



19th November, 2019

Re: Invitation to apply for the establishment and patronage of new primary schools to open in 2020

Dear Patron/prospective Patron,

As you may be aware, in April 2018 the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over a four-year period from 2019 to 2022. This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the current and future need for primary and post-primary school places across the country.

As you are aware, as part of the recently announced measures to increase access to Irish-medium education as part of the patronage process, the new schools in Donabate and Newcastle_Rathcoole/Saggart will be designated Irish medium primary schools.

The following is the list of the four schools to open in 2020 for which a patronage process will be undertaken.

County	School Planning Area(s) to be served	School Size	Year of Opening	Language Position
Cork	Carrigaline	16 classrooms	2020	To be determined after the OPPS
Dublin	Donabate	16 classrooms	2020	Designated Gaelscoil
Dublin	Newcastle_Rathcoole/Saggart	8 classrooms	2020	Designated Gaelscoil
Dublin	Sallynoggin_Killiney_DLR/Cherrywood	16 classrooms	2020	To be determined after the OPPS

Each of the four schools is being established to meet a projected demographic need to cater for children living within the school planning area(s) to be served by the school and who are due to commence their primary education from 2020 onwards. Please see attached maps of each of the relevant school planning area(s) to be served.

Parental preferences are central to the patronage process. The process is designed to be fair, transparent and open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of any planned new school under this process, provided they meet the minimum requirements set down by the Department.



An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by the Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. Parents are also given an opportunity to express a preference for their child to be educated through the medium of Irish or English in areas where the language of the school has not been pre-determined. Parental preferences will be submitted by parents online.

The Patronage Process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of the Department's assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on the Department's website.

Please find attached (**Enclosure 1**), for information, a copy of the document "Arrangements for the establishment and patronage of new primary schools due to open in September 2020". This document also contains general information for applicant patrons (**Appendix A**) who are not already patrons of existing schools with regard to the requirements which must be satisfied in relation to any application under the patronage process. Please note that meeting the requirements in this document does not confer an automatic right to become a patron of a new school. However, failure to meet these requirements by the date of application may mean that an applicant patron cannot be included in the process.

Information on the mandatory Code of Conduct for patron bodies relating to canvassing parents for their particular preferred model of patronage, is provided in **Enclosure 2**. Please note that the maximum expenditure limits incorporates the total spend throughout the campaign.

Applicant patrons are reminded that the Code of Conduct is mandatory. It is important to note that a breach of the Code may render the patron's application invalid and result in elimination from the current patronage process.

It is the applicant patron's sole responsibility to:

- read in its entirety and understand all of the information provided; and
- ensure that their application is complete and is in compliance with the mandatory requirements and criteria as published.

If you wish to become a patron in any of the areas outlined above, you must complete the attached Patron Application Form in full. The deadline for receipt of applications, together with any required supporting documentation is **11a.m. on Friday 22nd November 2019**. Completed applications may also be scanned and emailed to patronapps@education.gov.ie. The original hard copy of the application form can follow by post to the address below and should be received no later than one week after the closing date.



The Department will not commence the assessment process of the Patron Application Forms until after the closing date for receipt of applications (**22nd November 2019**) and further contact cannot be made with applicants regarding the substance of their application after the closing date.

If you have any queries in relation to the above, please e-mail them to patronapps@education.gov.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Fannin
Principal Officer
Forward Planning Section

Enclosures:

- **Enclosure 1:** Arrangements for patronage in the establishment of new primary schools due to open in September 2020
 - Appendix A - General Information for Prospective Patrons

- **Enclosure 2:** Code of Conduct



Enclosure 1 - Arrangements for the Establishment and Patronage of New Primary Schools due to open in September 2020.

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 applicant patrons addressing all of the criteria.
- Consideration of the applications by Department officials and a report drafted for consideration by the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG).
- Consideration by Group of the report and endorsement by Group or identification of need for further analysis by Department and subsequent consideration by the 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 an applicant 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.

Most new school provision will be co-educational in nature and patronage decisions will be made on that basis. There may be a small number of instances where single-gender provision will need to be made if there is an identified imbalance between the capacities of single-gender schools. Any such identification would be made in advance of seeking applications from applicant patrons.

For most new schools, parents will be surveyed on language of preference. New schools will be designated as an Irish-medium Gaelscoil if there is no existing Irish-medium provision in the school planning area, or where a number of new schools are due to be established in the same school planning area, at least one of these schools will be designated as an Irish-medium school, unless there are particular local circumstances where this is not considered appropriate.

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

November 2019



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 be registered for charitable status with the Charities Regulatory Authority.

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.



Enclosure 2: Patron Code of Conduct

Please note that this Code of Conduct is MANDATORY

In this code, the term “patrons” refers to existing registered school patrons and prospective new patrons.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

Patrons may seek to directly canvass parents to encourage them to express a preference on the Online Patronage Preference System (OPPS).

Patrons and their representatives agree to provide factual information in respect of the underpinning ethos of schools under their patronage. In describing the ethos of schools under their patronage, patrons may identify agreed and well-understood distinguishing features of that ethos. No reference to, subjective statements about, direct commentary on, or description of, schools under other forms of patronage will be made. Contentious commentary, value statements or descriptions of schools under other forms of patronage will not be made.

While the limitation of the influence of patrons is recognised, nevertheless, it is expected that patrons will encourage schools and other groups affiliated to them to abide by the spirit of this code of conduct.

Enrolment policies are a matter for a school’s Board of Management in the first instance. Accordingly, securing the patronage of a new primary school in the area to be served does not automatically confer rights of transfer to any particular post-primary school. This means that regardless of the patronage decision for new primary schools, pupils will have transfer rights to post-primary schools in the area in the normal way. Patrons will not make any statement or provide information which may give the impression that enrolment in a particular primary school will confer entitlement to enrolment in any post-primary school.

Similarly, in respect of post-primary schools, patrons will not make any statement or provide information which may give the impression that securing patronage of the post-primary school will guarantee rights of access for students of any particular primary schools in the area.

EXPENDITURE

Patrons shall contain expenditure on promotional activities within an overall limit for each school. A maximum limit of €500 (incl. of VAT) per patron will be observed for expenditure in each area for which a new school is to be established.

The limit incorporates the total spend on promotional activities i.e. this amount is to include a notional monetary value for any goods or services provided as benefit-in-kind to the patron by a person, company or organisation as well as for the costs of services provided from existing resources available to the patron. Where a group of organisations is engaged in a joint



application or applications, the collective expenditure of the groups shall not exceed €500.00 (incl. of VAT) in an individual area.

Given that there can be a significant period between the announcement of the establishment of new schools and the commencement of patronage processes, it is reasonable that patrons will wish to publicise their intention to apply for patronage of schools at an early stage and to keep interested parties informed. Accordingly, the costs of providing and maintaining 'static' or general information or electronic mailing lists on websites, and similar, are outside the scope of the expenditure limit. However, the cost of any targeted promotional material or events such as leaflets, meetings, advertisements, social media 'pushes etc. should be included.

Patrons agree to provide statements of expenditure for the purpose of satisfying these requirements. Patrons should be able to produce any necessary documentation, if requested to do so by Department officials, for the purposes of verification of expenditure incurred in connection with this application process. This could include, for example, relevant receipts, invoices and the corresponding transactions as they appear in the organisation's accounting and payment systems and bank account and an outline of the notional cost of services provided from within existing resources and benefits-in-kind.

BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

A breach of this Code of Conduct may render the patron's application invalid and result in their elimination from the patronage process on this occasion.

The process is as follows:

- An alleged breach may be brought to the attention of the Department.
- An alleged breach will be brought to the attention of the relevant patron by the Department.
- The relevant patron will be given an opportunity to respond and remedy the situation as appropriate.
- Any alleged breaches and responses will be dealt with in the relevant area assessment report.
- The New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG) will consider the matter in the context of the report and may make recommendations accordingly.

Department of Education and Skills

November 2019