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**Richard Bruton T.D**  
**Minister for Education and Skills,**  
**Marlborough Street,**  
**Dublin 1.**

4<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

**Re: Consultation Paper – Statement of Strategy 2016-2018.**

Dear Minister,

We refer to your invitation for consultation on Statement of Strategy 2016-2018 and comment as follows:

Firstly we welcome this consultation paper as an organisation representing parents of Post Primary schools through our Directors.

We have considered the documentation which accompanied the above and have expressed our views in the attached document.

We note that the Government is committed to producing a three year strategy and request as stakeholders to meet and discuss while it is in draft form before implementation.

Consultation should be on going with annual review where progress and future changes for the improvement of education and skills are implemented into the future.

**One of our aims is to provide a structure through which parents and guardians can inform and influence policy development.**

We look forward to working with you and your Department to advance and transform the educational system to meet the needs and demands for future generations and improve outcomes for every student.

Is mise le meas,

*Sean O'Riordan,*  
**Director,**  
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## Consultation Paper – Statement of Strategy 2016-2018.

### Foreword.

The National Parents Council Post Primary while it welcomes this consultation process it would point out that the time frame is very narrow for wider consultation with parent Councils/Associations and that it being the end of the school term with State Examination about to commence.

**Parents as the primary educators must be an integral part of the process for schools and the education system to function.**

We note that The Programme for Government sets out eight areas of priority and these are further commented on in this document.

**All priorities should prioritise Irish Culture in all stages within the educational system.**

Education serves many purposes one is to enlighten students about society which they live in and to create understanding of its makeup with the tools to contribute.

Communication with parent Councils/Associations must be streamlined to allow direct contact with parents in all Post Primary Schools - direct communication by e-mail to the Chairperson/Secretary is essential to keep parents informed and get feedback.

**Direct communication with parent Councils/Associations to become part of the structure to engage with parents.**

The funding imbalance across the post primary sector requires rebalancing to ensure there is equity and the provision of choice for parents and their families.

**Parents are being forced to bridge the funding gap.**

The programme for Government introduces words which may not have standard meaning or understanding therefore it would be important for clarity that they are defined if used in narrow or broad sense – example Diversity

Diversity must be explained in terms of what it adds to the educational system and that it reflects what is accepted in society and is not alien to our traditions and culture but embraces it having first been acknowledged by the partners in education through discussion.

**Diversity on its own should not be given the status as being acceptable or accepted when it does not reflect what is happening in the wider society.**

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The structures for the delivery of education must be clear to all partners involved with adequate funding and reviews where agreed priorities are met in the timeframe allocated.

The provision of trained Career Guidance teachers within the system will assist students and parents when making choices for third level and help reduce the dropout rate. This area of career guidance needs constant updating to take account of the many changes in business/society and the points entry system to third level colleges.

The educational system should also address those who do not wish to pursue a college course and should be adequately funded and promoted.

**Clear path to 3<sup>rd</sup> level and clear targets and guidelines on how to achieve access.**

Delivery of education should not be dependent on economic success – education is society’s investment in the future and a statement of where it desires to be placed in the world. Financial resources that are directed towards education and the educational system should have a positive objective stated when being allocated after consultation with the various stakeholders and committed to delivering results in the time agreed.

Reducing the pupil teacher ratio at all levels is essential in delivering a first class educational system supported by additional CPD for teachers – outside school hours. Investment in education must have agreed priorities with all stakeholders with achievable delivery dates with regular updates being provided.

**MISSION Statement National Parents Council – Post Primary - (NPC-pp.)**

The NPCpp is the voice and advocate for parents and guardians of young people in post-primary education. It serves and represents parents and guardians, principally through engagement with Parents Associations. In consultation with its Constituent Bodies, the NPCpp, offers co-ordinated training, interaction, information and engagement with parents and guardians.

The NPCpp aims to:

- have an effective Parents Association in place in every school
- communicate with all parents and guardians of young people in post-primary education
- support parents and guardians in being active partners in education
- challenge parents and guardians to participate
- provide a structure through which parents and guardians can inform and influence policy development
- take an active role in influencing policy at a national level
- build strong partnerships with key stakeholders

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**The Programme sets out the following eight areas of priority:**

The following points are in addition to Programme for Government and/or emphasis to points made.

All areas agreed to be budgeted with achievable delivery dates.

**1. Prioritising Early Years**

- a. Parents as the primary educator should have good communication with the provider of services where assessments are needed – **early intervention**.
- b. Support parents with programmes on early learning and learning difficulties.

**2. Tackling Disadvantage**

- a. DEIS classification and funding to be reviewed and targeted to areas of greatest need.
- b. DEIS schools to get same subject choice as others.
- c. Children between the ages 14 to 18 years have no organised activity during holiday period - Fund sport clubs to engage with this age group as they cannot work.
- d. Involve business to take an active part to give students experience during the holiday period and support it with programmes to ensure success. Apprenticeship programmes to be supported and funded.
- e. School attendance to be closely monitored and other agencies involved where necessary to deal with issues that affect the student from attending school - **early intervention**.

**3. Diversity and Choice for Parents**

- a. Develop a “Charter for Parents” that meets their needs on issues in Schools and with the Department.
- b. Educate together to be brought into Main Parents Umbrella groups.
- c. Look at school provision and plan new schools around actual and planned needs
- d. Speed up subject choice in schools and use joint classes in areas where numbers are an issue.
- e. Standardised testing needs broad consultation with parents.
- f. Cultural diversity to be included as part of the curriculum.

**4. Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools**

- a. MLL visits to check extra-curricular activity in STEM subjects
- b. Provide incentive to Teacher and pupil to go the extra mile
- c. Excellence and innovation in schools should be reflected and known in the community whether it is the areas of – Languages, Public Speaking, Projects that get displayed within or outside the school and involvement in sport.
- d. Provide ongoing teacher professional development and training – CPD.

**5. Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students**

- a. Further develop links to local Third level institutions and provide information about them at an early stage from Junior Cycle also to their parents.
- b. Provide funding so that students can attend seminars and displays where innovation is a topic.
- c. TY programmes to be well flagged to parents and end of term presentation within the school to the teaching staff and some representatives from the parents’ council as part of the assessment process.

**6. Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities**

- a. Provide better access to the public, charities and local groups when the school is not in use.
- b. Free up playing fields and sports facilities to local needs.
- c. Adult educational classes for parents and having seminars on areas affecting education.

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## 7. Special Needs Education

- a. Restore SNA numbers and simplify transfer arrangements between Primary and secondary
- b. Simplify application process for SNA
- c. Early intervention in the areas of Speech and Language Therapy and hearing and sight impairments.
- d. Resource hours need to be monitored to ensure the student is getting the allocated hours and support within the school.

## 8. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future

- a. Work with SOLAS
- b. Work with IBEC
- c. Consults Stakeholders on a five year basis on future needs with regular consultation on the progress of priorities agreed to ensure delivery within budget and in the timeframe allocated.
- d. Consult with the professional bodies such as Accountancy Bodies and Departments in third level where subjects are being taught to keep up to date on developments in their respective areas – communication with specialists in their relevant subject area.

With regard to the **Statement of Strategy 2015 – 2017** is passing the halfway mark and progress on the 21 outcomes suggested would merit critical scrutiny and their achievements discussed and published.

Citizens who engage with the educational system know how society works with a deep understanding of our history, traditions and laws and be secure in the knowledge that our Constitution will deliver a society that will protect those who are vulnerable and improve wellbeing for all.

This document is to highlight views of parents and to set the agenda for further discussions with the Department of Education and Skills as partners and stakeholders as set out in the Education Act 1998.

The following represented the constituent bodies within the board of NPC-pp in compiling this report:

**Martina O’ Shea** – PACCS (Parent’s Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools.)

**John Gibbons** – NPAETBS (National Parents Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges)

**Julia Carr** – COMPASS (Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parent’s Association.)

**\* Michael Mulry** – FEDCBS (National Parent Council Christian Bros & other Catholic Secondary Schools.) **\* Recently amalgamated as Fed-CSSPA**

**\*Sean O Riordan** - CSPA (The National Congress of Catholic Schools Parents Association.)

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