



**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

**Patronage Assessment Report
Primary Schools
(2019)**

**Report to the New Schools Establishment Group
Forward Planning Section
Department of Education & Skills
February 2019**

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Attachments (Area Assessment Reports):

- Booterstown_Blackrock
- Donaghmede_Howth_D13
- Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin _6W (Regional Solution)
- Dunshaughlin
- Glasheen_CorkCity/Pouladuff
- Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR
- Kilcoole/Newtownmountkennedy
- Killester_Raheny_Clontarf
- Leixlip
- Maynooth
- Swords/North
- Swords/South

Foreword

Chairperson,
New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG).

Dear Chairperson,

On the 13th April 2018 the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next 4 years (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, with 26 new schools announced at primary level and 16 new schools announced at post-primary level (see Appendix A for details).

Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin1 primary school to be established in 2019

With regard to the primary school to serve the Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin 1 school planning area due to be established in 2019, in line with the previous recommendations of the NSEG, patronage of this school has been awarded to An Foras Pátrúnachta as a gaelscoil.

On the 8th November 2018, the Minister for Education and Skills, Joe McHugh, invited applications for the patronage of the remaining twelve new primary schools due to be established in September 2019 in the following areas:

School Planning Area	School Size*
Boooterstown_Blackrock	8 classrooms
Donaghmede_Howth_D13	16 classrooms
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W (Regional Solution)	16 classrooms
Dunshaughlin	8 classrooms
Glasheen_CorkCity/Pouladuff	8 classrooms
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	16 classrooms
Kilcoole/Newtownmountkennedy	8 classrooms
Killester_Raheny_Clontarf	8 classrooms
Leixlip	8 classrooms
Maynooth	8 classrooms
Swords/North	8 classrooms
Swords/South	8 classrooms

**based on current projected need but will be responsive to patronage or demographic demand*

The closing date for receipt of applications from applicant patron bodies was 13th November 2018. On 10th December 2018, the Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) website went live for parents to express their parental preferences in respect of the 12 new primary schools to be established in 2019.

The applicant patrons for each school are as follows:

School Planning Area	Applicant Patrons
Boooterstown_Blackrock	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	DDLETB
	Educate Together
	Lifeways Ireland CLG (Steiner)
	Scoil Sínead
	St Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland

Donaghmede_Howth_D13	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	CDETБ
	Educate Together
	Lifeways Ireland CLG (Steiner)
	Scoil Sinead
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W (Regional Solution)	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	CDETБ
	Educate Together
	Lifeways Ireland CLG (Steiner)
	Scoil Sinead
Dunshaughlin	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	Educate Together
	LMETB
	Scoil Sinead
Glasheen_CorkCity/Pouladuff	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	CETB
	Educate Together
	Scoil Sinead
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	DDLETB
	Educate Together
	Lifeways Ireland CLG (Steiner)
	Scoil Sinead
Kilcoole/Newtownmountkennedy	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	Educate Together
	KWETB
	Scoil Sinead
Killester_Raheny_Clontarf	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	CDETБ
	Educate Together
	Lifeways Ireland CLG (Steiner)
	Scoil Sinead
Leixlip	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	Educate Together
	KWETB
	Scoil Sinead
Maynooth	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	Educate Together
	KWETB
	Scoil Sinead
	The Bishop of Meath and Kildare (COI)
Swords/North	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	DDLETB
	Educate Together
	Scoil Sinead
Swords/South	An Foras Pátrúnachta
	DDLETB
	Educate Together
	Scoil Sinead

In relation to the Patron Code of Conduct, a number of applicant patrons raised issues with the Department in the context of the Code of Conduct regarding elements of the campaigns of other patron bodies. Having reviewed these issues and patron expenditure, the Department considers that there was one technical breach of the Code of Conduct in relation to a minor overspend in one area. The Department also wishes to draw the NSEG's attention to issues raised regarding elements of campaigns by patron bodies in a number of areas which the Group may wish to consider in detail at the meeting. Further detail in relation to the relevant issues is provided in the Annex to this foreword for consideration.

The Department also wishes to draw to the attention of the NSEG again, the April 2017 report of An Comisinéir Teanga which contains recommendations in relation to the patronage process and in particular, to Irish-medium provision in this context.

The role of the NSEG is to oversee the patronage decision making process and to ensure that the process is implemented correctly and in line with the published criteria. Following consideration of the Department's patronage assessment reports, the NSEG is tasked with submitting a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision.

Consistent with the arrangements governing the patronage process for new schools announced by the Minister in June 2011, the Department has completed its assessment of the applications received for patronage of the new primary schools to be established in 2019. This is the resulting report for the New Schools Establishment Group, which is submitted for consideration by the Group. A detailed assessment of each individual area is attached and forms part of this report.

Jill Fannin,
Principal Officer
Forward Planning Section - Department of Education and Skills
12th February 2019

Annex

1. Changes to the Patronage Process

As you will be aware, further to previous recommendations from the NSEG regarding the method of collecting parental preferences, the Department introduced a number of significant changes to the patronage process in this regard. Phase 1 of the pilot was introduced for the post-primary schools due to be established in 2019 and phase 2 of the pilot was rolled out for the patronage process for the primary schools to be established in 2019. These changes include:

- a revised application process for applicant patrons.
- the introduction of a new online system for the collection of parental preferences;
- an option for parents to select patrons in order of preference.

➤ 1.1 Online Patronage Process System (OPPS)

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) was developed by the Department which provides objective information for parents on the applicant patrons which will facilitate parents in making 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.

Following the completion of phase 1 of the pilot of the OPPS system, a number of changes were implemented including:

- ensuring parents are clearly advised to submit their preferences at the end of the survey;
- clearly informing parents that they must select the patrons in order of preference;
- setting out that in the event of a number of preferences being submitted in respect of an individual child that only the final full valid preferences will be accepted; and
- providing the list of applicant patrons for each area on the website outside of the individual surveys.

➤ 1.2 Assessment of preferences

The new OPPS system allows parents to express a preference for their preferred patron or for more than one patron in order of preference.

The Department has utilised the First-past-the-post method of assessing valid parental preferences for applicant patrons and considers that this method offers the most transparent method for tallying the parental preferences expressed. It is considered that where parental preferences are tied in a particular area, the PR-STV method could be of assistance in considering the relevance of 2nd, 3rd and 4th preferences.

In the current process, there are no areas where the number of parental preferences were tied. The Department tested the PR-STV method on all areas. The outcome in all but one area was the same using the First-past-the-post and the PR-STV methods.

Following completion of phase 1 and 2 of the pilot process, the Department is proposing to continue with first preferences as the primary mechanism to assess parental preferences in future patronage processes.

2. Code of Conduct

➤ 2.1 Patron Expenses

In the recent post-primary patronage process, the NSEG recommended a number of changes to the Patron Code of Conduct, including an increase in the expenditure limits from €300 (incl. VAT) to €500 (incl. VAT) and the inclusion of benefit-in-kind received in calculating expenditure. The NSEG also recommended that any changes made to the Code of Conduct should be highlighted to applicant patrons in advance of the patronage process and we can confirm that all patrons were provided with this information.

On the basis of a number of subsequent queries received from patron bodies regarding the changes to the Code of Conduct, on 29th November 2018, the Department provided applicant patrons with the following clarification:

“The general principle is that all expenditure related to campaigning for the patronage of any particular school is relevant in terms of spending limits. However, as recent developments mean that there is a possibility of very lengthy lead-in times between the announcement of new schools and the conduct of patronage processes (i.e. up to 4 years as per the April 2018 announcement), the Department in consultation with the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG) will seek to further clarify the approach to be taken for future processes.”

In relation to the pilot OPPS primary process currently underway, given that a number of queries have arisen post the opening of the patronage application process and prior to confirmation of eligible applications, the period to which the expenditure limit relates for this particular process can be taken to be the period from the date on which the OPPS system opens for parental preferences until its closure. As indicated we will be in further contact in relation to the opening of the OPPS as soon as possible.

The Code of Conduct in respect of patron expenses is considered to apply to items related to the individual schools for which a patronage process will be undertaken rather than general materials about a patron body which are not specific to an individual campaign. However, should those general materials be targeted to the areas which are the subject of an ongoing patronage process and encourage parents to express a preference for a particular patron in a particular patronage process, such materials would come within the scope of patron expenditure as set out under the Code of Conduct.

In relation to services provided from within existing resources/benefit-in-kind, as you will appreciate, it is not possible for the Department to set out the correct treatment of every possible scenario. An example of the methodology to apply would be where a number of flyers were printed by a patron body for distribution. In such a scenario, a cost should be assigned to the direct cost e.g. cost of a number of reams of paper. However, it would not be necessary to include a proportion of the cost price of the printer unless the printer was purchased primarily for this purpose. Similarly, a donation of printed flyers from a supporter should be attributed a reasonable notional cost.

Above all in relation to these types of items, patrons are asked to act reasonably and to adhere to the spirit of the code of conduct.

The Department is cognisant of the changes to the Code of Conduct and will review same in consultation with the NSEG, taking on board, in so far as is practical and reasonable, the learning from both the recent post-primary and the ongoing primary pilot processes. Consideration will also be given to holding a workshop with patron bodies to reach an agreed joint approach to calculation and timing issues regarding patron expenditure for future patronage processes.”

The Department would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above clarification and any further clarifications the NSEG may consider necessary.

The Code of Conduct requires that patrons agree to maintain expenditure on promotional material within overall limits established for each identified area where the new schools are to be established in 2019 and provide statements of expenditure for the purpose of satisfying these requirements.

The Department was notified by a patron body that in one area, their expenditure exceeded the limits set out in the Code of Conduct by a small amount i.e. less than €20. Further details of same will be provided to the NSEG for consideration.

A number of patron bodies did not submit the supporting documentation and/or subsequent clarifications within the required timeframe. This led to a delay in preparation of this report to the NSEG.

➤ 2.2 Issues raised in relation to the Code of Conduct

The below issues were brought to the attention of the Department by applicant patrons during the course of the current patronage process:

Patron body	School Planning Area	Summary of Issues Raised
Cork ETB	Glasheen_CorkCity / Pouladuff	Department notified that the patron body provided parents with details of the location of new primary school in Glasheen/CorkCity_Pouladuff.
Educate Together	Dunshaughlin	Department notified that the patron body commenced its patronage campaign in advance of confirmation of acceptance as an applicant patron.
Louth and Meath ETB	Dunshaughlin	Department notified that the patron body advised parents that a preference for their model of patronage would 'secure a place' in the second level school in the area.
An Foras Pátrúnachta	Dunshaughlin	Department notified that the patron body commenced its patronage campaign in advance of confirmation of acceptance as an applicant patron.
Educate Together	Donaghmede_Howth_D13 Killester_Raheny_Clontarf	Department notified that leaflets were distributed in two of the areas by a local politician and former Educate Together employee, seeking parental preferences for ET and distributed by a 'paid delivery man'.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to discuss the above in detail with the NSEG at the meeting of the Group and will provide the relevant correspondence and responses received from the patron bodies in question. In considering the above issues and the overall operation of the Code of Conduct, the Department is cognisant that these patronage processes have been carried out as part of the pilot of the new system. The Department intends to engage further with the relevant Education Partners in relation to the feedback received and learning from the operation of the Code during the patronage processes for the 2019 schools.

3. Irish-Medium Provision

In its report to the Minister of 26th October 2018, in relation to the primary schools to be established in September 2019, the NSEG, having reviewed;

- its previous consideration of the parental preferences expressed in respect of the Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin 1 school planning area;
- the acknowledgment in its May 2016 report to the then Minister of the strong level of demand for Irish-medium education in that area; and
- the recommendations of An Coimisinéir Teanga in his report of 27 April 2017 in this regard,

indicated its view that the new primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin 1 school planning area should be a Gaelscoil under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

The group also noted:

- the wider recommendation of An Coimisinéir Teanga on Irish language requirements¹ and acknowledged the positive changes already incorporated by the Department in the patronage process such as the facility for separate parental preferences in relation to language of instruction; and
- that the Department was exploring how parental preferences for Irish-medium education could be further reflected in future patronage processes. This included consideration of the level of demand which might, for example, warrant what would otherwise be a 24-classroom English-medium school being delivered (based on parental preferences) as a 16-classroom English-medium school and an 8 classroom Irish-medium school, if feasible from a practical perspective. The Group recommended that the Department explore this matter further, however, it noted that this is a complex issue which will require further consideration and consultation with the main patron bodies.

In relation to the latter point, there are no 24 classroom school among the 12 schools which are the subject of the current patronage process; 10 of the 13 new schools to be established in 2019 are to be delivered, initially, as 8 classroom schools and 3 are to be delivered as 16 classroom schools.

¹ Relevant extracts from the report of An Coimisinéir Teanga (emphasis added):

“Choosing Education through Irish -The right of parents to an all-Irish education for their children has been a talking point and even a bone of contention for some years. Under Article 10 of the Education Act 1998 it is clear that it is up to the Minister for Education and Skills to officially recognise a school, this includes a school teaching solely through the medium of Irish. The Minister may choose to recognise a school but he/she must first of all be satisfied that the established school will be or could become viable. The Minister may also take into consideration whether it is desirable to have different types of schools operating in the same area as would be served by the proposed school.

No provision in the Education Act 1998 deals directly with the provision of education through Irish. Even so, there are objectives in the Act which need to be noted by all who function within the Act. Obviously this includes the carrying out of provisions regarding the recognition of a new school. In this particular instance two objectives stand out as being relevant. They are:

- the realization of policies and national objectives regarding the spread of bi-lingualism and
- the fulfilment of students’ language and cultural needs according to parents’ choices

Recommendation: “That from now on the statutory language obligations will be adhered to in the process through which patronage is granted.”

However, other options can be considered. In this context, the Department draws the NSEG's attention to the percentage of valid parental preferences expressed for Irish-medium education in the 12 current surveys:

- Over 30%: 3 areas*
- 20-25%: 2 areas
- 15-20%: 2 areas
- 10-15%: 5 areas

**In the individual area reports to the NSEG in relation to two of those three areas with Irish-medium preferences over 30%, applying first-past-the-post methodology, the analysis of survey data indicates that the language of instruction of the school should be Irish.*

It is necessary to consider these figures in the context of the overall level of preferences received. The overall level of preferences received in each of the 12 areas surveyed, as a percentage of the total eligible cohort, ranges from c.5% to 24% which is within the range experienced in other patronage surveys conducted in recent years. Within that, the actual numbers of preferences expressed for Irish as language of instruction range from 9 to 61.

Applying the first-past-the-post methodology, the analysis of survey data indicates that the language of instruction of the school should be Irish in 2 of the 12 areas. As outlined, the language of instruction for the school in Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin 1 has already been decided as Irish and patronage has been awarded to An Foras Pátrúnachta.

In the remaining 10 areas, given both the proportion of eligible preferences received and within that proportion, the actual numbers of expressions for Irish-medium provision, sufficient evidence is not available to show that a school established as an Irish-medium school will be, or could become, viable. This differs from the situation which pertained in the Drumcondra_Marino_Dublin 1 school planning area where there was evidence of a strong level of demand for Irish medium education (i.e. c.360 valid choices). In the absence of more certainty on viability it is not considered that establishing Irish-medium schools, in place of English-medium schools in these areas at this time, is the most efficient and effective use of resources, a matter to which the Minister must have regard in accordance with his legal responsibilities.

The above being said, it is the case that there exists a level of demand in each of the areas. In a number of areas it is likely that this demand will be catered for within the existing Irish-medium schools in the school planning area or adjacent areas. In some areas, the level of existing Irish-medium provision exceeds the level of demand indicated by the parental preferences. Maps have been provided to the NSEG setting out the location of existing Irish-medium provision in the relevant school planning area and adjacent areas. (Note also that, in terms of school transport, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kms from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.)

As a means to cater for demonstrable unmet demand, and in the context of the Department's legal obligations and certain other commitments², the Department proposes that, as an additional measure to support or expand Irish-medium provision, it will proactively explore with relevant patrons in these areas the level of demand and the potential for expansion of existing

² DES commitments in relation to the 20 year strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030:

Opportunities will be created for expanding Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht in the context of 42 new schools, which will afford particular consideration to the establishment of Gaelscoileanna, Gaelcholáistí and Aonaid Lán Ghaeilge as part of the new patronage process. Work with stakeholders to further develop policy in this regard at post-primary level will continue.

The demand for increased provision for Irish-medium schools will be assessed as part of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process, which will include surveys of parents and pre-school children regarding primary level provision in their area with a view to providing a more diversity of provision, including provision for language, in line with the choice of families and school communities."

Irish medium schools in the area/surrounding areas and/or requirements for new schools into the future. As part of this process, consideration could be given to demand for multi-denominational patronage where the existing Irish-medium provision is denominational or inter-denominational in nature.

The NSEG might wish to note that, generally, approximately 40% of additional school places are provided through expansion of existing schools and that such expansion of existing Irish-medium schools provides an additional opportunity to cater for Irish language demand in an area.

The online pilot has now been used in respect of the new primary and post-primary schools to open in 2019. The opportunity now arises to engage with relevant partners on the feedback arising from these pilot processes on a number of matters, including in relation to Irish-medium provision.

4. Parental Preferences

Parental preferences for patronage and language of instruction, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process. The OPPS website allows parents to access the appropriate survey for their area, to input the details of the eligible child(ren) and to select their preferred patron and language of instruction.

The estimated overall cohort of children in respect of whom a preference could have been expressed (based on Child Benefit data from 2018 – 2021) was some 18,000 children across the school planning areas for the twelve new primary schools. However, not all of these will wish to or be eligible to express a preference. In most cases, parents may intend sending their child to an existing primary school in the area and as a result would not have considered it necessary to express a preference with regard to patronage of the new school.

The Department is satisfied that the percentage of valid preferences expressed in relation to the twelve new primary schools to be established in 2019 (ranging from some 5% to 24% of the eligible cohort) is of a comparable level to valid preferences expressed in relation to the previous primary patronage processes for schools that were established between 2014 and 2018 (ranging from some 1% to 44% of the eligible cohort).

In the current patronage process for the twelve primary schools to be established in 2019, there were between 73 and 373 valid preferences for each of the twelve areas, in comparison with valid preferences of between 33 and 1,137 valid preferences received in relation to the new primary schools established between 2014 and 2018.

Invalid preferences in each of the areas were discounted where:

- the parent submitted duplicates of preferences in relation to an individual child (in which instance the last complete preference was considered the final preference in respect of that child to allow for parents who may subsequently have changed their mind/preference).
- the PPSN was not a valid PPSN i.e. it did not contain 7 numbers and 1 or 2 letters at the end;
- the parent did not actually complete and submit their preferences; and / or
- the parent did not select a preferred patron.

The percentage of invalid preferences has been reduced from an average of 25% invalid preferences in the previous primary patronage processes (2014 to 2018) to some 11% for the current process. The Department will continue build on the experience gained in the first phase of the OPPS pilot and will work on appropriate measures to further reduce the level of invalid

preferences. Initial engagement has taken place with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to verification of PPSN numbers in this regard.

5. Summary of Assessments

The criteria considered in the patronage assessment process was notified to applicant patrons in Enclosure 1 of the Patron Invitation Letter (included in Appendix B to this report). This criteria includes *inter alia* consideration of parental preferences as well as the extent or range of diversity of patronage, including ethos and language of instruction, offered across existing schools in the area. An assessment of each area is attached to this report and a summary of the outcome of each assessment is set out in the table below:

Area	Proposed Patron	Proposed Language of Instruction
Boooterstown_Blackrock	An Foras Pátrúnachta	Irish
Donaghmede_Howth_D13	Educate Together	English
Dublin6_Clonskeagh & Dublin_6W (Regional Solution)	Educate Together	English
Dunshaughlin	Louth & Meath Education and Training Board	English
Glasheen_CorkCity/Pouladuff	Educate Together	English
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	Educate Together	English
Kilcoole/Newtownmountkennedy	Educate Together	English
Killester_Raheny_Clontarf	Educate Together	English
Leixlip	Educate Together	English
Maynooth	An Foras Pátrúnachta	Irish
Swords/North	Dublin & Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board	English
Swords/South	Dublin & Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board	English