

Mr. Richard Bruton TD
Minister for Education and Skills
Department of Education and Skills
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

12 May 2016

**Report of the New Schools Establishment Group on the Patronage of Primary Schools
Scheduled to Commence in September 2016**

Dear Minister Bruton,

As members of the above named group, we are pleased to present you with our report on the patronage of new primary schools due to open in September 2016.

Our role was outlined in a Ministerial announcement of June 27, 2011. That announcement also included the criteria and arrangements for the recognition of new schools and the membership of the New Schools Establishment Group to advise the Minister on the patronage of new schools, following its consideration of an assessment report prepared by the Forward Planning Section of your Department.

On 16 February last, the Department informed patrons/prospective patrons of the details of the three primary schools to be established in 2016 and invited them to make applications for consideration of patronage of these schools. The closing date for receipt of these applications was 24 March 2016.

The Forward Planning Section carried out an assessment of the applications received and on 25 April 2015 the initial draft assessments were forwarded to our Group for consideration. A meeting was convened on 27 April 2015 with the officials from Forward Planning Section. At this meeting discussions took place on the process of examining the submissions and arriving at assessments. In the course of further discussion we recommended that a small number of minor amendments and clarifications be made to the assessments.

The Group has considered the revised assessments made with regard to the patronage of the new primary schools to be established in 2016. The Group now confirms that the criteria as set out in 2011 by your Department were applied in a fair and transparent manner to the applications received. On that basis we are satisfied that the following recommendations regarding patronage of the new schools are in accord with these requirements and criteria, and give due regard to the levels of parental demand demonstrated in the applications.

The Group is satisfied to make the following recommendations to you in relation to new schools to commence in September 2016:

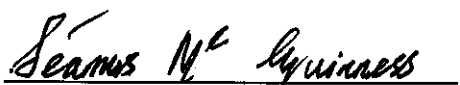
<u>School planning area</u>	<u>Recommended patron body</u>
Cabra/Phibsborough	- Educate Together
Drumcondra/Marino	- Educate Together
Goatstown/Stillorgan	- An Foras Pátrúnachta

The Group notes the strong level of demand for Irish-medium education in the Drumcondra/Marino area and recommends that this should be kept under review in the context of future demographic exercises.

Finally, the Group considers that the range and variety of bodies seeking patronage of new schools, while hugely welcome in extending parental choice, makes it significantly more challenging for parents in differentiating between different school types in exercising preferences within the patronage process. Terms such as denominational, non-denominational, inter-denominational, multi-denominational, multi-faith, multi-belief, equality-based and secular are all used on different occasions and in different contexts.

The Group acknowledges and affirms the rights of promoters to describe their own model and to distinguish it from other models. However, the Group recommends that the Department take a lead in developing some standardisation around the terminology and classification of schools in the interests of transparency so that parents can be entirely clear as to what they can expect during the school day in terms of ethos from each body seeking patronage of a school. These details should be published and readily available on the Department's website to assist parents in exercising preferences for patronage in a fully informed way.

The Group would like to thank the officials in Forward Planning Section for the assistance given throughout this process.


 Dr Séamus McGuinness,
 Chairperson
 New Schools Establishment Group