provides for joint patronage with denominational patrons only and will need to be revised accordingly);

(b) Partnership with individual Catholic patron bodies (such as a trust, order or Diocese) will be through the use of the existing designated community college model;

(c) Partnership with individual Protestant patron bodies (such as a Diocese) will be through the use of a development of the designated community college model.
In the case of options (b) and (c) above, the VEC and any denominational partner may, at a later date, opt to change to a new community school patronage model provided (i) the VEC and the denominational partner both agree to the change, and (ii) only when a single national Catholic patron body or Protestant patron body for community schools is in place. The Department’s policy approach is for a single national Catholic patron body to represent all of the Catholic trustee interests in the existing community schools.

Any new school in which a VEC has a role as a patron would be open on an equal basis to all applications for entry from those pupils living in the area served by the school and, should the school be oversubscribed, there should be a lottery (or other equally fair process) to determine who is offered a place.

The Department plans to develop a new patronage agreement for any new community schools which will build upon the patronage part of the deed of trust in place for the existing community schools. This will deal with any inflexibility in the existing deed of trust and will continue to require that a community school is open to all children in the area.

3. **Application deadline:** The current deadline for the receipt of applications for patronage of the new second-level schools to be established in 2013 and 2014 is Friday, 13th January 2012. Given that prospective patrons will need some time to consider possible applications and the options for co-operation with each other, it is now proposed to allow an extra 6 weeks for this and therefore the deadline for receipt of applications is being moved to **Friday 24th February 2012**.

4. **Notification of intent:** It was agreed that the Department would seek indications from patrons/ prospective patrons about which schools each patron body plans to make applications for so that the information can be made available on the Department's website and also to inform the local media in areas where the schools are to be established. This is with a view to ensuring that there is full local awareness of the processes underway in regard to the new post-primary schools to be established. In this regard patrons/ prospective patrons have been asked to now inform the Department as to which areas they intend to apply for patronage of the new schools to be established.

The deadline of **close of business on Friday, 13th January 2012** is set for receipt of the notification of the **areas where patrons intend to make applications** so that the Department can compile the list of applicant patrons in each area and make it publicly available. Notifications should be sent to Forward Planning Section of the Department of Education and Skills.

**Forward Planning Section**

**1st December 2011.**