

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR PATRONAGE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS due to open in September 2016**

### **NEED FOR NEW SCHOOL**

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

- The demographics of the area must support the need for the establishment of a new school (or where meeting demographic need through the extension of existing schools would leave an unmet demand for diversity of patronage)
- 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 primary school:

- The Department will proactively identify the areas where significant additional school accommodation is required.
- Identification of locations of new schools and sizes of new schools by the Department.
- In concluding as to whether a demographic need might be met through extension projects in local schools, the Department should not seek to extend accommodation in existing schools of a certain patronage, where there is a certain level of demand for patronage of a different type in that area.
- 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 criteria considered in the patronage assessment process are the following:

- The development already achieved by recently-established schools of a particular patronage in the identified area and the potential for future growth of these schools;
- The extent or range of diversity of patronage offered across existing schools in the identified area, having regard to the views of parents;
- The proximity of schools of similar ethos to those proposed by the applicant patrons;
- How the proposed schools under the respective patrons would provide for extending or strengthening diversity of provision in each area, having regard to the views of parents;
- Parental demand for the school that a patron is willing to establish;
- The extent to which schools of similar patronage in the area have already expanded to at least three streams (subject to space on an existing site etc.);
- In an area to be served by a single school, the extent to which the needs of all pupils in the area can be met by the school.

#### **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 start school within the next five years i.e. 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020 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. A template for submission of parental demand will be provided for this purpose, and all information must be presented in this format only.

#### **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 prioritise enrolment of children in the area 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 have up to three streams subject to demand for the school;
- 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 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, Appendix A outlines general information for prospective patrons on the requirements to be put in place.

Department of Education and Skills  
February 2016

## **APPENDIX A**

### **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 have charitable status.

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.