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Report for New Schools Establishment Group

Patronage for New Primary Schools for September 2014

September 2013

Contents

	Page
Foreword	3
Recommendations (summary)	4
Basis for recommendations	5
Appendices	
Appendix 1	
New Arrangements for patronage of new schools	7
Appendix 2	
Summary of Current School Types in the Irish Primary Education Sector	9
Attachments – Assessment Reports	
Attachment 1 – Middleton/Carrigtohill – assessment report	
Attachment 2 – Dublin (Fingal) Swords – assessment report	
Attachment 3 – Dublin (South) Sandymount/Ringsend – assessment report	
Attachment 4 – Galway (City West) Knocknacarra – assessment report	

Foreword

Mr. Seamus McGuinness,
Chairperson,
New Schools Establishment Group.

Dear Mr. McGuinness,

On 22 April, 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills invited applications for the patronage of four new primary schools due to commence operation in September 2014. The closing date for receipt of applications from patron/prospective patron bodies was 14 June, 2013. The areas to be served by the four new schools are:

County	Area to be served	School size
Cork	Middleton/Carrigtohill	*Up to 16 classrooms
Dublin (Fingal)	Swords	*Up to 16 classrooms
Dublin (South)	Sandymount/Ringsend	*Up to 16 classrooms
**Galway (City West)	Knocknacarra	*Up to 16 classrooms

* Up to 16 classrooms i.e. 2 junior infant intakes

**The new school in Galway City West was previously announced to open in September 2013 but with the question of patronage undecided at that time. The decision was taken to re-run the patronage determination process for this school this year.

The establishment of the new schools for 2014 is the continuation of a process which began in June 2011 when the Minister announced that 20 primary schools and 20 new post-primary schools were to be established up to 2017 across a number of locations to cater for increasing pupil numbers.

The criteria for recognition of new schools was also set out at that time, details of which are contained in Appendix A.

Of the 20 new primary to be built in coming years, seven opened in September 2012 and six more are due to open this coming September (patronage of 2 of the schools, Mallow and Carpenterstown, has previously been determined).

The New Schools Establishment Group, an independent advisory group, is tasked with advising the Minister on the patronage of the new schools following its consideration of a report prepared by Department officials.

This is the report for the New Schools Establishment Group for the four new primary schools to be established in 2014 where patronage has yet to be determined. The Report is submitted for the Group's consideration please.

Jacky Hynes,
Assistant Principal,
Department of Education and Skills
September, 2013.

Recommendations - summary

An assessment of each individual application by area is attached to this report. A summary of the Department's recommendations contained in those assessment reports is as follows:

County	Area	Recommended Patron Body /other recommendation
Cork	Middleton/Carrigtohill	Defer establishment of the school.
Dublin (Fingal)	Swords	Review the need to establish the school in 2014 in consultation with existing patrons in the area. If deemed necessary, re-run the patronage determination process for a 2014 start up.
Dublin (South)	Sandymount/Ringsend	Educate Together
Galway (City West)	Knocknacarra	Educate Together. However, approval should initially be given for an 8 classroom school for this patron body. Consider the establishment of a further 8-classroom school in 2015 under the patronage of Lifeways Ireland subject to further prior confirmation that parental demand will support this model and size of school adequately at that time.

Basis for the Department's recommendations

Middleton/Carrigtohill

Applications were received from two patron bodies to operate this school – Educate Together and the Cork Education and Training Board (application originally made by County Cork VEC). As the models proposed by the applicants do not appear, either separately or jointly, to enjoy a level of parental support sufficient to establish a viable school, the Department recommends that the establishment of a new school for Middleton/ Carrigtohill be deferred. The Department also recommends that the situation in Middleton/Carrigtohill be kept under review with the patronage determination process being re-run in 2015 if this is appropriate. In re-running the process the Department will discuss, with prospective patrons, possible means of promoting greater awareness of and participation in the process among parents.

Dublin Fingal - Swords

Applications were received from two patron/prospective patron bodies to operate this school – the Educational Society of Ireland (prospective patron body) and the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (application originally made by County Dublin VEC).

It is clear that the models proposed by the applicants do not have sufficient parental support to sustain either a school of the size required to cater for the increasing demographics of the area (16 classrooms) or two individual eight-classroom schools. The establishment of a school on foot of the applications received could, therefore, leave a large level of unmet demand for school places.

In the circumstances, the recommendation made to the NSEG is that the Department should review the need to establish the school in 2014 with existing patrons in the area.

If deemed necessary, the patronage determination process should be re-run for the establishment of the school in 2014, otherwise defer until 2015. In re-running the process the Department will discuss, with prospective patrons, possible means of promoting greater awareness of and participation in the process among parents.

Dublin (South) – Sandymount/Ringsend

Applications were received from three patron/prospective patron bodies to operate this school – An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Educational Society of Ireland (prospective patron) and Educate Together.

On the basis that An Foras Pátrúnachta and the Educational Society of Ireland have not demonstrated viable parental support for their model types and that the evidence of parental preference for the Educate Together model is very strong, the Department recommends that patronage for the new school should be awarded to Educate Together.

Galway (City West) – Knocknacarra

Applications were received from three patron bodies to operate this school – Lifeways Ireland Limited, Educate Together and the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (original application made by City of Galway VEC).

