

New Arrangements for patronage of new schools

Primary

The following key elements will apply to the establishment of a new primary school:

- The demographics of the area must support the need for the establishment of a new school (or where meeting the demographics 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.

Most new schools must have the capacity to accept at least one full class group of pupils at junior infant level and to increase capacity up to three full streams as needed subject to demographics and parental demand in the area.

The following requirements will have to be satisfied by prospective school patrons:

- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to accept and open special education facilities;
- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to have up to three streams subject to demand for the school;
- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to enter into the standard lease agreement with the Department of Education and Skills. Otherwise the prospective patron could provide their own school site;
- Confirmation of willingness 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;
- Confirmation of willingness to operate the school within the resourcing and policy parameters established by the Department of Education and Skills
- Confirmation of willingness to be part of a campus development with other primary or second-level schools as identified by the Department;
- Confirmation of willingness to enrol children in the area for whom the Department has identified the need for a school.

The criteria to be considered in deciding on patronage 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.

The process will involve the following steps at primary level:

- 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 News 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

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 who indicate interest in having their children educated in their new school. These lists are to be broken down by the age of the children, including year of proposed entry to school, and by where they are living, having regard for the area to be served by the school. A template for submission of parental demand will be provided for this purpose, and all information must be presented in this format only.

Department of Education and Skills
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