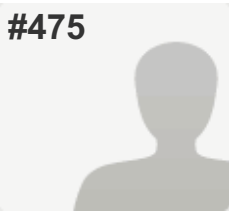


#475



**COMPLETE**

**Collector:** Web Link 1 (Web Link)

**Started:** Wednesday, June 01, 2016 1:08:54 PM

**Last Modified:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 5:52:50 PM

**Time Spent:** Over a day

**IP Address:** 89.101.216.238

**PAGE 1: Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise**

**Q1: Name:**

Áine Lynch

**Q2: Organisation:**

National Parents Council Primary

**Q3: Email:**

alynch@npc.ie

**PAGE 2**

**Q4: 1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources**

A review of school boards of management- with increasing development of standards within the area of governance in general, it is important that our school boards of management meet the standards and expectations of other sectors in relation to good governance. As schools are now entered on the "Register of Charities" it becomes increasingly important that their governance structures meet the requirements set down within this sector. Schools Boards of Management have a vital function in schools and as such must be constituted and supported to carry out this function to the highest standard.

**Q5: 1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision**

Decades of research has told us that what parents do in the home to support their children's learning is critical for improved outcomes for children. The most important thing parents can do is create a positive home learning environment for their children. A recent NPC survey showed the majority of teachers (80%) parents (73%) and children (62%) see benefits of homework however they also expressed concerns in how it currently is delivered. 53% of children told us that they worry about completing their homework and 62% of parents told us that homework time is stressful. If the home learning environment is important and parents, children and teachers all see the benefits of home learning, it is essential that we examine further how we can support families to create and foster positive opportunities and environments for children. Parents, children and schools working in partnership is vital to re-imagining how homework is delivered.

In Ireland we rightly spend enormous financial and human resources developing a curriculum for learning at school. NPC believes we must pay equal attention to a home curriculum and professionally develop teachers to support parents in their key role supporting their child's learning.

**PAGE 3**

**Q6: 2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?**

1. Parent and Student Charter (PSC) :- The proposal for a PSC is a welcome one that NPC supports fully. The delay in delivering the legislation to support the Charter however is frustrating. As the Charter is connected to the revision of Section 28 of the Education Act this also raises concerns for NPC in the continued lack of an appropriate complaints mechanism for parents. The lack of an appropriate complaints mechanism for parents may further undermine parents and childrens' Rights when Section 5 of the Teaching Council Act is fully operational, as it calls for local complaints mechanisms to have been followed in the first instance.

"Unless there are good and sufficient reasons, the Teaching Council will generally not look into a complaint unless school complaint or grievance procedures have been exhausted (established under sections 24[i] and 28[iii]\* of the Education Act, 1998,)" (Taken from Teaching Council Website)

This leaves parents in an ambiguous situation in their role as their child's advocate in protecting their Rights..

2. NPC believes that the role of the "Parents Learners and Database Unit" should be expanded within the department. The current remit as stated on the DES website:-

The Parents, Learners and Database Unit administers appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act, provides advice to parents and students on the operation of schools' complaint procedures and manages the Post Primary Pupil Database"

NPC believes is too constrained and administrative in function. Research tells us that partnership with parents is critical to outcomes for children and NPC believes that the Parents Learners and Database Unit of the DES should have a role in ensuring that all DES policy is promoting and informed by international research in the area of partnership with parents in all areas of education.

3. NPC believes that the introduction of the Primary Online Database has been important and that the data that is generated will help develop the education sector in an informed way into the future whilst also helping to identify children who maybe disengaging with their education at an earlier point.

---

**PAGE 4**

---

**Q7: 3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?**

Pupil/student voice:-Since the establishment of student councils in the post-primary sector, significantly more research and development has been carried out Internationally regarding the voice of the child and children and young peoples capacity and role in decision making. NPC believes that the Department should undertake a complete review across the education sector examining the pupil/student voice and develop a framework for the pupil/student voice at all levels from the classroom to national policy level across the education system; from early education all the way through to third and further level education.

---

**PAGE 5**

---

**Q8: 4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.**

Each outcome on "Achieving our goals will have the following outcomes" list should have specific, defined measures which success should be measured against.

---

**PAGE 6**

**Q9: 5.** Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise

*Respondent skipped this question*

---

PAGE 7

---

**Q10: 6.** Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018

*Respondent skipped this question*

---

PAGE 8: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

---

**Q11: 1(a)** Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

NPC welcomes the:

Introduction of a second preschool year

Reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio at junior and senior infants

A new model of in-school SLT

Provision of additional NEPS psychologists

In addition NPC believes that a national strategy should be developed that provides for how partnerships between parents and teachers/schools should be advanced to support childrens learning.

---

**Q12: 1(b)** How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?

Specific outcomes should be identified against each measure. This will then make the goals specific, defined and purposeful.

---

**Q13: 1(c)** What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Priority actions are all those areas identified under question 1 (a)

If these actions are implemented many benefits will arise, however NPC believes equality in educational expectations/potential for children should be a priority outcome.

---

PAGE 9: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

---

**Q14: 2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC believes that all measures targeted at tackling disadvantage should have partnership with the parent/family at the core. Any measure that is aimed only on replacing or reducing deficit by the parents and family will not address the underlying support needs of the child and family. Parents are the best support for children and measures should be developed that support parents to fulfill their role rather than to simply replace what the parent has "failed to do". For example summer programs for children could be programs for children and parents that help support the parent/child relationship and develop the parents skills.

Children going hungry in Irish schools impacts upon their well-being, concentration and attention levels, learning and motivation, as well as heightening risk of aggressive behaviour in class and with peers. A systematic national strategy to prevent hunger in school needs to be put in place. The strategy should follow the principle outlined earlier of partnership with parents.

---

**Q15: 2(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantaged be measured?**

All measures in the new action plan should have stated outcomes with specific measures attached.

---

**Q16: 2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

As stated in 2 (a)

The publication of the updated Action Plan for Educational Inclusion with particular focus on DEIS, on time

---

**PAGE 10: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

---

**Q17: 3(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC welcomes the commitment in the Program for Government to strengthening parental choice and also welcomes the planned increase in the provision of non-denominational and multi denominational schools. Continued attention however should be given to parents who will continue to have no choice but to send their children to a school that is not of their own belief or of no belief. More importantly perhaps, further consideration should be given to how we can continue to improve children's experience of attending schools that do not fit with their and their families beliefs/no beliefs in all schools .

NPC welcomes the commitment to publish new School Admissions and Excellence legislation which will increase transparency and fairness in admissions. NPC request that the Government also prioritise the Parent and Student legislation and the revision of Section 28 as a matter of urgency.

NPC believes that an effective complaints procedure and a complete review of school Boards of Management, including a benchmark against best practice of governance in other relevant sectors will address the underlying issues within the education sector that may have led to the proposal for an Ombudsman for Education. There is already an Ombudsman for Children who investigates complaints from parents and children regarding education issues. In many areas of Government there are measures in place attempting to ensure joined up policy and service provision, with varying degrees of success, where different aspects of children s lives are dealt with by different Departments and their Ministers.It may be unwise in a situation where we have currently have one Ombudsman Office for Children, to separate the functions causing the same problems that currently exist in other child policy and services areas to replicate within the Ombudsman function.

NPC welcome the Governments attention to assessment of investment regarding annual reporting. NPC however believe that further consideration should be given to the relationship between parents and schools regarding accountability. Whilst accountability is vital in any system; a system that is purely built on reporting to and from stakeholders on their areas of responsibility i.e how a parent and child performs regarding school attendance or how a school reports a childs' progress, can have a detrimental impact on the crucial partnership relationship that is necessary between children, parents and schools to ensure better outcomes for children.

---

<b>Q18: 3(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>
<b>Q19: 3(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>

---

**PAGE 11: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

---

**Q20: 4(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC supports the attention to the promotion of excellence and innovation and believes that this will be best achieved at school level and policy level when all stakeholders, schools, children, parents and local communities are included in development and decision making.

NPC welcomes the proposal to provide forward planning regarding capitation payments but suggest that this will only make the difference intended if capitation is paid at the required level.

NPC welcomes the schools excellence fund initiative and would also like to see a comprehensive resource developed for sharing the learning that is developed through such an initiative.

NPC believes that significant benefits would be achieved for implementing the "pool of experts" initiative across both sectors...primary and second level. It is unclear in fact why this initiative would be highlighted "especially at second level".

---

<b>Q21: 4(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>
<b>Q22: 4(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>

---

---

**PAGE 12: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

---

**Q23: 5(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC welcomes the attention given to transition supports. NPC believes that transitions should be kept to a minimum, however where they do occur support should be given to both children and parents. Parents are the key support to a child especially at times of transition where many things in the child's life is changing. Parents need information and support to fulfill this role effectively.

A National Strategy for STEM is welcomed and due importance should be given to instilling interest and engagement in STEM subjects in early years and primary education. This is should involve parents and schools.

---

<b>Q24: 5(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>
<b>Q25: 5(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?</b>	<i>Respondent skipped this question</i>

---

---

**PAGE 13: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

---

**Q26: 6(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC welcomes the statement affirming schools place at the center of communities. Children and families, in the main, know schools, know the buildings, trust the school with their children every day. Wrapping other services and activities around schools should only foster deeper levels of connection between families and schools and between families and other community activities and services.

**Q27: 6(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**Q28: 6(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**PAGE 14: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

**Q29: 7(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

NPC welcomes the commitment to review special education access and funding provision and the engagement with NCSE on this issue. NPC is anxious that the Program for Government appears to presume that efficiencies will be made before the examination has commenced.

NPC would welcome a review of the July provision. Whilst parents value the July provision they do communicate difficulties to NPC regarding timing and access of provision.

NPC agree that with the proposal to establish a new-model of in-school SLT and this has been an service that NPC have long campaigned for.

NPC also welcome the increase in NEPS psychologists proposed in the program.

**Q30: 7(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**Q31: 7(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**PAGE 15: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education**

**Q32: 8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**Q33: 8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

**Q34: 8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

*Respondent skipped this question*