In assessing the applications the Department was mindful of the fact that there were very similar levels of demand overall demonstrated by both Lifeways Ireland Limited and Educate Together, albeit that the demonstrated demand for the Educate Together model was stronger in year one and year two of operation. The overall parental demand demonstrated in both the Lifeways Ireland Limited and Educate Together application was at a significantly higher level than the demand demonstrated in the application from the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board.

Given that the level of demand for the Educate Together model is stronger in the earlier years of the school's development than that for Lifeways Ireland Limited, the Department recommends that patronage for the new school to commence in 2014 be awarded to Educate Together.

However, approval should be given for a single stream, eight-classroom school only initially.

Consideration of the establishment of a further single stream, eight-classroom school to commence in 2015 under the patronage of Lifeways Ireland Limited should be subject to prior confirmation that parental demand will adequately support this model and school size at that time.

If a sustainable support base for the Lifeways Ireland Limited model does not materialise, the Educate Together school will be required to increase capacity to a two stream, 16 classroom school i.e. two junior infant intakes.

The Department does not generally recommend the commencement of two schools of similar ethos in the same area at the same time in order to avoid competition between them and the possible undermining of one or other of the schools. Hence, the recommendation for the possible commencement of two schools in consecutive years.

Other information

The Department notes that all applicants have agreed and undertaken to meet the Department's requirements and rules in relation to the establishment and operation of the schools. New schools receive temporary recognition initially to safeguard the interests of pupils, parents and all interested parties in this regard. Details of the requirements to be satisfied by prospective school patrons are provided in Appendix A attached.

Appendix A

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.

Appendix B

Summary of Current School Types in the Irish Primary Education Sector

Historically Irish schools catered for a relatively homogenous group of pupils and came under the patronage of a small number of religious groups. Since the 1970s a number of developments have taken place in response to a greater demand for diversity. Traditionally the ethos of most primary schools has been religious with over 90% being under the patronage of the Catholic Church. As the profile of the population has changed so has the patronage system changed with a subsequent increase in a diverse range of school types.

The history of the patronage system has meant that the educational philosophy of the patron, be it religious or linguistic, translates into a distinctive character of the education provided in the school. A variety of terms has been used to describe this distinctive character of a school:

- Ethos
- Characteristic spirit
- Mission
- Purpose
- Philosophy

The Department of Education and Skills currently classifies primary schools as denominational, inter-denominational and multi-denominational offering education through the medium of English or Irish (all-Irish schools in Gaeltacht areas and all-Irish schools outside of Gaeltacht areas). A description of each category and the main types of schools currently within each category is outlined below. In addition a description of Gaelscoileanna is also outlined below.

1. **Denominational schools**

The majority of denominational schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. The other main denominational schools currently recognised by the Department are Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish and Quaker schools.

Schools under the patronage of the main religious beliefs operate an ethos in accordance with the main principles of that particular religion/ belief system. In many cases this includes faith formation during the school day. In the context of the Education Act 1998, the Department of Education & Skills recognises the rights of the various church authorities to design curricula in religious education in primary schools and to supervise their teaching and implementation and the Act makes provision for the teaching of religious education and religious instruction in these schools. Denominational schools support the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

2. **Multi-Denominational schools**

Religion may be taught as part of the school day or may be taught outside of the school day. The main types of multi-denominational schools currently recognised by the Department are Educate Together Schools, Community National Schools, Lifeways Ireland/Steiner National Schools, and the John Scottus National School. A brief description of the school type of each patron currently in the Irish primary education sector is outlined below:

Educate Together National Schools – Educate Together define their ethos as multi-denominational, i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected. The schools do not provide for any faith formation or religious observance during school hours but do facilitate faith formation on school premises outside of school hours.

Educate Together delivers an Ethical Education programme entitled “Learn Together”. This programme specifically addresses the Educate Together ethos.

Community National Schools - The Community National School (CNS) is a new model of primary school patronage which is being developed in a pilot mode since late 2008 in which the State is directly involved in the provision of primary education.

The schools are multi-belief and welcome and respect children of all beliefs and none. They recognise and aim to accommodate the wishes of parents to have their children receive religious education and faith formation in the school setting within the school day. A multi-belief programme, called *Goodness Me! Goodness You!* providing for the delivery of religious education and faith formation in the CNSs, is being developed on an action research basis over the course of the pilot.

Lifeways Ireland/Steiner National Schools – Based on the work of scientist and philosopher Rudolf Steiner this form of education began in 1919 with the founding of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany. Steiner Waldorf schools offer an academic and practical education which is multi-denominational and co-educational. Classes in religious doctrine are not part of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and children of all religious backgrounds attend Steiner Waldorf schools.

3. **Gaelscoileanna**

In common with all schools, Gaelscoileanna follow the standard curriculum as set by the Department of Education and Skills. Irish is the teaching language in the school and the language of communication between the teachers, the students, the parents and the board of management. The principal aim of Irish-medium schools is to provide excellence in education and the ethos of Irish-medium schools helps to keep Irish as a living language in the community.

In terms of ethos, a gaelscoil can be denominational, multi-denominational or inter-denominational depending on the local circumstances.

4. Special Schools

Special schools meet the educational needs of pupils whose needs could not be adequately catered for in ordinary primary schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The Council was first established as an independent statutory body by order of the Minister for Education and Science in December 2003. NCSE's local service is delivered through a national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs.