



Revised Criteria and Procedures for Establishment of New Primary  
Schools

Report of the Commission on School Accommodation

February 2011

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## **Foreword**

In September 2008, the Minister for Education and Science requested that a review of the criteria and procedures for the establishment of new primary schools be undertaken by the Commission on School Accommodation. A Technical Working Group under the Steering Group of the Commission on School Accommodation was established to undertake a full review of the existing criteria and procedures.

The Technical Working Group was asked to present a report to the Steering Group for consideration and transmission to the Minister. This is the report of the Technical Working Group which has been agreed to in principle by the Steering Group. The Steering Group nominees of An Foras Pátrúnachta and Gaelscoileanna Teo have expressed reservations about some of the Report's recommendations. Correspondence from those bodies is attached at Appendix H of the Report.

The terms of reference for the Technical Working Group included inviting submissions from the public and interested parties, considering the submissions both written and oral and conducting a detailed analysis of all the issues. Reports of the New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC) were examined and international best practices in the area were considered.

The early implementation of the recommendations of this report will provide an invaluable aid in planning school provision in the future and in responding to the demands for increased choice of provision.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication to aspects of the task by members of the Technical Working Group and in particular to my colleagues Shirley Kearney, Richard Dolan, Mary Carney, Tony Dalton, Seán Ó Foghlú and Frank Wyse.

Frank Murray  
Chairperson

February 2011

## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

### ***Summary of Part One – Current Position***

**Part One** explores the background factors relating to new school establishment, outlines the views received as a result of consultation with the public and the New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC) and reviews international practice in relation to establishment of new schools.

The population of the country experienced an unprecedented increase in the past ten years. Despite the current economic downturn, the effect of this recent population increase is that growth in demand for school places is set to increase over the short to medium term. The overriding objective is to ensure that a school place is available to every child.

The process by which the need for new schools arises, is identified, planned for and delivered has been the focus of considerable comment and analysis in recent years. Economic growth and net in-migration followed by high birth rates drove the need to rapidly provide an increased number of new primary school places, especially in fast developing areas around key cities and towns.

At the same time of increased demand for pupil places, there has also been a demand for increased availability of different types of schools, particularly multi-denominational and Irish language medium schools. It could also be the case that demand in future could arise for other diverse types of schools. Since the publication of the White Paper on Education (1995) Irish society has changed dramatically. The increased diversity in our population is reflected in our schools with many schools being more diverse both in terms of pupil enrolment and also in terms of diverse approaches within them. This is particularly the case in urban and suburban areas but the change is not just confined to these areas.

In areas of significant demographic growth it has been possible to meet much of the demand for increased choice of provision through the establishment and construction of new schools. However, in areas where new schools do not need to be established for demographic reasons, demands still continue for the increased choice in provision.

The Group considers that the Department has to ensure in the first instance that every child has a school place available to them. The Group further considers that the Department should take all reasonable measures to ensure that there is a choice of patronage of schools available where there is a critical mass of demand for such choice, having regard to the finances available.

The Group considers that new policy options need to be explored to seek to realise such a choice of patronage and these are discussed later in this report. In these circumstances, the Group recognises that it is not practical for every student to be provided with access to a place in a school operated by a patron of their choice. The Group also recognises that in areas where there is not a demographic demand for new schools, it is very difficult for the Department to justify the allocation of capital expenditure on the construction of new schools given the prioritisation needed in the

Department's capital budget to provide for the demographic increases as well as the historic under-investment in school buildings.

The possibility of the Catholic Church divesting itself of certain primary schools was raised by Catholic Church authorities initially. At the request of those authorities, the Department of Education and Skills undertook to identify possible areas where the demographics and existing school configuration was such that there might be potential for the Catholic Church to consider divesting patronage.

In this regard, in August 2010 the Department identified forty three possible town areas and a number of Dublin city areas. Out of all the areas identified, ten areas were selected at random for more detailed analysis. They are also areas that have a predominance of denominational school provision.

The publication of the outcome of the Department's identification exercise in August 2010 was welcomed by the Irish Bishop's Conference and the Conference has invited consultation and debate within the Church on the way forward.

A total of twenty seven submissions were received in response to the public consultation. Issues addressed in the submissions included the following:

- Minimum number of pupils required for the establishment of a new school.
- Views about the Community National School concept
- Views on the concept of shared campus,
- Views on the policy around all-Irish education
- Views advocating the co-trusteeship patronage model adopted at second level in the Community Schools
- Proposals in regard to the regulation of patrons

The New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC) encountered a number of key issues during their period of operation (2002 – 2008) and during the consultation expressed views on the following:

- Minimum number of pupils required to establish a school
- Diversity and the need to have procedures to provide diversity
- Inspection process
- Special schools

Internationally, the practice in regard to new school establishment is that the relevant central Government authority may decide to establish a new school, based on need, and this decision is generally made following a public consultation process.

### ***Summary of Part Two – Future School Planning***

**Part Two** explores issues around planning for new schools in the future. It discusses patron selection, the mechanism for identifying the need for a new school and proposals for cost effectiveness, including campus arrangements. A school is of central importance to a local community and therefore the establishment of a new school must be carried out with reference to the overall plan of the local authority for any given area. Guidelines published under Section 28 of the Planning Act entitled "The Provision of Schools and the Planning System" (July 2008) establish a

framework for co-operation between the Department and planning authorities to ensure the timely and cost-effective provision of school facilities.

Key steps in the planning and delivery process are:

- Identifying the requirement for school places
- Choosing an appropriate patron
- Planning and delivering a school building

Detailed demographic analysis is necessary in order to determine the requirement for school places. CSO population projections show that pupil numbers could grow by an additional 64,000 pupils by the year 2018. The challenge is to identify the locations in which the increase will be experienced most significantly so that accommodation can be put in place to meet needs. The Dept of Education and Skills is able to determine the number of additional pupil places required in an area with the aid of its GIS. If these places cannot be provided through extension of existing schools, the only option to meet the need is to establish a new school. The Department will decide on the size of school required to serve the long-term educational needs of the community following consultation with the patron bodies.

The choice of a school patron is a critical one. A number of elements in regard to patronage need to be addressed:

- Introduction of a process for approving a new patron independently of recognising a patron for a new school
- A process for changing patronage of an existing school
- Establishment of criteria for patron recognition
- Time scale for new school establishment
- Criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of a patron

Co-operation between patrons is required to cater in a cost effective manner for diverse needs in particular areas where there may be spare capacity available or where there may be opportunity to share buildings and/or campuses. Shared campus arrangements can offer good synergies.

### ***Summary of Part Three – Proposals and recommendations***

**Part Three** makes recommendations in regard to the system for establishing new schools.

There are a number of recommendations for the development of the criteria and procedures for the recognition of new primary schools.

- In the first instance, the arrangements now in place within the Department of Education and Skills for the identification of the need for the establishment of new schools are noted.
- Next, recommendations are made in relation to the process for patron selection of such schools.
- There is then an outline of the issues in relation to parental demand for choice of patronage where new schools are not required for demographic reasons, issues in relation to transfer or change of patronage are discussed and recommendations are made.

- Subsequent to this, some more general issues in relation to the role of the patron generally are discussed and
- Recommendations are made to establish a patronage advisory group with the role of advising the Minister on a number of matters in relation to patronage.

#### Identification of the need for the establishment of a new school

The Department will proactively identify the areas where significant additional school accommodation is required. The Department will decide that a new school must be established following consultations with the patron bodies.

#### Selection process for the patron of a new school

The selection of a patron requires detailed work at a local level. A number of criteria are suggested to be adopted in the selection of a patron. Among them are the strength of parental demand for the proposed school type and how the proposed school would extend the choice of provision in the area and protect the ideal of social inclusion, having regard to the rights and views of parents. 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 is very important.

#### Parental demand for choice; transfer and change of patronage

The Group considers that there is a need to consider how best to meet parental demand for provision of alternative choice where there may not be a demographic need for the establishment of a new school. A number of suggestions are made:

- The Group considers that the Department should, in line with the legislation, have procedures for the receipt and consideration of applications from prospective patrons in areas where there may not be a demographic need for the establishment of new schools.
- The Group considers that the NSAC process needs to be replaced.
- The Group also considers that 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.
- The Group considers that there may also be potential in the use of existing vacant spaces in school buildings in areas where there may not be a demographic need for a new school.
- The Group notes the consideration of divesting underway within the Catholic Church referred to in **Part One** and the work underway in this regard. The Group considers it vital that these developments realise greater diversity of patronage through maximising the use of existing infrastructure.
- The Group also considers that there may be other potential for linguistic diversity to be realised without a change of patronage, for example an existing



- English-medium school may change to become an Irish-medium school or an Irish-medium element may be introduced in an English-medium school.
- The Group considers that there may be other transfers of patronage between patrons which could contribute to increasing diversity of patronage in an area.

#### General issues in relation to the role of the patron

It is recommended that there should be separate processes for inclusion of a new patron in the Department's patron register and the recognition of a patron of a new primary school.

#### Parental demands for choice of patronage

As outlined in **Part One**, it is important that Irish-medium education is supported by positive policy implementation that embraces a range of solutions for Irish language education. Primary education has a pivotal role in the preservation and expansion of the first official language so that the demand for Irish medium education should be supported in any system for the establishment of new primary schools. Government policy as outlined in the "Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030" particularly in relation to education, should inform the policies and the plans of the Department of Education and Skills in relation to all-Irish medium education. This should result in an agreed and planned delivery of all-Irish medium education into the future.

There is also an increasing parental demand for multi-denominational and non-denominational education as outlined in **Part One** and the State has attempted to meet its obligations to respond to that demand by supporting the establishment of increased numbers of multi-denominational schools in recent years.

#### Campus development recommendation

Campus developments provide synergies and benefits. It is recommended that a template for good campus management is adopted to be used nationally by all schools in campus arrangements.

#### Patronage Advisory Group

The Group recommends the establishment of a new body, to be known as the Patronage Advisory Group (PAG) to undertake responsibilities in regard to patron recognition for new schools and change of patronage for existing schools in consultation with all relevant parties. The PAG should also consider the development of criteria for the inclusion of a patron on the patron register, evaluation of the performance of a patron and arrangements to remove a patron if they are not performing their role correctly. The members of the PAG should be appointed by the Minister and satisfy certain criteria in terms of knowledge, experience and independence.

## **Part One – Current Position**

### ***Background***

#### ***Terms of Reference***

In September 2008, the Minister for Education & Science instructed that a review of the criteria and procedures for the establishment of new primary schools be undertaken by the Commission on School Accommodation. A Technical Working Group, under the direction of the Chairperson of the Commission, was established to undertake a full review of the criteria and procedures for the recognition of new primary schools. The Technical Working Group is a small expert group appointed to undertake the full review of the criteria and procedures for the recognition of new schools.

The terms of reference for the Technical Working Group were to:

- Invite submissions from the public and interested parties
- Consider the submissions both written and oral
- Conduct a detailed analysis of all the issues
- Examine the reports of NSAC and the issues raised
- Consider international best practice in this area
- Report to the Steering Group on their analysis and findings
- Make detailed recommendations for revised arrangements for new schools

The membership of the Group is contained in **Appendix A**.

#### ***Methodology for the Review***

The Technical Working Group investigated current practice in the recognition of new schools and conducted research and consultation with all interested parties as a basis for formulating recommendations. Summaries of the wide-ranging submissions are contained in the report.

Some of the key issues which were considered by the Technical Working Group as part of the review process were:

- Legislation /constitution of schools
- Diversity
- Social Inclusion
- Patronage of schools
- Existing capacity / best use of spare capacity
- Optimum school size (including minimum threshold required for opening a new school)
- Different school types
- The Irish language

The Report of the Technical Working Group is now being presented to the Steering Group under the Commission on School Accommodation for consideration. The Steering Group of the Commission on School Accommodation consists of representatives of all the partners in education and officials from the Department of Education and Skills. The Steering Group will examine all the findings and recommendations and bring its own analysis of the issues to bear on the final report for the Minister for Education and Skills.

The membership of the Steering Group is contained in **Appendix B**.

### *Historical perspective*

In 1998 the Steering Group under the Commission on School Accommodation published the report “Criteria and Procedures for the Recognition of New Primary Schools”. This led to a shift away from a situation whereby applications had been processed directly by the Planning and Building Unit of the Department of Education and Skills to one where a new body, the New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC), considered applications for new schools and then reported in an advisory capacity to the Minister. This provided a transparent system where the same qualification criteria applied to all classes of schools (denominational, gaelscoileanna, multi-denominational etc). The Committee was comprised of members appointed by the Minister after consultation with the partners in education.

The NSAC was established following a period of falling pupil numbers and one of the key qualification criteria was that a proposed new school should have 17 junior infants to start rising to 51 pupils in the third year of intake. This Committee reported each year to the Minister and these reports raised a number of issues including those relating to the changing climate of future enrolment trends and consequent demand for new schools. It queried the continuance of the NSAC as the mechanism for establishing new schools, the relevance of its terms of reference in the changed demographic environment, issues regarding patronage and diversity in education. The NSAC’s term of office expired in August 2008 and on foot of the issues raised by their reports and the changed demographic climate, the then Minister for Education and Science, Mr. Batt O’Keeffe TD, announced a review of the criteria and procedures for the establishment of new schools. A Technical Working Group was set up under the Commission on School Accommodation to carry out this review and to report back to the Commission Steering Group. The first meeting of these groups took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008.

### *Procedure for the opening of new schools during NSAC’s term of office*

The NSAC was established in 2002 to process applications for the recognition of new primary schools. Its tasks included data gathering, conducting public consultations and identification of need and making recommendations to the Minister for Education & Science.

When considering an application for a new primary school, NSAC considered the application under the following criteria which were devised by the Commission on School Accommodation in 1998:

Evidence that:

- It was clearly established that the proposed educational service met a need that could not be reasonably met within existing provision

- The formal application for a new school was preceded by public local community consultation
- The patron was registered or was in the process of obtaining registration
- There was a verified intention to establish a management structure that was recognised by the Minister for Education & Science
- There was a verified intention to manage the school according to the principles set out in the “Rules for National Schools”
- The proposed school would comply with the following criteria

#### Enrolment Criteria

Applications for recognition had to include and be assessed on figures for:

- a. the minimum guaranteed enrolment for the first year of operation: 17 junior infants
- b. the minimum projected enrolment for the third year of operation: 51 pupils

There were five stages to the procedure for the recognition of a new primary school, as recommended by the Commission on School Accommodation’s 1998 report:

<u>Stage 1</u>	Notification of intention to apply for recognition
<u>Stage 2</u>	Public consultation and identification of need
<u>Stage 3</u>	Application for recognition
<u>Stage 4</u>	New Schools Advisory Committee’s recommendation to the Minister
<u>Stage 5</u>	Minister’s decision communicated to the patron and appeal process

There were formal dates established for each of these stages in the Commission on School Accommodation’s 1998 report, however, in practice, the NSAC adjusted the timescale on an annual basis.

### ***Change in demographic trends***

The Report of the Steering Group of the Commission on School Accommodation (CSA) on the “Criteria and Procedures for the Recognition of New Primary Schools” (1998) was undertaken in a period of declining primary pupil enrolment. Indeed, all the indications at the time anticipated a continued steady decline in enrolments up to year 2026 and consequential school closures and amalgamations in many areas.

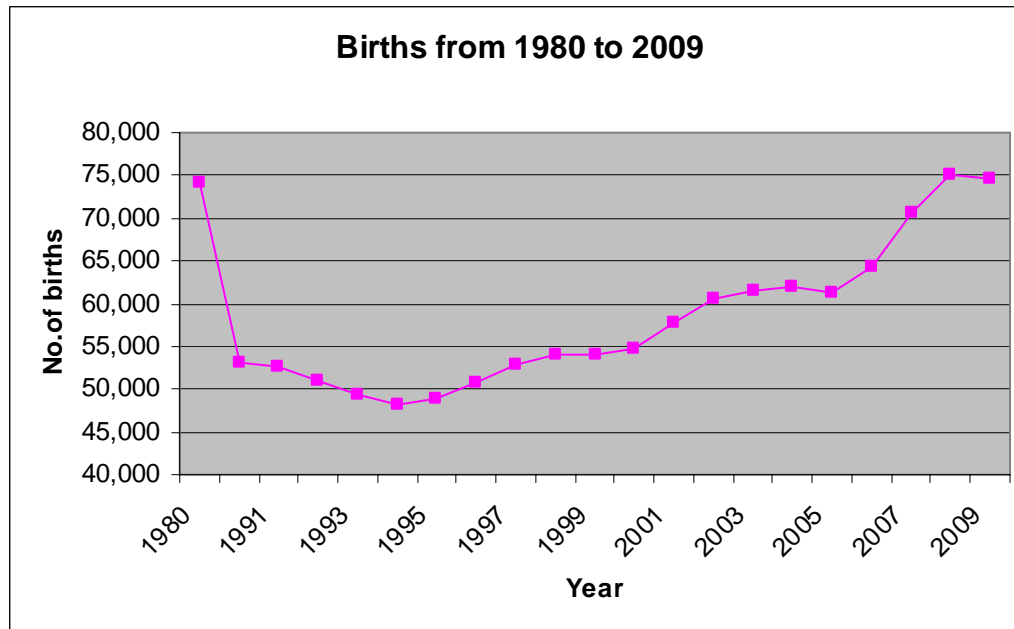
To contextualise this point, it will be noted that the number of primary school pupils had fallen from a total of 566,289 in 1984/85 to a total of 478,692 in 1995/96 which represents a decline of 15.46% over that ten year period. CSO population projections in 1998 indicated that the number of primary school pupils would continue to decline to between 321,000 and 426,000 pupils by year 2016, depending on assumptions regarding the migration and fertility rates that would prevail over the period to 2016. In 1998 the Department also projected a continued drop in primary school enrolment up to the year 2016, albeit a less steep decline to between 418,900 and 442,300 pupils.

The assumptions underlying the population projections in 1998 were based on an expectation of relatively low fertility rates and high emigration rates. Instead, Ireland has experienced an unprecedented increase in population from 1998 up to the current

date. The reasons relate to an almost continual rise in the birth rate for ten years from 1998 up to 2008 and positive net migration.

### Birth rate

The graph below illustrates the trend in the birth rate from 1980 to date. There was a particularly steep increase in the three years 2007 to 2009. In fact, the number of births in Ireland in 2008 was 75,065 which is the highest number recorded since 1896. In 2009 the number of births was 74,728 which is just marginally down on the record number in 2008. The published birth statistics for the first six months of 2010 show the same high trend as for the first six months of 2009.



### Migration

Migration has also had a dominant influence on the profile of population change. **Table 1** below shows the annual migration flows for the years from 1997 to 2007. The annual number of immigrants increased steadily between 1997 and 2002 and following a slight fall off in the years to April 2003 and 2004 experienced a major upsurge since then. This sharp increase in the period 2005 to 2007 was mainly as a result of labour migration following the accession of the ten new EU member states in May 2004. With the exception of 1999, outward migration has been in the range 20,000 to 30,000 annually between 1997 and 2005. The upward movement since then reflects a return to their home countries on the part of some recent immigrants. Immigration has been the main driver of net migration in the period since 1997 with a temporary peak of over 40,000 being experienced in the year to April 2002. Following a slight decline, the number increased significantly and reached a maximum of close to 72,000 in 2006 following which it fell back somewhat to 67,000 in the year to April 2007.

<b>Table 1 : Estimated migration 1997 to 2010</b>			
<b>Year ending April</b>	<b>Emigrants (‘000s)</b>	<b>Immigrants (‘000s)</b>	<b>Net migration (‘000s)</b>
1997	25.3	44.5	19.2
1998	28.6	46.0	17.4
1999	31.5	48.9	17.3
2000	26.6	52.6	26.0
2001	26.2	59.0	32.8
2002	25.6	66.9	41.3
2003	29.3	60.0	30.7
2004	26.5	58.5	32.0
2005	29.4	84.6	55.1
2006	36.0	107.8	71.8
2007 <sup>1</sup>	42.2	109.5	67.3
2008 <sup>2</sup>	45.3	83.8	38.5
2009 <sup>3</sup>	65.1	57.3	-7.8
2010 <sup>4</sup>	65.3	30.8	- 34.5

**Table 1: Estimated migration (1997 to 2010)**  
**Source “Population and migration estimates April 2010” CSO Sept 2010**

### **Current position**

The surge in birth rate in recent years will necessitate the provision of significant additional pupil places to cater for the children born in Ireland during this period. The CSO expect that the current relatively high birth rate will continue for the medium term. In regard to migration, it is the most uncertain factor affecting the population. As can be seen in **Table 1**, the CSO report a return to net outward migration in April 2009 of 7,800 people and this is estimated to have increased to 34,500 a year later in April 2010. Nevertheless, the natural increase of the population remains very strong (i.e. excess of births over deaths). The combined effect of strong natural increase and negative net migration resulted in a small increase in the population estimate of 11,400 in the period April 2009 to April 2010. According to the “CSO Population and Migration Estimates (April 2010)”, the estimated number of children in the 0 – 4 years age group in 2010 is 353,800 while those in the 5 – 9 of age group is 311,600. This is another clear indication that an increase in pupil numbers in primary school continues to be the most likely scenario over the short to medium term.

The net conclusion is that despite the current economic downturn, the total enrolment in primary schools may grow from 505,600 pupils in the 2009/10 year to 569,600 by the year 2018. This could lead to the need for an additional 2,285 classrooms over the period. The effect of recent demographic patterns and projecting future requirements

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary figure

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary figure

<sup>3</sup> Preliminary figure

<sup>4</sup> Preliminary figure

is dealt with in more detail in **Part Two** of the report. It should be noted that the economic performance of the country has a significant impact on demographics. The current situation underlines the difficulty in giving long-term accurate projections on population figures. Therefore any system that is introduced relating to the opening of schools must be robust and flexible so that it can be effective in times of rising, stable and falling population. Demographic analysis will continue to be a central element regarding new school establishment.

## ***Patronage***

### ***Development of the Patronage System***

Our current system of primary school patronage has its origins in the establishment of the primary education sector under the Stanley letter in 1831. The original intent outlined in the Stanley Letter was to have local national schools established serving all pupils in the community regardless of denomination. However, within 40 years the situation had changed whereby the system sought to utilise the existing church structures to organise schools throughout the country. This system has evolved to include the range of patron bodies we have today and the system has been underpinned by legislation including the Education Act, 1998. Apart from the Churches, bodies such as Educate Together Ltd and Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge Teo, have become national patron bodies with schools throughout the country. These patron bodies have limited company status.

The history of the patronage system has meant that the educational philosophy of the patron, be it religious or linguistic, translates into a distinctive character of the education provided in the school. A variety of terms has been used to describe this distinctive character of a school:

- Ethos
- Characteristic spirit
- Mission
- Purpose
- Philosophy.

### ***Definition of a Patron***

According to the Education Act, 1998 the Patron is defined as follows:

8. (1) (a) the person who, at the commencement of this section, is recognised by the Minister as the patron of a primary school, and
- (b) the persons who, at the commencement of this section, stand appointed as trustees or as the board of governors of a post-primary school and, where there are no such trustees or such board, the owner of that school,

Shall be deemed to be the patron for the purposes of this Act and the Minister shall enter his, her or their name, as appropriate, in a register kept for that purpose by the Minister.

- (2) In any case other than that provided in subsection (1), the patron of a recognised school shall be the person who requested recognition of

the school or a nominee of such person and the name of that person shall be entered in the register.

The Act also outlines that schools may be operated by more than one patron on a joint patronage system and new patrons can apply to be registered by the Minister. Section 8 (6) provides that “The patron of a school shall carry out the functions and exercise the powers conferred on the patron by the Act and such other functions and powers as may be conferred on the patron by any Act of the Oireachtas or instrument made there under, deed, charter, articles of management or other such instrument relating to the establishment or operation of the school.”

### ***Function of the patron***

The functions of the patron have evolved over the years. The main functions of a patron relate to definition of school ethos and to the appointment of the Board of Management. Historically, the patron provided a site for the school but new schools are increasingly built on sites purchased by the Department. Since the mid-1970s, responsibility for running schools on a day to day basis has been devolved from the patron to the board of management and this was statutorily underpinned by the Education Act, 1998.

The position of the patron relative to the board of management was set out in a court case, *Keara Uí Chróinín et al and The Minister for Education and Science Ireland and The Attorney General* in May 2009. Referring to the Education Act, 1998 the judgement states “*these statutory provisions leave no doubt that the role of the patron is of a more primary and antecedent nature than the role of the BOM. It appears to be intended by the Act that the BOM is to be a derivative of the patron, to act as the manager of the school from day to day along with the patron. This primary and antecedent role shows the contrast between the permanent or enduring role of the patron and the temporary nature of the roles of the various members of the boards*”.

While the Education Act, 1998 does not specify detailed functions for the patron, it does in Section 9, list the functions of a school as follows:

A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall use its available resources to—

- (a) ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs are identified and provided for,
- (b) ensure that the education provided by it meets the requirements of education policy as determined from time to time by the Minister including requirements as to the provision of a curriculum as prescribed by the Minister in accordance with section 30,
- (c) ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices,
- (d) promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school,



- (e) promote equality of opportunity for both male and female students and staff of the school,
  - (f) promote the development of the Irish language and traditions, Irish literature, the arts and other cultural matters,
  - (g) ensure that parents of a student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, have access in the prescribed manner to records kept by that school relating to the progress of that student in his or her education,
  - (h) in the case of schools located in a Gaeltacht area, contribute to the maintenance of Irish as the primary community language,
  - (i) conduct its activities in compliance with any regulations made from time to time by the Minister under *section 33*,
  - (j) ensure that the needs of personnel involved in management functions and staff development needs generally in the school are identified and provided for,
  - (k) establish and maintain systems whereby the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations can be assessed, including the quality and effectiveness of teaching in the school and the attainment levels and academic standards of students,
  - (l) establish or maintain contacts with other schools and at other appropriate levels throughout the community served by the school,
- and
- (m) subject to this Act and in particular *section 15 (2) (d)*, establish and maintain an admissions policy which provides for maximum accessibility to the school.

Section 14 of the Act provides that, ‘It shall be the duty of a patron, for the purposes of ensuring that a recognised school is managed in a spirit of partnership, to appoint where practicable a board of management the composition of which is agreed between patrons of schools, national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and the Minister’.

### ***Who can become a patron?***

While legislation and other Department of Education and Skills documents deal at some length with the issue of patronage there are no detailed guidelines as to who can become a patron. At present, the appointment of a new patron is linked to the establishment of a new school as outlined in the Education Act, 1998 and there are no provisions for appointing a new patron independently of their application to open a new school. While the process used by the NSAC was in operation, the Department adjudicated on the patronage element of applications where the applicant for the new school was not already registered as a patron. This process followed that outlined in appendix K of the Commission on School Accommodations, ‘Criteria and Procedures

for the Recognition of New Primary Schools’, 1998. This is included in **Appendix D** of this report.

## ***Diversity***

Traditionally choice in primary school provision has been based around the choice of denominational education, formation and practice and choice in terms of language (English or Irish). Clearly in our society these are not the only elements of diversity. These elements include, but are not limited to, diversity related to socio-economic, ethnicity, gender, nationality and inclusion of children with special educational needs. The section in the White Paper on Education (1995, 32) on *Diversity of Schooling Provision* regards diversity as diversity of school type particularly in relation to denominational and linguistic diversity. The White Paper (1995, 6) embraced the ideal of pluralism as one of its basic educational principles: “The State should serve the educational rights of its citizens to participate in and benefit from education in accordance with each individual’s needs and abilities and the nation’s resources.”

The Constitution enshrines the principle of parental choice. Article 42.3 provides as follows: ‘The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular type of school designated by the State’. Article 42.4 provides that: “...the State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation.”

It is also relevant that Article 8(1) of the Constitution declares Irish as the first official language.

Section 6 of the Education Act 1998 sets out the objects of the Act which include the following: -

- Section 6(e) “to promote the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice having regard to the rights of patrons and the effective and efficient use of resources”
- Section 6(i) “to contribute to the realisation of national policy and objectives in relation to the extension of bi-lingualism in Irish society and in particular the achievement of a greater use of the Irish language at school and in the community”

The Education Act 1998 also enshrines the principle of diversity in the following specific Sections of the Act. Section 7 (4) (a) provides that:

‘In carrying out his or her functions, the Minister shall have regard to -

- (i) the resources available,
- (ii) the provision for education and training made by other agencies with funds provided by the Oireachtas,
- (iii) the need to reflect the diversity of educational services provided in the State.
- (iv) the practices and traditions relating to the organisation of schools or groups of schools existing at the commencement of this Part and the right of schools to manage their own affairs in accordance with this Act and any charters, deeds, articles of management or other such instruments relating to their establishment or operation,

Section 10(2) (b) provides that the Minister may designate a school ..... where the Minister is satisfied that “in the case of the proposed school, and having regard to the desirability of diversity in the classes of school operating in the area likely to be served by the school, the needs of the students attending or likely to attend the school cannot reasonably be met by existing schools,”

The decade of the 1970s saw the establishment of new types of primary schools prompted by parental demand for choice. Up until then, the choice available to parents was effectively the local denominational school only. The denomination in the vast majority of cases was Catholic and a small minority of schools were Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist. There was one Jewish school. By the end of the 1970s, there was evidence of change. 1978 saw the establishment of the first multi-denominational school. In subsequent years, Ireland has become a signatory to a number of international conventions<sup>5</sup> which, inter alia, have resulted in a call for the provision of more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools. At the same time, demand for Irish- medium education had been growing outside the Gaeltacht areas. In 1978, according to the Department’s statistical report, there were 23 Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht areas. These would all have been denominational in character in 1978. Thirty years later, in 2008, this number had grown to 139 Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht areas. The majority of these schools (113) are denominational, but a number are either inter-denominational or multi-denominational in ethos.

Nationally, the following table outlines the position as regards the patronage of primary schools in 20010/11.

(Note: The Group is aware that the Department is currently updating the register of patrons and, as such, there may be some minor revision to the detail in the table following verification from patron bodies.)

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<sup>5</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 1989), Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ratified 1999), Convention on the rights of the Child (ratified 1992) and the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ratified 2000)

<b>Table 2: Total number of primary schools by patron body (2010/11)<sup>6</sup></b>		
<b>Patron Body</b>	<b>No of Schools</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Catholic <sup>7</sup>	2,841	89.65
Church of Ireland <sup>8</sup>	174	5.49
Presbyterian	17	0.54
Methodist	1	0.03
Jewish	1	0.03
Islamic	2	0.06
Quaker	1	0.03
John Scottus Educational Trust Ld	1	0.03
Lifeways Ireland Ltd	2	0.06
An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghæilge Teo	57	1.80
Educate Together Ltd (national Patron Body)	44	1.39
Schools in Educate Together network with their own patron body <sup>9</sup>	14	0.44
Vocational Education Committees <sup>10</sup>	5	0.16
Minister for Education & Skills	9	0.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,169</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>6</sup> This table outlines the patronage of ordinary mainstream primary schools and does not include Special Schools. In 2009/10 there were 130 Special Schools. In the main, Special Schools are either under the religious patronage of the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland or under patronage of various organisations such as the Health Service Executive, Ability West, the Central Remedial Clinic, COPE Foundation, Enable Ireland, Rehab Group, KARE and most recently Autism Ireland. A small number of special schools are under the patronage of various other private organisations and individuals. (See Appendix F for a list of patrons of special schools).

<sup>7</sup> One hundred and eighty seven of these schools which are under Catholic patronage operate through the medium of Irish (composed of 106 schools in Gaeltacht areas and 81 gaelscoileanna outside Gaeltacht areas )

<sup>8</sup> One Church of Ireland school has shared patronage with the Methodist Church, four schools have shared patronage with the Presbyterian Church and three schools have individual patron bodies.

<sup>9</sup> One of these schools is a gaelscoil

<sup>10</sup> Community National Schools are under the interim patronage of the Minister while draft legislation to confirm VEC patronage was published in November 2010.

The Department of Education and Skills currently classifies primary schools as denominational, inter-denominational and multi-denominational offering education through the medium of English or Irish (all-Irish schools in Gaeltacht areas and all Irish schools outside of Gaeltacht areas). A description of each category of school and the main type of schools within each category is contained in **Appendix F** and later in this part there is a description of the rationale and steps leading to the establishment of the Community National School model. It also contains a description of gaelscoileanna. It should be noted that the ethos of a gaelscoil can be denominational, multi-denominational or inter-denominational.

The data shows an increased range in school patron types in the primary education system. The majority of the new schools established in the last thirty years are either multi-denominational or Irish-medium schools. Small numbers of Catholic schools have been established in areas of large population growth and schools have been established to cater for minority denominations, for example the two Muslim schools and the Quaker school. The changes reflect the radically altered and more diverse society from which our school communities are drawn. The Group notes the growth of the multi-denominational sector, the all-Irish schools and the establishment of the model of the Community National School. The following table gives an overview of the number of schools established under various patron bodies from 1997 to date.

**Table 3: Number of new schools opened under various patrons since 1997/98**

Year	Patron Body						Total
	Catholic	Educate Together Ltd	An Foras Pátrúnachta Teo	Schools in the Educate Together Network with their own patron body	Other denominational patron bodies	Other Multi-Denominational Patron Bodies	
1997/98	0	0	1	2	0	0	<b>3</b>
1998/99	0	1	6	0	0	0	<b>7</b>
1999/00	1	1	3	0	0	1	<b>6</b>
2000/01	1	1	2	0	0	0	<b>4</b>
2001/02	3	2	2	0	1	0	<b>8</b>
2002/03	0	7	3	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
2003/04	3	3	1	0	0	0	<b>7</b>
2004/05	0	4	1	0	1	0	<b>6</b>
2005/06	6	4	3	0	0	0	<b>13</b>
2006/07	2	2	5	0	0	0	<b>9</b>
2007/08	6	3	4	0	1	1	<b>15</b>
2008/09	3	12	3	0	0	3	<b>21</b>
2009/10	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
2010/11	2	2	0	0	0	3	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>116</b>

The changing nature of society is leading at present to demands for the increased availability of different types of schools, particularly multi-denominational and Irish language medium schools. It could also be the case that demand in future could arise for other diverse types of schools. Since the publication of the White Paper on Education (1995) society has changed dramatically. There is an increased understanding for the types of diversity referred to earlier in this section. The increased diversity in our population is reflected in our schools with many schools being more diverse both in terms of pupil enrolment and also in terms of diverse approaches within them. This is particularly the case in urban and suburban areas but the change is not just confined to these areas.

Much of the demand in terms of choice of school patronage in areas of significant demographic growth is being met through the establishment and construction of new schools. However, in areas where new schools do not need to be established for demographic reasons, demands continue for the increased choice in provision.

The Group considers that the Department has to ensure in the first instance that every child has a school place available to them. The Group further considers that the Department should take all reasonable measures to ensure that there is a choice of

patronage of schools available where there is a critical mass of demand for such choice, having regard to the finances available.

The Group considers that new policy options need to be explored to seek to realise such a choice of patronage and these are discussed later in this report. In these circumstances, the Group recognises that it is not practical for every student to be provided with access to a place in a school operated by a patron of their choice. The Group also recognises that in areas where there is not a demographic demand for new schools, it is very difficult for the Department to justify the allocation of capital expenditure on the construction of new schools given the prioritisation needed in the Department's capital budget to provide for the demographic increases as well as the historic under-investment in school buildings.

### ***Establishing parental preferences for a school type***

Article 42.1 of the Constitution recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children. It is important, in any system for establishing new primary schools, to ensure that the principle of parental input into the type of school to be provided is preserved. New mechanisms will be needed to identify parental/ community wishes. Where new schools are being established, the decision on who will be patron of these schools should take account of parental choice. The Group notes the survey work undertaken by the Department in Gorey, Co. Wexford in regard to the parental preferences for the new post-primary school being established there.

The areas where new schools will be required include those where there is currently a local population and new green field areas that do not have a population. The system for the establishment of new schools must take into account both of these types of areas, but must also be flexible enough to deal with changing areas that currently have schools, or areas of declining population where the range of schools may need to be adjusted. A system for establishing new schools must protect and optimise the resources of the State but should not make assumptions regarding the values and choices of parents without proper consultation.

### ***The Irish language***

Article 8 of Bunreacht na hÉireann states that: "The Irish language as the national language is the first official language". The promotion of the Irish language has been an important aim of successive Irish Governments and its place in our education system has been consistently protected. This should continue to be the case.

The importance of Irish has been re-affirmed in the recently published 20 year strategy for the Irish language, "Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030". From 1972 to 1997, the number of schools educating exclusively through Irish grew from 11 to 101 and since that time an extra 38 gaelscoileanna have been opened. The ethos of gaelscoileanna is varied. It can be denominational, multi-denominational or inter-denominational. Fifty-eight of the gaelscoileanna are under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge and the remainder are mainly under the patronage of a local Catholic bishop. It is also of note that the number of people who speak Irish has increased by in excess of 85,000 in the inter-censal period between

2002 and 2006. A continued strong interest from parent groups in setting up Irish language primary schools backs this up and makes it clear that any system for setting up new primary schools must be sensitive to the special place of the Irish language in our culture. Therefore Irish language schools should be accommodated in the new system whether by means of campus developments with other schools or where appropriate on their own sites.

In areas where it has been decided that additional classrooms will be required based on demographic analysis, the provision of Irish language education should form part of the analysis of how the needs of the area can be met. If a patron decides that it wishes to change an English-medium school to an Irish-medium school this should be facilitated provided that the change is agreed by all stakeholders and that it does not leave a deficit of accommodation in the area. Where Irish language schools are being set up they should comply with the same rules and regulations for establishment as all schools.

It is important to note the importance of the Irish language, not just in Irish-medium schools, but also in English-medium schools and that it is a function of all schools to promote the Irish language. This is set out in the Education Act, 1998 (section 9).

### ***Divesting process being advanced***

The possibility of the Catholic Church divesting itself of certain primary schools was raised by Catholic Church authorities initially. At the request of those authorities, the Department of Education and Skills undertook to identify possible areas where the demographics and existing school configuration was such that there might be potential for the Catholic Church to consider divesting patronage.

In this regard, in August 2010 the Department identified forty three possible town areas and a number of Dublin city areas. Out of all the areas identified, ten areas were selected at random for more detailed analysis. They are also areas with a preponderance of denominational school provision.

The publication of the outcome of the Department's identification exercise in August 2010 was welcomed by the Irish Bishops Conference. It stated that while the Catholic Church has made clear the commitment of Catholic communities throughout Ireland to providing denominational Catholic education to parents who desire such for their children, it does not see itself in the future as the sole or dominant provider of schools. It further stated that there is a need for the measurement of parental attitudes, beliefs, values and expectations as well as a long-term framework through which a variety of complex issues can be addressed. The Irish Bishops Conference also stated that an internal Church reflection on the nature and scope of Catholic schools and education for the next generation is now required and should involve wide consultation. It invited those interested in the future of Catholic schools to make their views known and to contribute to this important debate.

### ***Development of new patron model***

Historically the role of the State in the establishment of primary schools was confined to facilitating the initiative of patrons. This contrasts with the role of the State at second level, where it has been actively involved for many years in the establishment



of schools. It was considered by Government to be appropriate and important that the State, through local VECs, should be in a position to participate in primary education provision in order to provide an alternative patronage model at this level.

It was also the case that situations could arise where a primary school was required but no patron was willing or available to establish one. In order to meet the challenges posed by the changing shape of Irish society and the needs of its emerging communities for greater diversity, the former Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D., with the approval of the Government, undertook to explore the possibility of developing a new model of patronage for primary schools. This involved a consultation process with all the relevant education partners, including the main patron bodies, management bodies and union interests. From that process the view emerged that maintaining the *status quo* would not address the new demands being placed upon the education system. It also revealed a widespread general welcome for the initiative itself and for the main principles of the approach being adopted.

The Government agreed that the new model of primary school patronage would be a new State model of community national schools under the patronage of vocational education committees.

It is not the intention that the new model of patronage will replace existing models but that it will be a complementary alternative where the specific local circumstances warrant this new approach. The new patronage model is currently being piloted in five locations in Counties Dublin, Meath and Kildare. The Community National Schools that have been established to date have been established under the interim patronage of the Minister for Education & Skills while legislation is being prepared to confirm VEC patronage.

### ***Public consultation***

One of the central elements of the terms of reference for the Technical Working Group was that a public consultation process should be undertaken. There were two elements to this consultation process. The first element was an advertisement placed in the national media in June 2009 inviting submissions from interested parties to the review. The second element was direct consultation with the outgoing New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC) whereby the points raised in their annual reports were explored in greater detail.

### ***Main issues raised in the public consultation process***

In response to the advertisement in the national media a total of twenty seven submissions were received from individuals and organisations. A summary of the submissions received is attached at **Appendix E** and the main issues raised are outlined in this section. The Technical Working Group has decided to outline here the views garnered by the public consultation and to reflect the views here in the report prior to the Group's recommendations.

Issues addressed in the submissions included the following:

- Minimum number of pupils required for the establishment of a new school.
- Views about the Community National School concept
- Views on the concept of shared campus,
- Views on the policy around all-Irish education
- View advocating the co-trusteeship patronage model adopted at second level in the Community Schools
- Proposals in regard to the regulation of patrons

It was acknowledged by many respondents to the public consultation that, in future, the Department of Education and Skills would identify where schools are needed and a major issue would be to decide who will be the patron of any such new school.

### ***Minimum number of pupils required to establish a school***

The public consultation expressed many varying viewpoints on the minimum number required to establish a new school. Four submissions wished to retain the minimum number of 17 pupils, four submissions regarded the minimum number as too high and four regarded it as too low. There were requests to have the number flexible depending on urban /rural situations and requests to be flexible with minority/small groups.

### ***Views about the Community National School concept***

A number of the submissions received advocated the Community National School patronage model.

### ***Accommodation and shared campus arrangements***

There were mixed views on the idea of a campus with some submissions favouring a campus, others disliking the idea and others favouring it provided that the separate ethos of the various schools involved is protected.

A number of submissions advocated a gaelchampus. It was mentioned that there also has to be good campus management to ensure that it works properly.

### ***Views on policy of all-Irish education***

A number of submissions called for a holistic policy on all-Irish education.

### ***Lead in time to establishment of new school***

Two submissions called for the lead-in time to the establishment of a new school to be increased.

### ***Co-trusteeship patronage model***

A submission called for the consideration of the adoption of the management model used in second level Community and Comprehensive schools. Under this model, the Board of Management is representative of religious and lay interests as well as parents and teachers

### ***Proposals in regard to the regulation of patrons***

A submission called for more accountability in relation to school patrons and if necessary the adoption of legislation to regulate school patrons in specific areas. This included provision of a statement of ethos and how it is applied in practice; statement of delivery of the religious/ethical education to be delivered and regulation of patron bodies in areas such as finance, membership, competence and obligation to produce annual reports to stakeholders.

### ***Main issues raised in consultation with NSAC members***

In May 2009 a meeting was convened between representatives of the Technical Working Group and representatives of the NSAC to discuss the major issues that NSAC had encountered during their term in office under the Commission on School Accommodation. NSAC encountered a number of key issues and expressed views on the following:

- Minimum number of pupils required to establish a school
- Diversity
- Inspection process
- Special schools
- Decoupling of registration of patron from applications for new schools

### ***NSAC view re minimum number of pupils required to establish a school***

NSAC members raised the question of the minimum number of pupils required to establish a school. They expressed the view to the representatives of the Technical Working Group that 17 pupils as a minimum number to start a new school is too small. They felt that the minimum start up number should be at least one class group (25 to 30 pupils). There should also be an allowance for incremental growth – in that if a new school opens it should be given time to grow and fill along the class groups.

The NSAC felt however, that the minimum start-up number should not be so high so as to discriminate against small minority groups. The NSAC members also felt that there should be a two year run-in for the start up of any new school to give the school authority a better opportunity to arrange accommodation, appoint teachers, etc.

### ***NSAC view re concept of diversity of provision/ characteristic spirit***

Diversity criteria became the most important factor for the NSAC during the course of their work. If the diversity criterion was met in an application for a new school, it was very difficult not to recommend any such new school to the Minister. Language, single sex versus co-educational, inter-denominational, multi-denominational, for instance, were all means by which new schools applying under the NSAC process

indicated they were providing diversity. The NSAC members felt that this policy could result in a number of small schools in an area.

NSAC members considered that the main concern should be the long-term viability of a school rather than the number of pupils it can achieve in its first year of establishment and it was pointed out that the minimum number of seventeen pupils was agreed at a time of declining enrolments.

#### *NSAC view re inspection process for new schools*

The NSAC members felt that there should be a rigorous inspection process in place for at least the first three years of any new school to ensure that the school is meeting requirements in relation to numbers, ethos, curriculum and the other rules laid down by the Department for the running of schools.

#### *NSAC view re establishment of Special Schools*

The NSAC members felt that Special Schools should be treated as a stand alone issue, as should Hospital Schools. They felt that these schools should be dealt with by Special Education Section of the Department and that they should not have to come through the NSAC procedures, or whichever procedures replace them as a result of this review.

#### *NSAC view re decoupling of registration of patron from applications for new schools*

NSAC was of the view that the current position whereby a patron can only be considered in the context of a new school opening should be changed. A group should be able to apply to be registered as a patron independently of a new school being required, and if they are successful, they should be in a position to apply to operate a new school when it is required.

### *International comparisons*

As part of its work on the issues under consideration here, the Technical Working Group has examined examples of the international position with regard to the establishment of new primary schools. It is difficult to draw direct analogies between culturally and geographically diverse locations with differing education systems but this international analysis does give an indication of the similar challenges faced by other countries and the way in which they met these challenges. The countries examined were Scotland, Wales, England, Australia and New Zealand. While this can only be considered a cursory study of the challenges facing education bodies internationally it helps to place the Irish situation in context and along with the other work done by the Technical Working Group, including the consultation processes, provides a basis for the recommendations in **Part Three**.

The Education Act, 1996 sets out how schools are established in England and Wales. There are a number of categories of schools in the jurisdiction but the Group focussed on the state-funded sector. **Appendix C** provides some relevant legislative extracts relating to the establishment of schools.

### ***School funding***

There are unique aspects to the primary school system of each country examined but funding was a common thread among them all. In all the countries examined there is a large state-funded sector but private funding of schools also exists. As this report deals with the state funded sector no analysis has been carried out on how the privately funded education sector operates in these countries. The operational method of funding the schools varies but the commonality exists in the fact that schools are funded ultimately from the Exchequer.

### ***Planning for school accommodation***

As in Ireland, international practice is that the provision of education is based on legislative acts which lay out the responsibilities of the various partners in education. In most instances the responsibility for ensuring that all children have a school place falls on the relevant government authority, though this may be a local government agency or a central government department. Within the English and Welsh systems a local education authority may establish primary schools and secondary schools; maintain primary and secondary schools, whether established by them or not and assist any primary or secondary school which is not maintained by them. A local education authority may establish, maintain and assist schools outside as well as inside their area. The funding authority may establish grant-maintained schools for the purpose of providing relevant education.

Approval for new schools comes from the public body charged with this responsibility and whoever proposes the school becomes responsible for ensuring that a suitable premise is available.

### ***Establishment of new schools***

In the main, the examples of international practice examined indicate that it is that the relevant government authority, whether this be a local government agency or a central government Department, may decide to establish a new school, based on need, and this decision is in the most part made following a public consultation process. In certain jurisdictions public consultation will also take place in regard to not only the establishment of new schools but also in relation to school closures, alterations an/or amalgamations.

Decisions to open a new school (or to alter, close or amalgamate existing schools) will in general have regard to the educational, financial and social impact of such a decision. In Queensland, Australia, for example an application for a new school is based on a number of criteria, including the educational programme to be delivered, resources, financial viability and improvement processes.

### ***Campus development***

An example of a campus development in Scotland was examined. In Scotland, the local Council carries out consultation with the local communities before any school building takes place. The local Council also, at an early stage, conducts discussions with the local Catholic Bishop in the case of schools under the patronage of that church. Before building takes place, arrangements were reached with the local community and local Catholic Bishop, to protect the identity, distinctiveness and ethos of a Catholic School sharing a co-located campus with a non-denominational School. Formal consultation regarding pupil admission and location of a faith school within a co-located campus were carried out with the local Bishop as set out in

Sections 22D of the Education Scotland Act, 1980 and amended Section 5.6 of the 1981 Act.

## **Part Two – Future School Planning**

There are three key steps in planning for and delivering future school requirements, namely:

1. Identifying requirement for school places;
2. Choosing a patron(s); and
3. Planning and delivering school buildings.

### ***Overview***

Ireland has, in the last fifteen years moved from an era of contracting population to one of rapidly expanding population and now appears to be entering a phase of more stable population growth generally driven by natural increase. While it appears that the national population will grow at a slower rate over the next number of years than in the years of significant economic growth, the continued strong growth in the birth rate means that primary school enrolments will continue to rise in the short to medium term. These shifts in population trends over a relatively short period of time demonstrate the need to put in place a system for school establishment that can respond to the trends.

A school is an integral part of any local community and therefore the establishment of a new school must be carried out with reference to the overall plan of the local authority for any given area. This necessitates collaboration between the planning system and the education system. In this regard, a set of statutory guidelines was published in 2008 under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. These guidelines were published jointly by the Ministers for Environment Heritage and Local Government and the Minister for Education and Science. The Guidelines set out the roles, responsibilities and specific actions to be taken in relation to forecasting future demand for school places and planning for schools provision through the development plan, local area plan and development management processes by the Department of Education and Skills and local authorities. The Guidelines aim to ensure the timely provision of schools and schools-related infrastructure within the planning system and by focusing on three objectives:

- firstly, schools provision should be an integral part of the evolution of compact sustainable urban development and the development of sustainable communities;
- secondly, the provision of any new schools should be driven by and emerge from an integrated approach between the planning functions of planning authorities and the Department of Education and Skills; and
- thirdly, planning authorities will co-operate and co-ordinate with the Department of Education and Skills in ensuring the timely delivery of schools.

Furthermore, the 2010 Planning and Development (Amendment) Act widens the scope for inclusion of school sites in the categories of public infrastructure that can be incorporated into local authority Development Contribution Schemes and Special Development Contribution schemes that govern the rate of contribution levied on new developments and towards the cost of public infrastructure that benefits such

development. A practical effect of the, 2010 Amendment Act is that grant of planning permission for new housing development in certain instances may include a requirement for the payment of cash contributions towards the provision of public infrastructure facilitating the development, including schools. However, such a requirement necessitates certain pre-conditions. These pre-conditions include that the appropriate provision has been made in both the development plan and the development contribution scheme. Both the development plan and the contribution scheme are reserved functions of the locally elected members. Work is currently in progress on the drafting of guidelines to be issued to the planning authorities on the exercise of these reserved functions in the context of the Amendment Act, 2010

Another major issue which has impacted on school planning is the fact that the appointment of a patron was linked in recent years to the establishment of the school if at least seventeen pupils were enrolled for the first year of the school's operation. This system, which had been adopted based on the recommendations of the 1998 Steering Group's report, was application-based. In areas where there is not demographic growth, it could lead to duplication of provision and thus over investment by the State in terms of capital expenditure. The system placed an emphasis on the first three years of a school's existence rather than an analysis of the area to ascertain the long-term educational needs of the community. Since this system was application-based, it could lead to a fragmentation of provision in a local area that would not give the optimum educational return to the community in the longer term. If the establishment of a new school is based on detailed demographic analysis by the Department of Education and Skills then it should be possible to establish schools with a secure long-term viability in good quality buildings that will be able to grow incrementally over a period of time.

The Technical Working Group also feels that the current position whereby a patron can only be considered in the context of a new school opening should be changed. A procedure should be put in place to allow for registration of a patron independently of a new school being required and, if they are successful, they should be in a position to apply to operate a new school when it is required.

### ***Demographic Analysis –population projections***

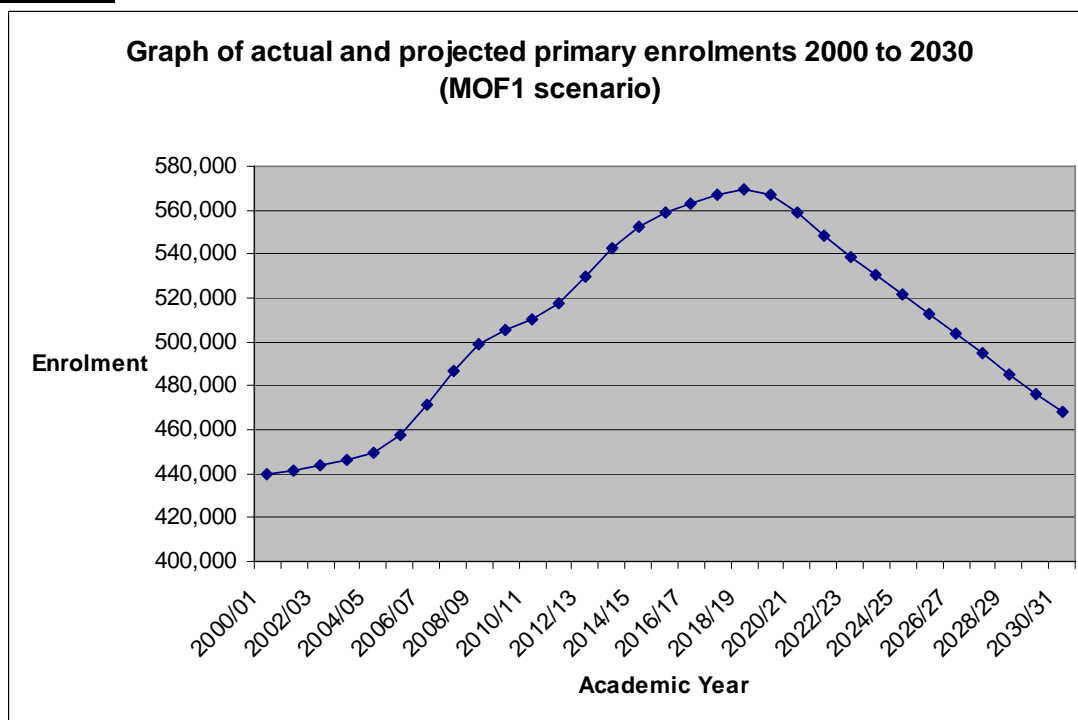
**Part One** outlined that Ireland is currently in somewhat of a population boom with record increases in birth rates in recent years and high inward migration until quite recently.

The CSO regularly produces population projections to aid planning. Population projections are based on assumptions relating to future trends in fertility, mortality and migration. These are constantly reviewed and updated in light of changing trends. Population projections depend on the assumptions chosen in the three variables of fertility, mortality and migration and the inter-play between them. The CSO has conducted detailed analysis on the most likely scenarios in regard to these three variables over the short, medium and longer term. Based on this analysis the CSO estimates in "Regional Population Projections 2011 – 2026 (published December 2008) the most likely out-turn for overall average fertility as measured by the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) over the period to 2026 is likely to be 1.9 children per woman in her lifetime. This scenario, labelled F1, in effect assumes a continuance, but not an increase, in the current level of births. In regard to migration, the CSO estimates that the most likely scenario over the period to 2026 is zero net migration. In practice, this means that best estimates indicate the numbers of immigrants into Ireland and



emigrants from Ireland will be about the same thus resulting in a zero net migration figure. Combining the scenario of continuing relatively high fertility (F1) with zero net migration (MO) gives the MOF1 assumption in regard to future population. The Department’s Statistics Section’s projections of full-time enrolment (February 2010) have regard to this scenario. The graph in **Figure 1** below demonstrates the likely projected effect of the MOF1 scenario on primary school enrolment levels up to the year 2030. It can be seen that there is an expected increase in enrolment every year from now until 2018 when it is expected to peak and then decline slowly. The projections show it could be necessary to provide approximately an additional 60,000 primary pupil places over the next eight years.

**Figure 1**



For clarity, below are the projected pupil numbers from 2011 to 2018 under the MOF1 (zero migration, high fertility) assumption

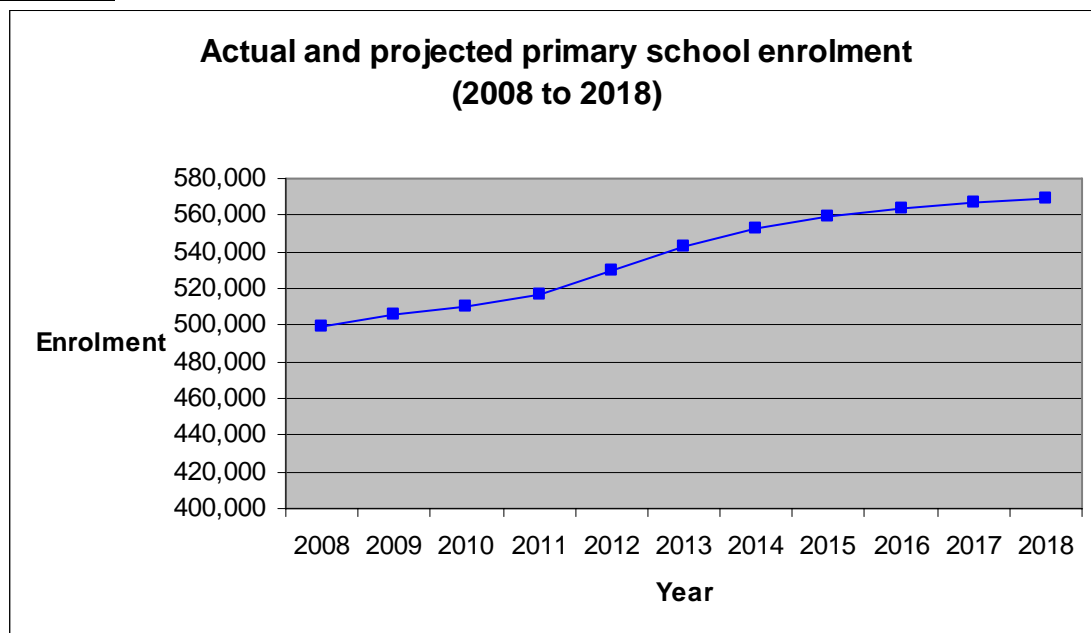
<b>Table 4: Projected pupil number from 2011 to 2018 under the MOF1 assumption</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Estimated primary pupil numbers</b>
<b>2010/11</b>	510,300
<b>2011/12</b>	517,200
<b>2012/13</b>	529,800
<b>2013/14</b>	543,100
<b>2014/15</b>	552,700
<b>2015/16</b>	559,100
<b>2016/17</b>	563,300
<b>2017/18</b>	567,300

It should be noted that since the CSO published the “Regional Population Projections” in December 2008, a number of important economic, social and demographic changes

have occurred, including a rise in the total fertility rate to over 2.0. Projections regarding pupil numbers are subject to change depending on a range of variables and as such, must be kept under continuous review.

The graph in **Figure 2** below illustrates clearly the immediate likely challenges to provide places over the period to 2018. While these figures indicate the situation at national level, the challenge is to establish in which locations the school going cohort will increase most significantly so that sufficient school accommodation can be put in place to meet demand.

**Figure 2**



**Source :** “Projections of full-time enrolment in teaching institutions aided by the Department of Education and Science at primary, secondary and higher level (2009 to 2030)” published February 2010 by Statistics Section (DES)

## ***Demographic Analysis – Methodology***

Forward Planning Section of the Department of Education and Skills is responsible for assessing the demographic trends in each area of the country and estimating the number of classrooms that will be required resulting from demographic changes.

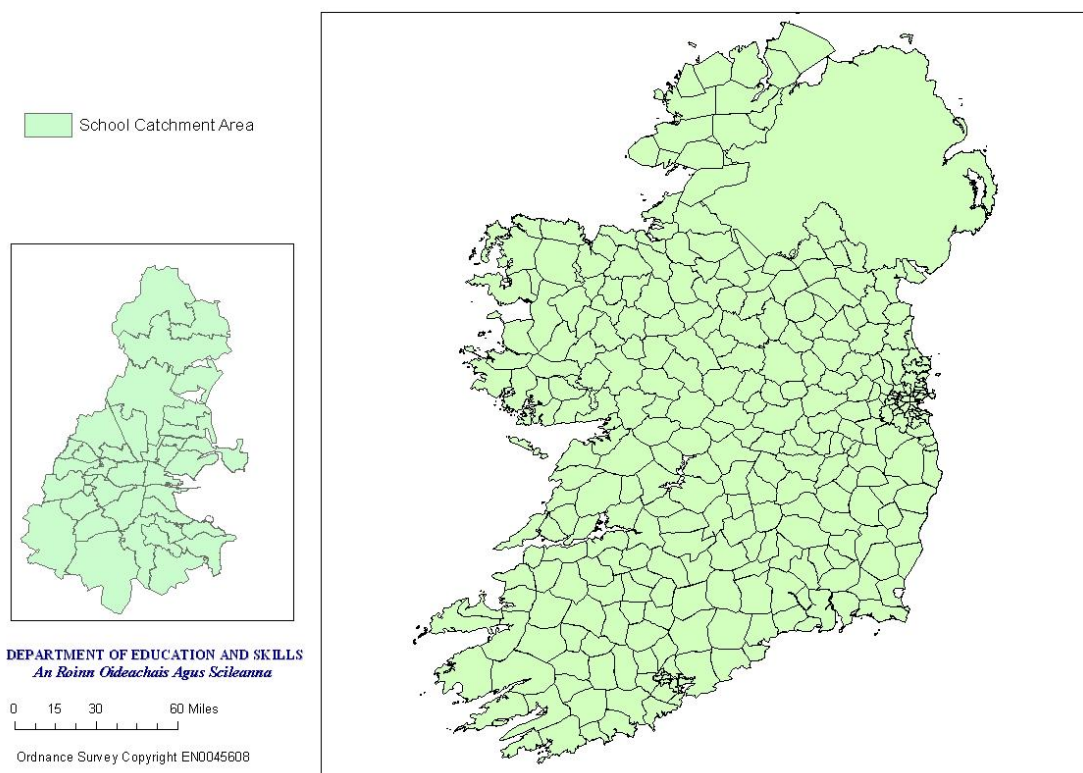
These estimates are based on statistical information from a number of sources:

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO)
- The Department of Social Protection
- The General Register's Office
- An Post's Geo-directory
- The Department of Education and Skills database
- Local Area Plans from the local authorities

Forward Planning Section of the Department of Education and Skills has developed an extensive capacity to analyse statistics and demographics from amongst the above sources using a Geographical Information System (GIS). The GIS allows the Department to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in many ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, reports, and charts. A GIS helps answer questions and solve problems by looking at information in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared.

GIS allows various datasets to be layered over a digital map of Ireland. The location of all schools, primary and post-primary, have been mapped and indicative school catchment areas, based on post-primary feeder areas, have been established and the relevant demographic information was then linked to these catchment areas using GIS. These catchment areas are outlined in **Figure 3** below and it is important to note that they do not follow the boundaries of the school transport catchment areas.

**Figure 3**



## ***Datasets Used for Demographic Analysis***

Over the past number of years the Department of Education and Skills has been increasing the sophistication of its planning process both by developing closer ties with other public bodies and as we have already discussed through the development of available technology. The effectiveness of planning depends primarily on the quality of the information available to the planners and therefore the Department uses a wide range of datasets in its planning process.

### ***Central Statistics Office – Census Data and Regional Population Projections***

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) publishes a suite of Census data following each census and the small area population statistics (SAPS) are particularly valuable for inclusion on the Department's GIS for planning purposes. These provide a reliable benchmark in relation to the distribution of the national population and demographics at the time of each census.

The CSO also produces regional population projections every five years. The Department can use these to carry out a regional analysis of likely future requirement for additional educational accommodation based on the expected percentage growth in population and the current enrolment in an area. The regional population projections represent a top-down disaggregation of national projections. The assumptions used in the national model (fertility, mortality and international migration) are regionalised mainly based on recent historical data, while migration between regions is also assessed. The outcome of this procedure is a set of regional population projections based on what would be likely to happen if recent trends in fertility, mortality and international migration were to continue, subject to the overall constraint of the national population projections.

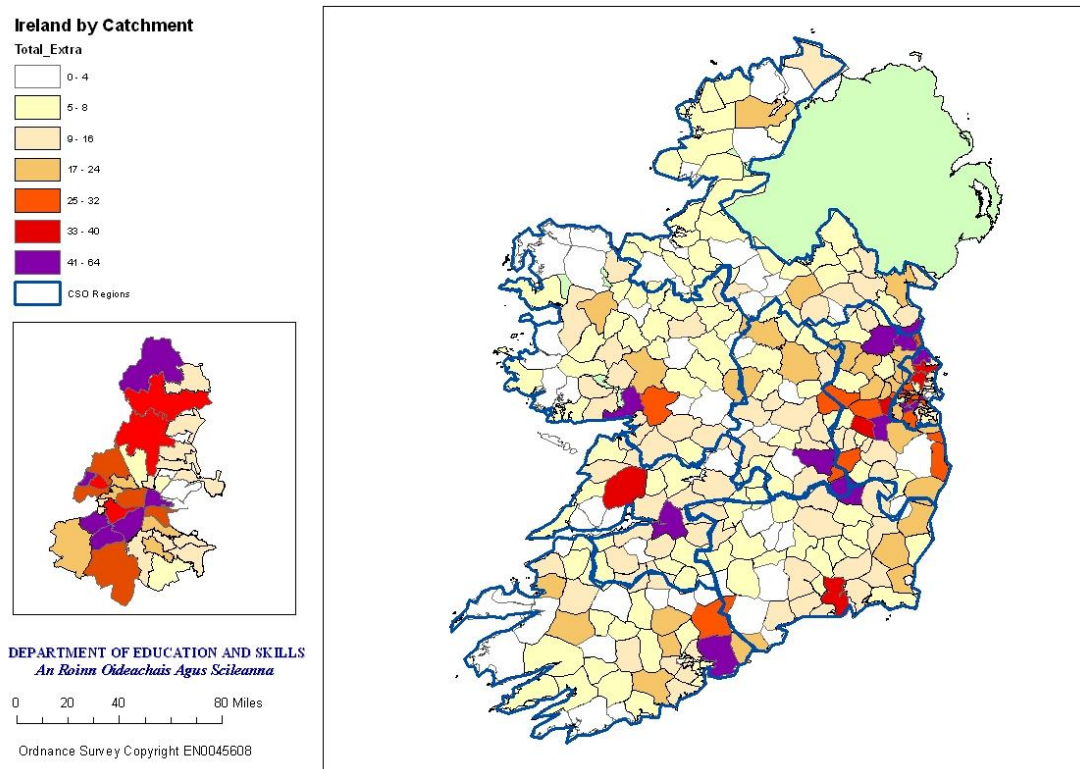
### **Limitations of Regional Population projections**

Because of the greater uncertainty attaching to regional as distinct from national population projections, the results for individual Regional Authority areas must be regarded as somewhat tentative. The objective of the regional population projections is to determine how the population of the various regions would evolve in the period if recent demographic trends were to continue.

The most recent regional projection from the CSO was the “Regional Population Projections 2011 – 2026” (December 2008). The Department has used these projections to apply growth scenarios to each Regional Authority area based on each area's expected rate of growth. Among the key findings of the regional population projections is the fact that the population of the Mid-East region is set to increase substantially under all scenarios. Dublin's population is projected to decline under the MOF1 Recent scenario – the only region projected to show a population decline in the period to 2026.

**Figure 4** below outlines some draft projections of the number of additional classrooms required in the various areas of the country based on the assumptions surrounding the MOF1 projections:

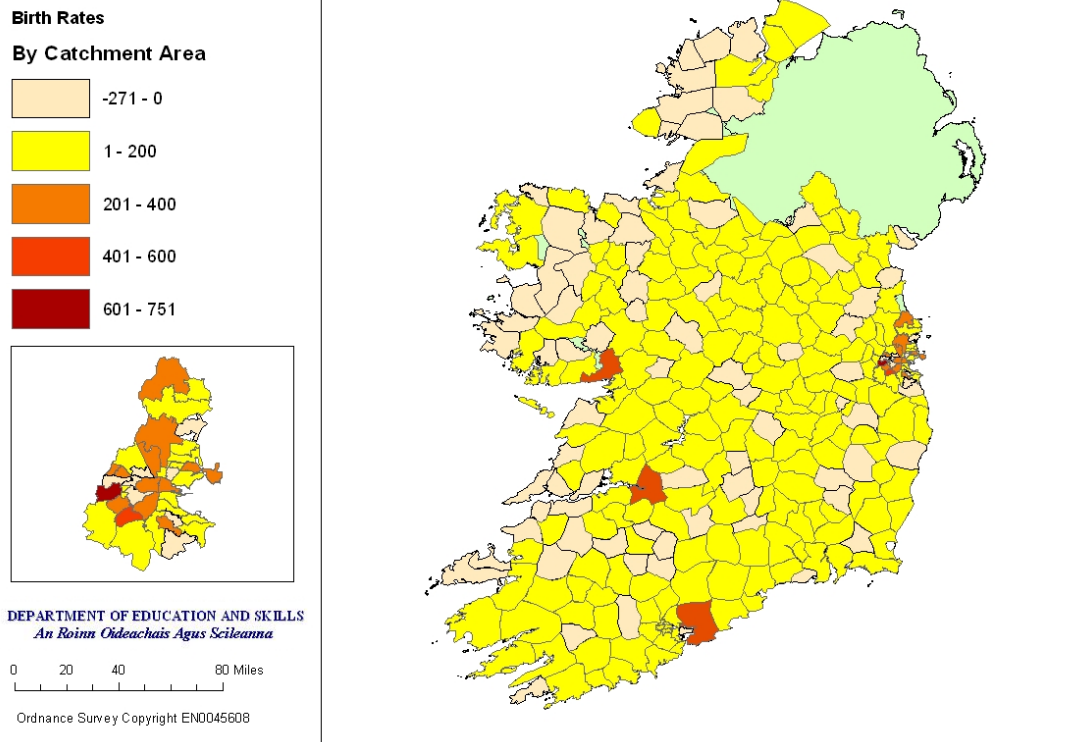
**Figure 4**



### ***General Register Office (GRO) Dataset***

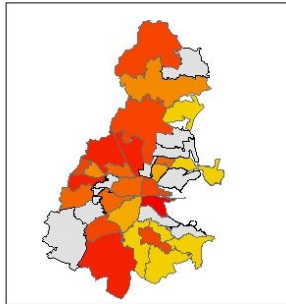
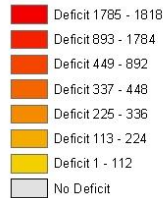
On a quarterly basis, a tabular list of live births registered in the previous quarter, is supplied by the GRO to the Department of Education and Skills. This information consists of the date of birth, and the mother's address for each child born in the State. The tabular information is then linked to the relevant catchment area to provide a scenario for estimating future school requirements. **Figure 5** demonstrates the birth rate for each catchment area from 2005 to 2008 as an example of this work while **Figure 6** shows how the birth detail can be compared to the current enrolment to show which catchments might require additional accommodation in the future.

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

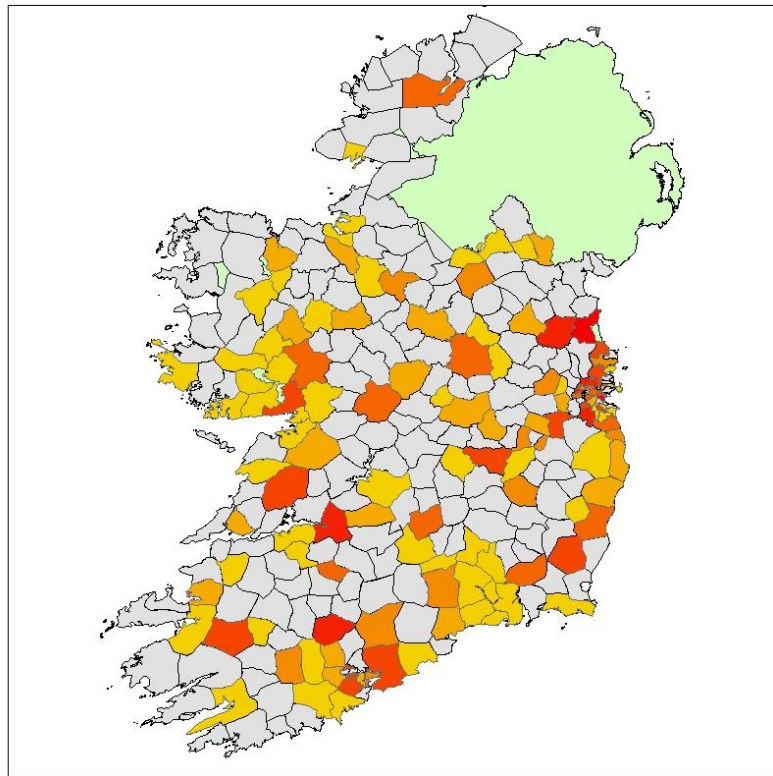
**Comparing Births and Jnr Classes**



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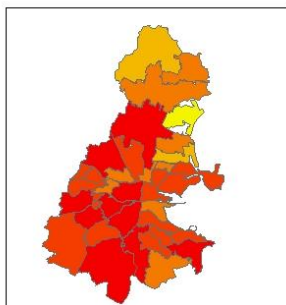
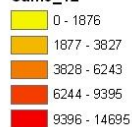
***Department of Social Protection dataset***

The Department of Social Protection provides to the Department of Education & Skills a database containing the full anonymised list of all children in receipt of child benefit in the state to the Department of Education and Skills, as required. The information provided includes date of birth and address, but excludes names. This is extracted into a tabular format, to be utilised and linked to post primary catchment areas using the GIS, providing a further scenario for estimating future school requirements. **Figure 7** is an example of this information in use.

**Figure 7**

**5 to 12 yo Catchment Areas selection**

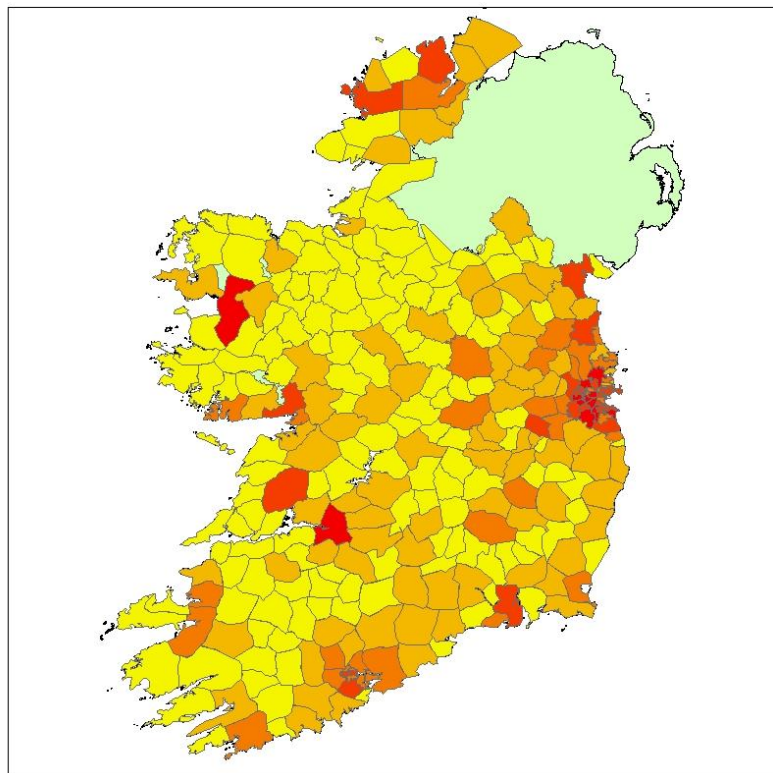
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### ***An Post Geodirectory***

The An Post Geodirectory is a geodatabase maintained by An Post, containing unique identifiers for every building in the country, with coordinate information, essentially providing a point on the map for every address in Ireland. This information is utilised by the Department of Education and Skills to attach address information from GRO and Social Protection, to its correct geographical location. It is, along with the Ordnance Survey mapping, one of the base datasets used by the Department for demographic analysis.

### ***Liaison with Local Authorities***

Once a detailed picture is built up by the Department in relation to the likely demand for new school places in specific areas, it engages at a more substantive level with local authorities within the context of the Planning Guidelines on "The Provision of Schools and the Planning System", (July 2008). This is to ensure that the Department of Education & Skills and Planning Authorities play their full part in facilitating the timely and cost-effective provision of school facilities.

Integration between the school and physical planning process has been a focus for policy development in recent years. Effective alignment between school and physical planning processes are essential in supporting the development of sustainable communities where schools are a key element of community development.

Under the Guidelines, the Planning Authorities will, with the support and expert input of the Department of Education and Skills:

- Make provision for the site requirements of new schools in statutory development plans and local area plans;
- Specify site development standards;
- Expedite the process of applying for planning permission to develop proposals for new schools that comply with development plan requirements; and
- Arrange for the acquisition of school sites.

The Technical Working Group notes the legislative change arising from the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 which has strengthened the position regarding school site provision (referred to in the Overview).

The Group also notes that the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government will progress the development of a national development plan GIS, that over time would allow a comprehensive national picture of all the local authority development plans to emerge and would be capable of integration with the Department of Education and Skills GIS on schools.

The wide range of data, technology available and the co-operation with other planning stakeholders puts the Department in a better position than ever before to plan for the establishment of new schools. The analysis of demographic trends is however only the first step in the process of opening a new school.



## ***Choosing a patron(s)***

Effective liaison between the Department and planning authorities in making provision for new schools in their development plans and statutory planning functions in development management terms is also dependent on the decisions that will be taken in choosing a patron for a new school and the criteria to be applied in such choices.

The patronage system is a crucial element in the history and structure of the national school system and any recommendations for the future must take cognisance of this history and structure. To date, the role of the patron in school operations has not been strongly defined in detail, as we can see from the 1998 Act. At the moment there is no method for approving a new patron or patron body independently of an application for a new school. The Technical Working Group is of the view that these two elements should be decoupled so that there is an independent process to be assessed as being a suitable patron.

The changing demographic profile in Ireland with regard to geography, language and religious preference means that there may be instances in the future where a school wishes to change its patronage. There is no clear procedure for this at the moment and there is a requirement to put this in place. Many of these issues were raised by the NSAC in their annual reports. They highlighted four questions which need urgent consideration:

- What type of organisation (or individual) is suitable to be considered as patron of a primary school?
- What criteria are to be used in assessing applications for registration as a patron?
- What timescale should be involved in the process?
- How, over time, should the effectiveness of a patron in carrying out their obligations be judged or monitored?

Added to this list should be the question of how a school can go about changing from one patron body to another. This is relevant in the context of the identification by the Catholic Church of the possibility of expanding the role of other patronage models, where such demand exists, through a form of structured divestment by the Catholic patron which recognises the rights and interests of all parties. Clearly, any implementation framework that is developed to facilitate the possible transfer of patronage would need to be planned and managed and it would be important in individual school cases for consultation to take place with all relevant stakeholders including parents, teachers and local communities. Any changes could only come about by agreement between the various stakeholders.

## ***Financial Constraints/ Value for Money/ Cost of Schools***

Resources devoted to capital expenditure for primary schools have greatly increased over recent years. Over the ten year period 1998 to 2008, annual expenditure increased from €60m to €489m. Expenditure in 2009 was €329m. The capital budget is spent on the purchase of sites, provision of new buildings, (including furnishing and equipping) and extending and refurbishing existing buildings and rental of temporary accommodation where required.

**Table 5: Capital Expenditure on Schools 1998 to 2009 (€m)**

School Sector	Year											
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Primary	€60	€77	€103	€140	€173	€175	€171	€267	€245	€399	€489	€329
Post-Primary	€73	€117	€154	€177	€171	€151	€162	€234	€249	€247	€155	€197
<b>Total</b>	<b>€133</b>	<b>€194</b>	<b>€257</b>	<b>€317</b>	<b>€344</b>	<b>€326</b>	<b>€333</b>	<b>€501</b>	<b>€494</b>	<b>€646</b>	<b>€644</b>	<b>€526</b>

Even with the greatly increased allocations, the available budget is not sufficient to meet all the demands and requests. The challenge facing the Department is to deliver the necessary accommodation to meet the needs of additional pupils entering the system and simultaneously address the historical legacy of underinvestment in school buildings.

The Department is in receipt of a large number of applications (over 1,000) for major capital funding. These applications arise for two reasons. Firstly, a significant number are due to demographic pressures. Secondly, there is a legacy of underinvestment in existing school buildings for many years, which has left them in need of significant refurbishment and/or modernisation works. Many existing schools date from a time when schools were built with classrooms which are small by modern standards and do not facilitate the delivery of the modern curriculum. Many schools have little, if any, ancillary accommodation, such as teaching space for resource/learning support instruction, Special Needs Units, libraries, PE Halls or GP rooms. The appointment in recent years of significant numbers of new teachers and resource/support/special needs staff to schools has increased the demand for such ancillary accommodation in order to ensure the effective delivery of service by such staff.

In light of limited resources to deal with the level of demand, the Department adopted in 2004 a prioritisation system for all applications for capital works. Details of the Band Rating system are summarised in **Appendix G**. The band rating system was put in place following consultation with the education partners. All applications are assessed and assigned a priority band rating, commensurate with the urgency attaching to the project.

Based on expected population growth, it is likely that there will still be significant demands on the budget at a time of limited exchequer resources. Therefore imaginative solutions are needed to ensure that a school place is available to every child.

In general, unit capital costs are less for the larger schools. It is also the case that recurrent costs are also less for larger schools. The following table provides an estimate of the unit capital costs in the various standard sizes of new school buildings and is presented in this report so as to indicate the significant capital costs associated with establishing new schools.

<b>Table 6: Estimated Capital Building Cost of Selected Standard School Sizes</b>						
	<b>Number of mainstream classrooms</b>					
<b>Standard Size:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2 x 16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Total square metres:</b>	790	1,353	2,208	4,416	3,494	4,439
<b>Cost on basis of €30 per sq m:</b>	€0.73m	€1.26m	€2.05m	€4.10 m	€3.25m	€4.13 m
<b>External Costs @ maximum of 12.5%:</b>	€0.1m	€0.2m	€0.3m	€0.5m	€0.4m	€0.5m
<b>Ideal minimum size of site</b>	2 acres	2 acres	3 acres	5 acres	4 acres	5 acres
<b>Estimate average Site Purchase cost: (€100,000 per acre)<sup>11</sup></b>	€0.8m	€0.8m	€1.2m	€2.0m	€1.6m	€2.0m
<b>Total Estimated Cost:</b>	<b>€1.63m</b>	<b>€2.22m</b>	<b>€3.51m</b>	<b>€6.62m</b>	<b>€5.26 m</b>	<b>€6.64m</b>
<b>Estimated Cost per pupil place:</b>	€14,253	€9,891	€7,835	€7,389	€7,821	€7,416

The foregoing estimates exclude abnormal costs (potentially a maximum of 15% of project cost) and cost of furniture and fittings.

<sup>11</sup> This is an estimated value only. Land values will vary depending on location. It should also be noted that since 2008 land prices have encountered a downward trend.

The following table describes the estimated recurrent costs of schools of various sizes in 2009/10:

<b>Table 7: Estimated recurrent costs of schools of various sizes in 2009/10</b>						
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	<b>Capitation Grant <sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Ancillary Services Grant<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Teacher salaries and allowances</b>	<b>Supervision</b>	<b>TOTAL Estimated expenditure</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Expenditure per pupil</b>
1	12,000	9,300	65,310	4,953	<b>91,563.00</b>	13,080
2	12,000	9,300	125,079	1,165	<b>147,544.00</b>	4,918
4	18,400	14,260	240,848	0	<b>273,508.00</b>	2,973
6	30,600	23,715	355,133	0	<b>409,448.00</b>	2,676
8	42,000	32,550	474,296	0	<b>548,846.00</b>	2,614
16	85,000	65,875	957,843	0	<b>1,108,718.00</b>	2,609
24	130,000	77,500	1,434,287	0	<b>1,641,787.00</b>	2,526

There are also additional recurrent costs arising from establishing new schools. Clearly it is necessary to meet these in areas of growing population. However, it is more challenging to justify increased expenditure (capital and current) on schools in areas where the population is not growing and there is vacant school accommodation. Indeed in such areas consideration of the issue of rationalisation of existing provision may arise.

The Group is aware that a Value for Money review on small schools is being commenced by the Department and that this will include detailed examination of recurrent costs and educational outcomes across a range of school sizes.

This also raises the issue of how to ensure best value for money and how to maximise use of spare capacity in existing schools and looking at the possibility of two or more patrons sharing a building and/or campus. This will require a spirit of co-operation and understanding on all sides in order to bring about optimum results.

<sup>12</sup> Capitation grant payable depends on pupil numbers. For the purpose of this table, the mean number of pupils is used to calculate the capitation grant for each teacher size of school.

<sup>13</sup> Ancillary services grant payable depends on pupil numbers. For the purpose of this table, the mean number of pupils is used to calculate the ancillary services grant for each teacher size of school.

## ***Shared campus arrangements***

### ***Rationale for a shared campus***

Given the increasing demands on the State's limited resources and the scarcity of suitable sites for new schools in many urban areas, shared campus arrangements will become more common in future. This will optimise scarce financial resources and also opens up new educational opportunities. Having campus schools can provide the following educational advantages:

- A degree of choice for parents when deciding what kind of school they want their children to attend.
- Resources available for shared schools that could not be financed by separate schools.
- Sharing staff expertise between schools.
- Promoting tolerance and cooperation between the children, parents and staff of the school communities.

Campus arrangements are already a part of the Irish education landscape though it is worth looking in more detail at how this idea might be developed in the future.

There are a range of other benefits from the campus approach. These include:

- co-ordinating transport/ access to schools,
- encouraging walking and cycling and maximising usage of specialised school facilities such as sports facilities,
- proper planning and sustainable development considerations of planning authorities including opportunities for grouping with other essential community facilities at the heart of developing areas; and
- the overall achievement of value for money,
- in the case of a gaelchampus, where all the schools are Irish-medium schools, it is recognised there would be positive synergies between the schools in terms of spoken language.

Accordingly, planning authorities will often indicate a preference for either developing in the vicinity of existing school facilities, (primary or post-primary), or development of new schools (primary and/or post-primary) on a campus style basis. A campus may, or may not, include other public facilities such as libraries and/or health clinics. From a Department of Education and Skills perspective, the criteria involved in the choice of a patron for a particular new school should reflect the achievement of the objectives above.

The choice as to whether or not to select a campus-style approach to school development will depend on local circumstances, including planning and value for money considerations as outlined above.

### ***Definition of a campus***

A shared campus can take a number of forms depending on the number of schools involved, the type of schools involved (primary or post-primary) and the size of the

site. There can also be a temporary campus with shared facilities – in the case of a school that began life on another school campus. In this instance we will concentrate on the instance of schools sharing a campus on a permanent basis. It would seem that each campus school will have three principal aspects to their responsibilities :

- Areas of responsibility for each individual school:  
Each school would be responsible for their own policies in regard to student admission, employment of staff, constitution of parent's council, adoption of budget, uniform and dress code, etc.
- Facilities which are the sole responsibility of each school:  
In terms of physical facilities, each school on campus should have its own its own space clearly defined including its own entrance foyer and reception. It should also have its school name and external signage clearly displayed, its own classrooms and specialist rooms, its own staff room, its own school library and its own school office.
- Shared facilities/responsibilities  
Campus schools will have joint responsibilities in regard to shared facilities such as the assembly hall /games hall /gym, playground, heating plant, car park, drop off area and common services such as ground maintenance and refuse collection. There could be other shared spaces, as appropriate and as agreed.

### ***Guidelines to be developed***

The group considers that campus management guidelines should be developed by the DES in consultation with stakeholders. Issues to be addressed in these guidelines are set out below. It would be a condition of entering leasing arrangements for Department owned campuses that these guidelines are followed.

### ***Protection of school ethos/spirit***

Since a specific ethos/spirit is central to every school, the campus situation must respect the right of a school and patron to protect that ethos/spirit. It is important that each school understands and respects the ethos of neighbouring schools. It is important that schools be given the right to foster, protect and display a specific ethos when they are using shared facilities such as halls. Notice boards and posters, for instance, in the shared areas should be available in all the languages used in campus schools.

### ***Shared facilities***

Effective planning and good design of shared facilities is very important. The campus plans should include the provision of separate entrances for the different schools, and indeed this is an essential point if the general public have access to the building(s) out of school hours. The Technical Working Group supports the idea of the facilities being available for community use outside of school hours, particularly as the facilities are likely to be of high quality, are provided with public funds and could contribute enormously to the development of the community. Where possible, the hall should be large enough to be divided in half during the school day. The shared

facilities should be proximate to the schools using them as they will be in use for assembly and for classes such as drama or PE.

The use of shared facilities will depend on the size of the respective schools on the campus. If schools are of equal size, then usage will break down on a 50/50 basis but where there is a significant difference in the numbers enrolled in each school this will not be the case. In such a case the usage of facilities could be decided based on the relative number of pupils in each school.

### ***Campus management arrangements***

It will be necessary to put in place agreed campus management arrangements among the patrons involved.

## **Part Three – Proposals and Recommendations**

This report has outlined the main issues with regard to the establishment of new primary schools including the need to be able to respond in a timely manner to changing demographic circumstances, the requirement for a cost-effective, well-funded education infrastructure and the need to have accommodation plans for each area developed in a timely manner. This section brings together the recommendations and proposals of the Technical Working Group in this regard. The recommendations and proposals are intended to provide for a structure that will give clarity to the process for establishing a new school and for the selection of the patron of that school while also ensuring that the principles of diversity and parental choice are protected.

The Group considers that there needs to be a process brought in to replace the NSAC system which should be open and transparent and should be robust in that it will be applicable in all demographic scenarios and will have the flexibility to change with varying economic and social circumstances.

### ***Outline of approach***

There are a number of recommendations contained in **Part Three** for the development of the criteria and procedures for the recognition of new primary schools.

- In the first instance, the arrangements now in place within the Department of Education and Skills for the identification of the need for the establishment of new schools are noted.
- Next, recommendations are made in relation to how decisions on the patronage of such schools can be made.
- There is then an outline of the issues in relation to demand for choice of provision where new schools are not required for demographic reasons, issues in relation to transfer or change of patronage are discussed and recommendations are made.
- Subsequent to this, some more general issues in relation to the role of the patron generally are discussed and
- Recommendations are made to establish a patronage advisory body with the role of advising the Minister on a number of matters in relation to patronage.

### ***Identification of the need for the establishment of new schools***

We are currently in a period of population growth and it is the view of this Technical Working Group that the Department of Education and Skills requires a robust system of deciding on the need to establish new schools that will ensure the provision of an integrated, high quality primary education infrastructure that is efficient and effective in periods of stable, as well as changing, demographics.



The Technical Working Group notes the GIS that is now in place in the Department and recommends that the Department of Education and Skills should assess the need for additional accommodation based on demographic need and existing accommodation in an area. The Group notes the intention of the Department to share the findings with the relevant planning authorities and the education partners, including the patron bodies. The Group also notes the strengthened relationship between the Department, the local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in relation to planning matters and the implementation of planning guidelines which create sustainable communities and promote social integration. The enactment of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 is noted.

The Group considers that the Department should continue to use and update the planning technology in use while keeping under review the available datasets and how best they can be utilised. It is vital that the best use possible be made of the range of data available, including the geo-coding of the information from the GRO and the Department of Social Protection.

In relation to identifying where new schools are needed the group notes that it is the intention of the Department to proceed as follows:-

- a. based on the data available to the Department and on its own analysis, the Department will identify the areas where significant additional school accommodation is required:
- b. the Department will decide whether the additional places can best be provided through extension/ re-organisation of existing school facilities or through the provision of a new school building, following consultation with the school patrons. In making this judgement the Department will have to take account of many factors and maximise scarce resources. Among the factors which the Department must consider are location of existing schools within the area to be served, the number of additional pupil places required to be provided in the area and the long-term appropriateness of extension versus new school establishment to meet current identified needs and anticipated future needs, the enrolment of the existing schools, the capacity and willingness of the existing schools to extend and/or re-organise, the availability and cost of land in the area, the current diversity of school patronage in the area and parental preferences. The Department's overriding objective will be to provide the required pupil places in a timely manner while satisfying parental choice and optimum value for money;
- c. if, after the process of consultation at (b) above, it is decided by the Department that the required additional accommodation cannot be delivered through extension projects in the local school(s), it will follow that a new school will be required.

The Group agreed that the first objective must be that a school place is available to every child, whether that place is available through the expansion of an existing facility or the establishment of a new school.

The approach outlined above would be of considerable benefit to local authorities by giving them guidance and direction in relation to catering for new school requirements in their development plans and local area plans.

### ***Proposed process for choosing the patron of a new school***

The Group considers that it would be very helpful if the process for deciding on the patronage of a new school could be dovetailed, as far as possible, with the prior statistical analysis which identified the need for a new school and the preferences of the local planning authority in meeting planning policy and delivery considerations.

While the Department is in a strong position to carry out demographic analysis and enrolment trend analysis, the selection of a patron requires detailed work at a local level. This necessitates wide consultation with relevant groups at the local level. In order to ensure that the new school will be supported locally and will cater for the needs of the community it will be necessary to take account of local synergies, to assess the mix of patronage of schools in the area and to decide on the patronage of the new school in order to maximise parental choice and diversity.

The policy regarding the establishment of new schools should be consistent with the principles of the Education Act, 1998 and the Constitution. The Group considers that this proposed policy is consistent with these.

It is considered that there should be an opportunity for patrons to seek to apply for patronage of any new schools and that there should also be mechanisms developed to survey parents and prospective parents in an area in relation to the patronage of the school. Any such surveys would need to be informed by information on the types of schools which patrons are proposing to establish. The Group notes that in some green-field developments it might not be possible to consult extensively with prospective parents of a new school to be established.

It is considered that the following conditions should be met by prospective patrons in making applications:

- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to accept and open special education facilities;
- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to have up to three streams subject to demand for the school;
- Confirmation that the prospective patron is willing to enter into the standard lease agreement with the Department of Education and Skills. Otherwise the prospective patron could provide their own school site;
- Confirmation of willingness to operate by the rules and regulations laid down in various Department of Education and Skills circulars and operating procedures and to follow the prescribed curriculum;
- Confirmation of willingness to be part of a campus development with other primary or post-primary schools as identified by the Department;
- Confirmation of willingness to enrol children for whom the Department has identified the need for a school.

It is recommended that the criteria to be considered in deciding on patronage should include 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 a 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.

### ***Parental demand for choice; transfer and change of patronage***

The Group is of the view that there is a need to consider how best to meet parental demands for provision of alternative choice where there may not be a demographic need for the establishment of a new school. The Group considers that the Department's GIS is ideal for the technical work on this. The Group considers that the Department should also, in line with the legislation, have procedures for the receipt and consideration of applications from prospective patrons in areas where there may not be a demographic need for the establishment of new schools.

The Group considers that the NSAC process needs to be replaced. The Group also considers that 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 by parents for patronage of a different type in that area. The Group considers that both the demographic need identified and the level of demand by parents should be sufficient to establish a minimum school size of eight classrooms. However, in such instances it may still be necessary to decide on the patronage of the school among a number of prospective patrons and the Group considers that the proposed patron selection process should apply.

The Group considers that there may also be potential in the use of existing vacant spaces in school buildings in areas where there may not be a demographic need for a new school. In these circumstances, mechanisms should be established to optimise the use of existing educational infrastructure in the area. These could include the re-classification, re-configuration or divestment of an existing school, subject to agreement with patrons and all stakeholders. The Group considers that this could only

possibly be in the context of the new school being at least 8 classes and agreement that it is a permanent accommodation solution.

The Group notes the consideration of divesting underway within the Catholic Church referred to in **Part One** and the work underway in this regard. The Group considers that there is potential for this work to contribute to an increase in the diversity of patronage and looks forward to the piloting of some initial arrangements. The Group notes that these developments are at an early stage. The Group considers it vital that these developments realise greater diversity of patronage through maximising the use of existing infrastructure.

The Group also considers that there may be other potential for linguistic diversity to be realised without a change of patronage, for example an existing English-medium school may change to become an Irish-medium school or an Irish-medium element can be introduced in an English-medium school.

The Group considers that there may be other transfers of patronage between patrons which could contribute to increasing diversity of patronage in an area.

The Education Act, 1998 does not address all the issues that surround a possible change of patronage of a school. The Group considers that there is a need to develop a framework detailing the arrangements for changing the patronage of schools whether following a divesting or a transfer of patronage.

### ***General issues in relation to the role of the patron***

The history of the patronage system in Ireland has been outlined in **Part One** of this report, as have the definition of a patron and the function of a patron. The Education Act, 1998 (section 8) outlines the role of the patron but it does not outline eligibility criteria for becoming a patron. The Education Act, 1998 only envisages the appointment of a new patron where that proposed patron wishes to establish a new school. This situation has caused difficulties in the past. The Group considers that the processes for the approval of a new patron and the appointment of a patron to a new school entity can be de-coupled and notes that legislative changes would be required. The Group considers that criteria should be developed to be applied in the case of a new organisation applying to be placed on the Department's register of patrons and indeed, in a situation where the Minister might want to remove a patron from the Department's register of patrons.

### ***Parental demands for choice of patronage***

It was outlined in **Part One** that the changing nature of society is leading at present to demands for the increased availability of different types of schools, particularly Irish language medium schools and multi-denominational schools.

## *Irish language*

As noted in **Part One**, it is important that Irish-medium education is supported by positive policy implementation that embraces a range of solutions for Irish language education. Primary education has a pivotal role in the preservation and expansion of the first official language so that the demand for Irish-medium education should be supported in any system for the establishment of new primary schools. Government policy particularly in relation to education, as outlined in the recently published 20 year strategy for the Irish language, “*Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030*” should inform the policies and the plans of the Department of Education and Skills in relation to all-Irish medium education. This should result in an agreed and planned delivery of all-Irish medium education into the future.

## *Multi-denominational provision*

There is also an increasing parental demand for multi-denominational and non-denominational education as outlined in **Part One** and the State has attempted to meet its obligations to respond to that demand by supporting the establishment of increased numbers of multi-denominational schools in recent years. These have included many Educate Together schools and, more recently, have included the establishment of the Community National School model.

## *Optimising existing educational infrastructure*

In areas where population is growing, there will be opportunities for the consideration of new schools with patronage reflecting the parental demand for increased availability of different types of schools. In areas where the demographics are stable, the expressed desire by parents for different types of schools should be taken into account in the implementation of any new arrangements arising from transfer or change of patronage.

## *Establishment of Special Schools*

Special schools meet the educational needs of pupils whose needs could not be adequately catered for in the ordinary primary school. The need to establish a new special school is identified by the National Council for Special Education in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills. Once the decision is taken to establish the new school in order to meet a specific and quantified need that cannot reasonably be met through existing provision, there follows the question of appointing a patron. The Group envisages that the patron selection procedures outlined in this report would apply in the case of special schools as they are recognised on the same basis as other primary schools and are bound by the same rules and regulations.

## ***Campus development recommendation***

The Technical Working Group considers that campus developments provide synergies and benefits. As outlined in the previous chapter, the Department of Education and Skills should liaise with the education partners to put in place appropriate arrangements for campus development and guidelines for good campus management that can then be used nationally by all schools in campus arrangements. The template should include recommended procedures to be adopted by the schools involved in order to maximise the advantages of the campus arrangement and to resolve all issues to ensure the smooth daily operation of the campus.

## ***Patronage Advisory Group***

The Technical Working Group notes the announcement in July 2010 by the Tánaiste and Minister for Education & Skills, Mary Coughlan, TD, that she is establishing a Second Level Patronage Advisory Group.

While the Technical Working Group considers that the Department should retain overall responsibility for policy in the area of school patronage, the Group recommends the establishment of a new body, to be known as the Patronage Advisory Group (PAG), to undertake a number of the new responsibilities set out above. The establishment of the PAG is a natural development from the previous New Schools Advisory Committee (NSAC). It would build on the work undertaken by NSAC and in addition, assume some broader responsibilities.

It is envisaged that the main role of PAG would be to examine individual applications for patronage of new schools and advise the Minister. This would not be a new agency but rather a group of individuals supported in its work by a secretariat drawn from staff of the Department. The Technical Working Group also envisages that PAG would oversee all arrangements for the reconfiguration of existing provision (including transfer of patronage) and advise the Minister. The Group envisages that the PAG would operate in an independent and transparent manner.

It is not the intention of this report to set out in detail the terms of reference for the PAG but rather to outline some broad principles by which it will operate and its role in the opening of new primary schools. It is the opinion of the Technical Working Group that the PAG should establish its own detailed criteria for how a patron is selected and that these would build upon the factors set out in this report. The Group envisages that these criteria should be submitted for the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills.

While these are the initial priority tasks, there are other tasks which the PAG could address when it is fully established.

The Group considers that the PAG should develop a framework for changing the patronage of schools where the need arises and after consultation with all relevant parties and that such a framework should be submitted for the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills. The Group also envisages that PAG would be the primary implementation body for such a framework.

Further tasks will include criteria for the inclusion of a patron on the register of patrons and arrangements for the removal of patrons from the register if they are not performing their role correctly and the PAG should explore the means by which this might happen, including advice to the Minister on any necessary legislative changes. Linked with this task, is the issue of the evaluation of performance of a patron. The PAG should also be tasked with an examination of the role of the patron in relation to that of the board of management.

The PAG should put in place a consultation mechanism that will allow recognised patron bodies to consult with it on a regular basis. It should issue an annual report covering issues such as:

- Patrons appointed to new schools
- New patrons approved for inclusion on the Department's patron register

The Group considers that the PAG should be appointed by the Minister and comprised of persons of high standing within their field who will have broad experience and knowledge of the education system, an appreciation and understanding of the many issues and requirements involved and experience of the wider public service. The members of the PAG should therefore be able to draw on expertise that will allow them to make clear, well-reasoned judgments based on a range of data, including a public consultation process. Members of the PAG should be independent of the registered patron bodies as the PAG will have to advise on choices between the registered patron bodies in certain instances.

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## **Appendix A: Membership of the Technical Working Group**

Mr Frank Murray, Chairperson

Ms Eileen Jackson

Ms Deirdre O'Donoghue

Dr Peter Archer

Monsignor Dan O'Connor

Mr Niall Cussen

Mr Pat O'Connor

Mr Denis Bohane

Mr Dónall Ó Conaill

Professor Tom Collins

Mr Frank Wyse (to end February 2010)

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú (from start March 2010)

Mr Tony Dalton

Ms Mary Carney

Mr Richard Dolan

Ms Shirley Kearney

## **Appendix B: Membership of the Steering Group**

Mr Frank Murray, Chairperson

Monsignor James Cassin, Episcopal Commission for Education

Mr Seán Ashe, Irish Vocational Education Association

Ms Jacinta Stewart, Irish Vocational Education Association

Mr Brendan Griffin, Irish Vocational Education Association

Mr Ciarán Flynn, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

Dr John Harris, Protestant Managers/ Governors Second Level

Ms Áine Lynch, National Parents Council – Primary

Ms Mary Killeen, National Parents Council – Primary

Ms Carole Trodden, National Parents Council – Post Primary

Mr Noel Merrick, Joint Managerial Body & Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools

Ms Breda Corr, National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education

Mr Caoimhín O hEaghra, An Foras Pátrúnachta

Ms Bláthnaid Ní Ghréacháin, Gaelscoileanna Teoranta

Ms Nóra Ní Loingsigh, Gaelscoileanna Teoranta

Sr Canice Hanrahan, Conference of Religious of Ireland

Sr Eithne Woulfe, Conference of Religious of Ireland

Ms Sheila Nunan, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Mr Billy Sheehan, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Mr Joe Moran, Association of Secondary School Teachers Ireland

Ms Máire Mulcahy, Association of Secondary School Teachers Ireland

Imam Yahya Al-Hussein, Islamic Foundation of Ireland

Mr Paul Rowe, Educate Together

Ms Bernie Ruane, Teachers Union of Ireland

Mr Declan Glynn, Teachers Union of Ireland

Ms Eileen Flynn, Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

Ms Margaret Gorman, Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

Dr Ken Fennelly, Church of Ireland Board of Education

Mr Brendan Ellison, Department of Finance

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Department of Education & Skills

Mr Tony Dalton, Department of Education & Skills

Ms Mary Carney, Secretariat to the Commission on School Accommodation

Mr Richard Dolan, Secretariat to the Commission on School Accommodation

Ms Shirley Kearney, Secretariat to the Commission on School Accommodation

*(This list comprises the names of the latest membership of the Steering Group – certain members nominated by various organisations have retired or have been replaced throughout the period of this review)*

## **Appendix C: Establishment of new primary schools in England & Wales**

The Irish structures and the English/Welsh structures are not directly comparable. However there are some useful points of comparison. The Education Act, 1996 lays out how schools are established in England and Wales. There are a number of categories of schools in the jurisdiction but the concentration here is on those in the State funded sector.

Below are some relevant extracts from the Act relating to the establishment of schools:

### **Responsibility for providing sufficient school places (Schedule 4 , Part II, section 3)**

If the schools providing relevant education which are available for the area are not sufficient, the funding authority shall, for the purpose of securing the availability of sufficient schools providing such education for the area, exercise their powers to make proposals for the establishment, alteration and discontinuance of schools.

Nothing in this paragraph requires a funding authority to take any action where to do so would not be an effective use of their resources.

### **Power to establish, maintain and assist primary and secondary schools (section 16)**

For the purpose of fulfilling their functions under the Act, a local education authority may establish primary schools and secondary schools; maintain primary and secondary schools, whether established by them or not and assist any primary or secondary school which is not maintained by them. A local education authority may establish, maintain and assist schools outside as well as inside their area.

### Section 211

The funding authority may establish grant-maintained schools for the purpose of providing relevant education. Where the funding authority intends to establish a grant-maintained school, they shall:

- publish proposals for that purpose in such manner as may be prescribed, and
- submit a copy of the published proposals to the Secretary of State.

Before publishing any proposals the funding authority shall consult such persons as appear to them to be appropriate; and in discharging their duty the funding authority shall have regard to any guidance given to them from time to time by the Secretary of State.

### Section 212

Where any persons (referred to as “promoters”) propose to establish a grant-maintained school, they shall:

- publish proposals for that purpose in such manner as may be prescribed, and
- submit a copy of the published proposals to the Secretary of State.

Before publishing any proposals under this section the promoters shall consult:

- the funding authority, and
- such other persons as appear to them to be appropriate;

- and in discharging their duty the promoters shall have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

### Section 213

In some instances, a promoter may propose to establish a grant-maintained school in place of an existing independent school which it is proposed to discontinue on or before the date of implementation of the proposals. In such instances the proposals published by the promoters shall, in addition to the matters required to be specified in the Proposals for Establishment of New Grant-Maintained Schools as outlined below, also:

- specify any arrangements proposed to be made by the promoters for land and other property held for the purposes of the existing independent school to be held for the purposes of the grant-maintained school, and
- state whether there is a trust deed or other instrument relating to the existing independent school.

### **Approval and implementation of proposals for new school**

Proposals published by a funding authority require the approval of the Secretary of State if:

- he gives notice to that effect to the funding authority within two months after the submission to him of the published proposals,
- objections have been made within the period allowed (unless all objections so made have been withdrawn in writing within that period), or
- the proposals name a sponsor of the school.

### Section 215

Proposals published under section 212 require the approval of the Secretary of State. Where proposals require the approval of the Secretary of State, he may:

- reject them,
- approve them without modification, or
- after consulting the funding authority and or the promoters approve them with such modifications as he thinks desirable.

### Section 215

In the case of proposals published by a funding authority particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school must be adopted by the funding authority. In the case of proposals published by a promoter, particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school submitted require the approval of the funding authority.

Where proposals published by the funding authority do not require the approval of the Secretary of State, the funding authority shall determine whether to adopt the proposals.

### **Implementation of proposals**

Where any proposals are approved or adopted, the persons who are appointed in accordance with regulations to be the initial first or (as the case may be) foundation governors shall on the incorporation date be incorporated as the governing body of the school. Where any proposals published by the funding authority are so approved, the funding authority shall implement the proposals. Where any proposals published by a promoter are approved, the promoters shall implement the proposals.

**PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOL**  
**Schedule 20 section 4**

Proposals published by a promoter or by the funding authority shall:

- where any person is proposed as a sponsor of the school, state the name of that person and the number of sponsor governors to be appointed by him
- specify the number of initial first or, as the case may be, foundation governors proposed for the governing body
- specify the number of parent and teacher governors proposed for the governing body
- specify in the case of initial first, initial foundation or sponsor governors their proposed term of office (not being less than five nor more than seven years)
- where it is proposed that any foundation governorship be held ex officio, specify the relevant office
- give the name under which it is proposed that the governing body should be incorporated, and
- specify the proposed incorporation date and the proposed date of implementation of the proposals.

The proposals should describe the arrangements it is proposed to adopt in respect of the admission of pupils to the school and, in particular, shall specify the number of pupils proposed to be admitted to the school in each relevant age group in the first school year beginning on or after the date of implementation of the proposals.

There shall be annexed to any proposals a statement briefly describing the intended character of the proposed school including, for a school which is intended to have a particular religious character, that character and the religion or religious denomination (if any) in accordance with whose tenets religious education is to be provided.

**Schedule 20 section 5**

**Objections**

Within the period of two months beginning with the date of publication of any proposals by the funding authority, objections to the proposals may be submitted to the funding authority by any of the following:

- any ten or more local government electors for the area,
- the governing body of any school affected by the proposals,
- the appropriate further education funding council, and
- any local education authority concerned.

Within one month after the end of the period mentioned, the funding authority shall send to the Secretary of State copies of any objections made and not withdrawn in writing within that period, together with their observations on them.

Within the period of two months beginning with the date of publication of any proposals by promoters, objections to the proposals may be submitted to the Secretary of State by any of the following:

- any ten or more local government electors for the area,
- the governing body of any school affected by the proposals,
- the appropriate further education funding council ,
- the funding authority and
- any local education authority concerned.

## **Schedule 20 Part II section 12**

### **Approval of school premises**

Where proposals for the establishment of a new grant-maintained school are published by the funding authority, the funding authority shall prepare the particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school. Where proposals for the establishment of a new grant-maintained school are published by a promoter, the particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school shall be submitted to the funding authority, at such time and in such form and manner as the authority may direct, by the promoters.

The particulars of the premises are:

- particulars of the provision made or to be made in respect of the means of access to and within the proposed premises of the school, and
- such other particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school as may be required or, as the funding authority may require.

The particulars prepared or submitted shall indicate the extent to which the provision referred to conforms with the minimum requirements, so far as they are relevant to school premises with regard to health and safety and disable use.

## **Appendix D: Extract from 1998 Steering Group Report** (Report of the Steering Group of the Commission on School Accommodation on the criteria and procedures for the establishment of new primary schools)

### Appendix K

## **Procedure for Registration of New Patrons**

### **New religious denominations**

A patron with the status of religious denomination is covered by the provisions of Article 44.2.5° of the Constitution, which states:

Every religious denomination shall have the right to manage its own affairs, own, acquire and administer property, movable and immovable, and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes.

There is no legal definition of religious denomination, and at present there are no criteria for obtaining status as a religious denomination. However, Central Statistics Office reports illustrate the growing religious pluralism in Ireland. The Irish School of Ecumenics maintains that a wealth of literature on the topic does not yield a clear-cut definition of “church.” Consequently, processors of applications for a new school need a procedure for the establishment of school patronage of a new religious denomination.

Utilising state structures already in place, a new patron claiming status as a religious denomination should have both:

- the authority of the Registrar General for the solemnisation of marriage
- the approval of the Revenue Commissioners as a charity for tax purposes.

Once a group obtains the status of religious denomination, it can be patron of a school. The procedure for application for recognition of a new primary school should request a newly recognised religious denomination to articulate its educational philosophy and its founding purpose for the school.

A **lease agreement** between the newly recognised religious denomination and the Minister for Education and Science should:

- recognise the new religious denomination as patron
- establish the identity of trustees
- establish conditions of the lease regarding:
  - land and buildings
  - lease consideration
  - Rules for National Schools
  - board of management.

## Other New Patrons

Custom and practice provide the indicators for the necessary steps in the registration of a new patron.

For a group that is not a statutory body or that does not have the status of religious denomination and wishes to be established as patron of a school, the group needs to establish itself as a corporate entity or as some other acceptable legal entity, with a minimum of three members named as trustees. In this process the group should articulate its educational philosophy in the articles and memorandum of association.

### Proposed procedure for registration of a new patron:

1. Development of articles and memorandum of association, containing the patron's educational philosophy, the structure and membership of the patron body and the names of trustees. Membership to be open to people who are committed to the educational philosophy
2. Approval of the articles and memorandum of association by the Minister for Education and Science
3. Formation of a properly constituted legal entity in a form approved by the Minister for Education and Science
4. Approval from the Revenue Commissioners as a charity for tax purposes
5. Completion of a form of agreement or lease with the Minister for Education and Science, including arrangements for the key areas of:
  - land and buildings
  - lease consideration
  - Rules for National Schools
  - board of management.

*Source:* Extract from the Report of the Technical Working Group.



## **Appendix E: Summary of each submission received in the public consultation process**

### **1. Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)**

At primary level the vast majority of the 3,000 schools are under the trusteeship of established religious authorities. These schools appear to have the support of the majority of parents but there is an increasing demand for the recognition of a variety of other religious traditions and/or a multi-denominational approach to school governance. These demands present both a social and an economic imperative for government to provide an integrated system which will meet the educational needs of all children while recognising their cultural and religious traditions.

This analysis has some resonance with the circumstances in the late 1960's and early 1970's which gave rise to the establishment of Community and Comprehensive Schools. The question arises as to what extent is this model valid for the future development of primary schools and the essential questions to be answered are:

1. To what extent does the public at large still consider a religious ethos to be central to the provision of primary education?
2. To what extent are church authorities committed to a continued responsibility for the provision of primary education.
3. What is the extent of the demand for alternative denominational and non-denominational provision?

ACCS contend that the model as operated in their 91 schools has been successful and feel that a similar model which by including religious and lay trustees, with parental and teacher involvement at Board level, promoting a multi-denominational approach to religious instruction and tolerance would meet the needs of each local community. ACCS believe that such a model should be considered in view of any new process for recognising new primary schools.

### **2. Church of Ireland Board of Education**

Schools under Church of Ireland Patronage exist to serve the children of the Church of Ireland Community along with children from the wider protestant community and children of members of other Christian denominations, world religions and those whose families have no stated religion but find the Church of Ireland ethos congenial to their tradition and values.

#### ***Diversity***

While the 2006 Census shows that the membership of the COI is increasing as is membership of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, the protestant community is still a minority community with significant rural dispersion. It is imperative that diversity and pluralism in the education system are preserved and that there is a continued respect for diversity of provision, as emphasised in the 1998 report of the Commission on School Accommodation.

#### ***Minimum Enrolment for new schools***

The COI Board considers the existing figure of 17 pupils per year of entry is not unreasonable, as over an eight year cycle this leads to a significant number of pupils in a school. However there are many COI schools with an enrolment

significantly less than this that still function as effective schools. They feel that an increase in the minimum number will make it more difficult for minority communities to access primary education with an appropriate ethos which reflects that of parents and children and it will cast doubt on the viability of existing schools. It would also have implications on the cost of school transport in bringing pupils significant distances to primary school.

### ***School Patronage***

The COI Board believes that the recognition of new patronage bodies must be based on willingness by that body to provide and support the approved primary curriculum within the management framework approved by the Education Partners. In cases of non-compliance there must be provision for withdrawal of such recognition. The COI also feel that it is timely to review the Rules for National Schools.

### ***Conclusion***

The COI and other religious and cultural minorities which have a tradition of school development and supporting communities must be allowed to continue to open new primary schools with small but effective enrolments.

## **3. Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)**

CORI supports the Catholic Church's commitment to continuing its involvement in primary education in accordance with the wishes of Catholic parents. It is acknowledged that there is also a need for other forms of patronage in a diverse society.

### ***Legal Framework***

In making provision for new primary schools it is important that provisions set out in International Law, Irish Law, the Education Act 1998 and Rules for National Schools be observed.

### ***Catholic Primary Schools***

The Catholic Church recognises that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and strives to assist them in this task. The Catholic Church is committed to providing Catholic schools to cater for the needs of parents who wish their children to have a Catholic Education and the Catholic Bishops and reiterated their intention to continue their involvement in providing schools for Catholic parents. Wherever possible, Catholic schools, in keeping with their ethos and provided they have space and resources welcome children of other faiths and none. The Catholic church accepts that there should be choice and diversity within a national education system and they are committed to supporting other models of patronage.

### ***Critical Issues***

- Parental Choice – the criteria for the recognition of new schools must respect the continuing desire of parents for denominational education
- Provision for Diversity – In new areas of residential development where Catholic Primary Schools are required by the Community, it would be a breach of the Education Act (Section 10) not to make such provision.
- Developing Areas – as per the 06 Census there was an increase of 218,840 persons in the Catholic population, based on this the current stock of primary schools will be inadequate in the near future. New Catholic primary schools will be required in areas of population growth if desired by the local community and if agreement of the local bishop is procured.

- New Patronage Models – where new patronage models are considered appropriate these must respect the rights of Catholic parents. Faith communities in Ireland have made it clear that a common or “neutral” religious education syllabus is totally unacceptable.
- Equal regard for different Patrons – a multi-campus school would create totally unacceptable administrative conditions, even if under the same patron. Also provision of accommodation for new schools must be in permanent accommodation if value for money is to be assured.
- Lease and ethos – the position of the lease between the patron and the Minister for Education must be regularised as a pre-requisite to the patron taking responsibility for a new school
- Planning – it should be a requirement of planning permission for housing developments that school and other infrastructure provision be included.
- Political will – political will is required to publish a revised version of the Rules for National Schools.

#### 4. **City of Cork VEC**

City of Cork VEC welcomes comments from Senior Catholic Church and Church of Ireland sources that the current model of patronage is no longer sustainable if the State is to adequately cater for the needs of a more pluralist 21<sup>st</sup> century Ireland. The Committee also recognises that both churches have said that there is a real and justified demand for schools under church patronage while recognising that new models are required to cater for people of no religious persuasion and for other faith communities. However the VEC is aware that both churches insist that schools, whatever the patronage model, must cater for religious education. The Committee is also cognisant that some bodies wish to see non- denominational or multi-denominational schools with religious education occurring outside of curricular time. City of Cork VEC is of the opinion that schools under its patronage can meet the diverse needs of different groups.

The Committee is aware of the pilot project currently ongoing in Dublin VEC and feels that this model could be extended nationally to provide new Greenfield schools in areas where the Department decides this is the most suitable option. Should a need be identified to include a representation from a faith group or for a body such as Educate Together, such representation could be provided for within or through the board of management structures of the school. Such representation through boards might also be considered in existing schools should the church be willing to hand over patronage to the State.

The VEC is open to making available its in-house experience to these new schools, to assist in procurement, ICT, human resources, building/capital works, financial management and management fora for principals.

#### 5. **Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) and the Episcopal Commission for Education - Joint Submission**

The Catholic Church is committed to continuing its involvement in primary education in accordance with the wishes of Catholic parents. There is also a need for other forms of patronage in a diverse society.

### ***Legal Framework***

It is clear that international law and domestic law recognises the rights of parents to have their child educated in a school which conforms to their religious convictions (relevant extracts from International law, Irish law, The Education Act 1998, Rules for National Schools and the Curriculum 1999 are quoted in the submission).

### ***Catholic Primary Schools***

The Catholic Church upholds the primacy of parents' rights in the education of their children. The Catholic Church is committed to providing Catholic Schools to cater for the needs of parents who wish their children to have a Catholic Education and the Catholic Bishops have reiterated their intention to continue their involvement in providing schools for Catholic parents.

Wherever possible, Catholic schools, in keeping with their ethos and provided they have space and resources welcome children of other faiths and none. As well as ongoing commitment to Catholic Education there is a commitment to supporting other forms and models of patronage both existing and new as the Catholic Church accepts that there should be choice and diversity within a national education system.

### ***Critical Issues to be considered regarding the recognition of new primary schools:***

- Parental Choice – the criteria for the recognition of new schools must respect the continuing desire of parents for denominational education.
- Diversity – The criterion of diversity should not be invoked to prevent the establishment of new Catholic primary schools if such are required by the community, to do so would be in breach of Section 10 of the Education Act 1998.
- Level Playing Field – the application of a uniform set of published criteria and procedures, applying to all proposed new schools equally is essential.
- Existing models – there is a commitment to supporting other models of patronage, however, this is an additional rather than as a replacement model.
- Developing areas - as per the 06 Census there was an increase of 218,840 persons in the Catholic population, based on this the existing stock of primary schools will not be sufficient to provide education for the available pupils in the foreseeable future. Thus there is still clearly a need for new Catholic primary schools and provision must be made for such in newly developing areas.
- Other models – a Catholic community should always have the right to establish a Catholic primary school in an area. If this is not possible co-trusteeship with another patron could be an option (e.g. with the Church of Ireland, IVEA or a patronage model based on the model for a community school)
- A “neutral religious common education syllabus” is unacceptable.
- If faced with the prospect of relinquishing ownership of a Catholic School in favour of another model (a decision which would not be made lightly), Catholic Patrons would favour transferring to something modelled closely on the existing second level Community School.
- It is expected that the preparedness of the Catholic Church to consider transferring ownership in certain circumstances is something which will merit favourable consideration in applications for recognition of new Catholic primary schools, this would be a reciprocation of goodwill.

- Consultation – there is a need for consultation in relation to the establishment of any new school. The proposal for a new school should be discussed with the initiator/patron and the parents of the proposed school, the patrons of existing schools in the area, the boards of management of existing schools, the parents and staff of existing schools and the wider community.
- Effective and efficient use of resources – It is essential that new and existing schools are properly resourced and that provision is made for socially/ economically disadvantaged children and children with special needs. It is important that all schools, regardless of their patronage are equally resourced.
- Data gathering – Data gathered from a number of sources such as DES and CSO can form part of the criteria used to decide whether a new school should be recognised or whether an existing school should be extended, relocated, amalgamated or closed. However, caution must be exercised that decision making is not confined solely to data analysis and factors such as location, access, community and population density must also be taken into account.
- Proper Planning – proper long-term planning and joined up thinking between Government departments is required to ensure adequate school provision and to address wider community issues. No planning permissions for development should be granted without adequate school provision being included.
- Bona fides - the position of the lease between the Minister and the patron must be regularised in schools where such is not already the case. Any lease between the DES and a Patron must be available prior to the patron assuming responsibility for a new school.
- Political Will – an up-to-date amended version of the Rules for National Schools is required. Further, critical provisions of the Education Act 1998 and the Special Education Needs Act 2004 have not yet been commenced.

## 6. **Dublin 15 Community Council**

The Dublin 15 Community Council has previously and continues to support a diverse range of schools to meet the needs of their rapidly developing area. In the review of the process for recognising new primary schools their recommendations are in summary:

- In each area the needs of parents and children should be met with a diverse range of schools.
- New and existing schools should support the integration of newcomer children and avoid ghettoism.
- New schools in developing areas should be catchment area based.
- New school planning should be integral with development, not added on in an emergency mode when the crises emerges.
- Existing school capacity should be a key parameter to sustainable development of an area. The Department of Education & Science should actively participate in the development process by advising local authorities of projected constraints and opportunities.
- New school planning should address and integrate primary with post-primary needs.

## **7. Educate Together**

- A.** There should be greater accountability and transparency in relation to patrons of schools; if necessary, legislation should be introduced to ensure that:
1. All patrons are required to give a formal statement of ethos, including how that ethos is to permeate the school day, as required by the Primary School Curriculum (1971 and 1999). School communities should have standards against which to measure the work of their patron, underpinned by an understanding of how the ethos informs the way in which the school operates.
  2. All patrons are required to provide details of the religious or ethical education that is to be delivered on the 2.5 hours per week of contact time with children under the rules for national schools. Both Statement of Ethos and Curriculum should be approved by the Minister
  3. Educate Together proposes that the regulation of patrons and their continued recognition by the Minister should include obligations to submit and publish
    - Audited Financial Statements
    - Policy and procedure for all key patronage functions
    - Identification of all decision making bodies, their membership and authorities
    - That all members of such bodies are free from financial or other disqualifications
    - Demonstrable competence in the management of schools
    - Regular annual reports on the discharge of its obligations to:
      - i. Minister
      - ii. School community
      - iii. Public
- B.** There should be equal allocation of teacher education resources to the curriculum of all recognised patrons.
- C.** Educate Together rejects the contention that the State cannot afford to provide for parent choice and diversity of school type.
- D.** Parents should be consulted regarding the establishment of schools in their area, both to vindicate their constitutional rights and to ensure best quality of education.
- E.** A new independent method of assessing parental preference of school type should be introduced to assist the Department of Education & Science in the allocation of accommodation and resources.
- F.** Initial numbers of pre-enrolments should not be used as a measure of the future viability of a school. Instead reliable methods of assessing future demand should be developed.
- G.** Decisions relating to new schools should result from an independent and transparent process, based on clear criteria and subject to an independent appeals mechanism.

- H. Recommendations from NSAC to the Minister need to be considered and addressed.
- I. The facilitation of an independent and voluntary initiative is beneficial to the system as a whole and will allow the State to meet its constitutional, legal and international obligations.

8. **Estuary Education Trust**

Estuary Education Trust is currently finalising the formation of a Trust structure with the Revenue Commissioners with a view to provision of a school in North Dublin.

The Trust feels that the minimum enrolment number for the opening of a new school is unintentionally discriminatory against minority groups. Their appeal is to allow for the provision of an exception in the minimum enrolment in the case of religious minority groups, even if the degree of financial contribution is varied.

9. **Focus Learning Trust (on Behalf of the Brethren Christian Fellowship)**

Focus Learning Trust is a UK based charity providing direction, financial support and regulation to small schools established by parents to provide for children from the Brethren Community.

The Brethren feel that their community in the ROI is being indirectly disadvantaged through the current minimum enrolment of 17 students per year and they submit that the criteria the recognition of a school receiving state funding should not be limited by an arbitrary minimum number. The persons applying to start a school should rather have to demonstrate that the school will have sufficient additional income to operate viably. Such flexibility of funding is essential to promote diversity of educational provision.

The Trust fully supports all of the other existing criteria for recognition as fair and reasonable to ensure high standards of education.

10. **CPSMA (Galway Diocese)**

1. It should be the right of any Patron and of any denominational faith to apply to have a new school recognised.
2. In respect of a Catholic Patron it should be recognised that when a new parish is established consideration should be given to setting up a parish primary school as soon as possible.
3. The identity of an area and especially a parish is frequently defined by the presence of a primary school. In a developing area and in a new parish the primary school is the catalyst that brings families and the community together.
4. In a city area it is desirable that a school is within walking distance of the majority of its pupils – walking is valuable in the fight against obesity.
5. The minimum start up enrolment of 17 pupils would seem reasonable and should be maintained.

6. It is essential that a strong database be drawn up using Census, Social Welfare information etc in identifying the need for a new school. In the case of the Catholic Church, baptismal and parish registers will be strong indicators of the need for a local school.
7. Accommodation for pupils in a start up school can be problematical. In the present uncertain economic climate there may be a surplus of prefabricated units or commercial units that could easily be adapted as short term classrooms which could be made available to start up schools.
8. New schools should be eligible for all grant aid that established schools are entitled to.

**11. Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)**

***Community National Schools – the way forward?***

The INTO has considered this matter and on balance believes that the concept of a community national school offers a good way forward. Such schools have the potential to accommodate the provision of separate or common religious education programmes or none during the school day in accordance with parental choice. Community national schools, if fully developed, would have the capacity to meet the needs of all under the same roof.

***Practical Issues to be considered in regard to the recognition of new primary schools***

- ***Suitability of premises*** – the INTO believes that the establishment of new schools cannot take place in isolation from the DES’s overall strategy for the extension, refurbishment and maintenance of existing school stock. Further, the recognition of new schools should only take place where there is a clearly defined strategy within a specified timeframe for the provision of permanent, suitable and properly resourced facilities.
- ***Criteria for Recognition*** – the INTO supports the requirements as set out in the Department’s criteria for the recognition of new primary schools (June 2007)
  1. The Board of management will be appointed in accordance with DES requirements
  2. The Rules for national Schools will be complied with
  3. The school will follow the Primary School Curriculum of the DES
  4. The school will employ recognised primary school teachers.
- ***Minimum Numbers Requirement for Commencement of new schools*** – The INTO does not have a strong view on the specific enrolment requirement for the commencement of a new school, rather it is the necessity of establishing a new school and its continued viability to meet the needs of a particular geographical community that needs to be established.
- ***Consultation*** – Previously the NSAC placed a strong emphasis on consultation with local communities in advance of the establishment of a new school. INTO is strongly of the view that this emphasis on consultation should be maintained.



12. **Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA)**

VECs were established in 1930 to address the need for a system of schooling which could inter alia accommodate religious, cultural and social diversity. The flexibility of the vocational education legislation has facilitated the sector's patronage of two pilot community national schools under the proposed patronage of Co. Dublin VEC. IVEA state that these pilot schools were established to address the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and diverse local community and further state that it is envisaged that these model schools will be extended nationwide to cater for the diverse needs of newly developing areas.

**IVEA's key comments in relation to the current core criteria for the recognition of new primary schools are as follows:**

***The local community is consulted in advance.***

Where the demand for additional school places cannot be met within or by extending existing schools, the need for a new school must effectively be addressed. The diverse demands of the local community must be balanced with the financial demands on the exchequer. In this context IVEA believes the Community National School model best accommodates diversity, as it meets the need for a new form of plurality of provision within the framework of a single school setting.

***The Patron has been recognised as such by the DES***

Recognition and registration of patron bodies must remain a *sine qua non* in the process for the establishment of new schools.

***A Board of Management must be appointed within the guidelines of the DES***

The guidelines and procedures for the establishment of boards of management will ensure standard operational practices in all recognised primary schools. The community national school board of management will, uniquely, at primary level be supported and maintained in its role as both a management board and employer.

***The rules for national schools must be complied with***

This is necessary in the context of compliance and good governance.

***Minimum number of 17 pupils and minimum projected enrolment of 51 pupils by year 3 / All pupils are at least 4 years of age on the 30<sup>th</sup> September in which the school is due to commence operation***

While the IVEA agrees with the view that the present threshold of 17 infants is too low, it feels that the minimum threshold should not be increased to such an extent that the need to establish smaller schools where needed is eradicated. In saying this however, IVEA recognises that the Minister's preference for new schools with at least 16 teachers in expanding population areas is reasonable in the context of balancing demand for school places with effective use of exchequer funding.

IVEA also recommends greater use of the campus model.

***School Accommodation and the Building Regulations***

This essential compliance with building regulations is in the interests of good planning. As VECs have the technical and professional resources,

consideration should be given to the capacity of VECs to procure and develop new primary schools.

***The school will employ recognised primary school teachers.***

These are agreed essential requirements of the criteria for the establishment of new schools.

***Conclusion***

IVEA recognises the rich heritage of education provided by the churches and the religious orders. As church bodies divest themselves of patronage of some of their primary schools, there may be a need to accommodate those schools via a different model. In this context perhaps the success of the Community College model at post-primary level could be duplicated at primary level. VECs have demonstrated a capacity and a willingness to be responsive to changing societal demands. The vast experience of VECs in the development of capital projects would be an immense advantage also at primary level.

**13. County Meath VEC**

***Fundamental principles***

1. While acknowledging the need for flexibility and provision in a multi-cultural and religiously diverse society it is imperative that the new process does not interrupt existing structures but rather try to contain and build on the best of existing provision.
2. Patronage bodies when offering to play a patronage role for new foundations need first of all to take account of existing second level providers within the area so as not to adversely affect these providers.
3. There should be structured consultation with existing providers where new foundations are mooted.
4. The fact that a small number of parents propose the provision of an additional school under a new patron does not in itself justify a new foundation. In respecting the rights of parents to seek multi-denominational school/ Irish language schooling/ church schooling, this should be done within a framework of objective oversight.
5. The recognition of new primary schools should be based on the principle of exploring the potential for synergies involving shared campus or shared building on adjacent campuses.
6. Co Meath VEC has no strong view on the minimum number of pupils required to establish a new school, but feel that rather than establishing a universal baseline minimum number it should be dictated by the capacity of existing schools to cater for its community and whether in a particular area there is a need for diversity of patronage.
7. Recent changes that have increased patronage diversity have been rather small in scale. Any future increased diversity might be of a much greater scale and what has worked well on a small scale in the past may not necessarily work well on a larger scale in the future.

As a result and based on a number of considerations, County Meath VEC is of the view that VECs are suitable bodies to become patrons of primary schools, including the consideration that they have developed a second level model of inclusiveness and diversity which has responded over time to the evolving needs of the community.

**14. Newbridge Independent School**

Newbridge Independent School propose that any criteria for the funding of new primary schools has sufficient flexibility built into it that allows for small faith groups or communities to set up their own schools, either exclusively or including the intake of additional non-community students, but to which the Government would only commit funding according to the pupil roll. This would be based on the average pupil cost in state schools and the community or faith would agree to fully underwrite the school running costs that would be over and above the fair per-capita costs. Such an agreement would be subject to sufficient Government control and inspection and would include such items as:

- Standards of premises
- Health and safety to national standards
- Fully qualified teaching staff
- Support staff as required
- Teaching to the Irish curriculum
- National examinations
- Fully checked staff, trustees, drivers, etc
- Use of IT of VC
- Reporting to the Department of Education & Science
- Accepting non-brethren children if they respect the school ethos
- Such other criteria as is necessary for a quality school.

**15. National Parents Council**

NPC believes that all decisions made regarding the processes for recognising new schools need to be child centred and ensure that the best outcomes for all children are achieved. In achieving this NPC feel that two key issues need to be considered:

***Parental Choice***

In recognising new primary schools it is essential that the primary school system can accommodate diversity, ensuring that parents can choose a school for their child that fulfils their religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social educational needs. Therefore the process needs to be flexible and inclusive.

***Equality of Access***

All schools must offer the same facilities for children. All children should have access to adequate educational facilities regardless of their geographical or urban/rural situation. School transport issues also need to be considered.

**16. Steering Committee for new Primary School for Doughiska, Roscam, Ardaun (DRA) area of Galway**

The Steering Committee has commissioned a Profile and Needs Analysis and Action Plan for the DRA area. Key findings in relation to the expanding

population, housing, employment, occupations, education and community priorities are attached to the Committee's submission.

Included among the key findings is that the provision of schools, both primary and secondary is seen as a primary need to be addressed in the community. Currently, children are being dispatched to many schools all over the city, as the need for school places far exceeds convenient availability for parents in the area.

A school for the area is included in the PPP programme with an expected delivery date of December 2012. In the interim the Committee has made an application for a temporary school and request that their application be given priority by the Commission on School Accommodation and the DES.

**17. Maurice Fitzgerald, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork**

- The Commission should have particular regard for non-denominated schools that seek to promote equality and freedom for children to interact with each other, irrespective of religious indoctrination favoured by their parents.
- The Commission should give no favour or primacy whatsoever to any patronage of a particular religious organisation. The primary focus should be on minimum numbers, standards, accountability, ability to follow the state curriculum to the letter, ability to manage the school in question, and overall amenity to students.
- No public money should be given to any school or quasi-schools who are not promoting equality or following state examinations, and has a religious theme to enrolment or engages in any form of indoctrination that would alienate other non-religious or religious or agnostic pupils.

**18. Conradh na Gaeilge**

Conradh na Gaeilge believes that education through the medium of Irish should be available as a right for every child in the State whose parents/guardians demand it for them, and that it is the role of the Irish State to guarantee that right and to provide the appropriate resources to achieve this

***Recommendations***

1. Irish-medium schooling should not be limited to the State's large cities. The number of pupils required to afford a gaelscoil temporary recognition should remain at 17 pupils.
2. Places must be agreed where Naíonra, primary schools and second level schools could be established in the interest of having an impact on as large a community as possible.
3. In relation to second level, where only one strong gaelscoil exists in a town an independent Gaelcholaiste should be founded to support it; a stream/unit is not sufficient.
4. The DES must permit a room for the development of a naíonra as an aspect of the plan for any permanent gaelscoil.
5. The administrative system shouldn't require two years of preparation to permit the foundation of a new gaelscoil.
6. At primary level the single-streamed national school is very suitable for Irish medium schooling, towns with populations of 2,000 to 3,000 can support a single streamed gaelscoil, while a national school with English as the teaching medium still remains in the town as a choice for parents.

7. It may be that it would be beneficial to establish the second (or the third) gaelscoil in a city, or in a second (or a third) large town nearby, to provide and to maintain post-primary services for the whole area. If the demand for Irish-medium schooling increases still then the all-Irish primary schools could take in a second stream.

**19. Pádraig Ó Cuinneagáin, B.Ed, MA, MSc**

1. A national strategy should be in place to ensure that education through the medium of Irish is available to everyone in the country, both rural and urban areas.
2. Different numbers should be considered in relation to the number of children required to open a school. It is recommended that there should be different numbers depending on whether it is a rural or an urban area.
3. The current numbers as they were until September 2008 should be maintained (as the lowest number required for urban areas – all-Irish primary school). It is recommended that this be the same as the number required for permanent recognition: 51 by year three. In the case of primary schools in rural areas a lower figure should be used for opening a school and for gaining permanent status.
4. The Department of Education should lay out a projected plan for the establishment of all-Irish schools. It is recommended that there should be a certain amount of all-Irish schools in each county with all-Irish secondary school(s) serving them accordingly.
5. It is a cause of embarrassment that the Department of Education and Science failed to grant the community/foundation committee in Killinkere, Co. Cavan permission to open Gaelscoil Chillín Chéir in September 2009. The Department of Education is depriving education through the medium of Irish to this rural community. It is recommended that permission be given to this Committee to open Gaelscoil Chillín Céir.

**20. Foundation Committee, Gaelscoil Oiriall**

1. *Minimum number of pupils required to establish a school* – it would be necessary to have 20 children registered for junior infants to open a new primary school. This would mean that there would be two teachers in the school at all times to provide a safe environment for the children
2. *Diversity in Education* – it is important that there would be diversity in education in every area providing choice to parents. The DES should ensure that there is a gaelscoil in every area in which there is demand.
3. *Government Policy* - As is shown in official government policy – Statement on the Irish Language, 2006 –  
*“A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post-primary level will be developed to meet demand as required.”*

Without any doubt the Government should adhere to this policy and give every support to gaelscoileanna while they are attempting to get established.

**21. Forbairt Náionraí Teoranta**

1. *Minimum number of pupils required to establish a school* – it is recommended that a minimum number of 20 pupils in Junior Infants be required to establish a school.
2. *Importance of Gaelscolaíocht for language preservation* - Major importance is attached to all-Irish schooling for the preservation of the

country's first official language. It is worth clarifying the Government's policy here concerning the promotion of the language, Statement on the Irish Language, 2006:

“A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post- primary level will be developed to meet demand as required”.

3. ***Continuity in the Gaelscolaíocht System*** -Strategic planning is required to establish a joint plan for the continuity from pre-school level to Leaving Cert level. Naíonraí are important for the gaelscoileanna to give children a foundation in early total immersion education and the gaelscoileanna are essential for the development of the Gaelcholáistí. Campus style arrangements can have merit.
4. ***Timetable for establishing a new school*** - The school establishment process should take two years. A pre-application should be posted to the DES by the end of September, a more comprehensive application should be sent in to the Department before the end of January of the following year. A decision should have been made by the Department about recognition for the school before the end of the month of January the following year. A decision should be made by the Department on the school's recognition and announced to the foundation committee / the patron in April of the year before the new school opens. This will give the foundation committee time to announce the establishment of the school to parents in the area in a proper fashion, to appoint a principal and teacher(s) and give the Department time to build an appropriate building.

## 22. **Foras na Gaeilge**

Foras na Gaeilge believes that;

- Gaelscolaíocht (Irish-medium schooling) is a choice of education that should be available to all children throughout the country.
- Gaelscolaíocht is a choice of education that a lot of parents are making and appropriate provision should be made for gaelscoileanna in areas where there is the demand – whether in new areas of growth and development or not. A distinction should be made between the numbers required to establish schools in urban areas and the numbers required in non-urban areas – as in effect in Northern Ireland (15 in 1<sup>st</sup> Class in urban areas and 12 in 1<sup>st</sup> Class in non-urban areas).
- building sites for gaelscoileanna should be provided by the Department of Education and Science, especially in urban areas – which should include space for preschool, primary school and post-primary school services.
- the major growth and development of the gaelscolaíocht sector is clear, particularly over the last 30 years, and that the development of the sector should not be prevented especially when there is demand for all-Irish schools. It is unclear why provision could not be made if establishment criteria are fulfilled and if it is shown that the school is sustainable.
- There should be a special unit within the Department of Education and Science to deal solely with gaelscolaíocht. Extra support should be provided to all-Irish schools as the case for immersion education in all-Irish schools is completely different from those in all-English schools.

23. **Eileen Daly, The Playhouse Playschool, Ballaghmore, Borris-on-Ossory, County Laois**

1. ***Minimum number of students required to establish a school*** – it is recommended that the minimum number of pupils required be raised from 17 to 20 pupils. This would mean further safety in schools.
2. ***Diversity in the provision of education and the importance of Gaelscolaíocht for language preservation*** – the gaelscoileanna cater for a wide range of diversity in society and there are many all-Irish schools which have a diversity of religious ethea. Further, major importance is attached to all-Irish schooling for the preservation of the country’s first official language. It is worth clarifying the Government’s policy here concerning the promotion of the language, Statement on the Irish Language, 2006:  
“A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post- primary level will be developed to meet demand as required”.
3. ***Continuity in the Gaelscolaíocht System*** -Strategic planning is required to establish a joint plan for the continuity from pre-school level to Leaving Cert level. Naíonraí are important for the gaelscoileanna to give children a foundation in early total immersion education and the gaelscoileanna are essential for the development of the Gaelcholáistí. Campus style arrangements can have merit.
4. ***Timetable for establishing a new school*** - The school establishment process should take two years. A pre-application should be posted to the DES by the end of September, a more comprehensive application should be sent in to the Department before the end of January of the following year. A decision should have been made by the Department about recognition for the school before the end of the month of January the following year. A decision should be made by the Department on the school’s recognition and announced to the foundation committee / the patron in April of the year before the new school opens. This will give the foundation committee time to announce the establishment of the school to parents in the area in a proper fashion, to appoint a principal and teacher(s) and give the Department time to build an appropriate building.

24. **Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lánghaeilge Teo (FPSLG)**

***The Question of Patronage***

It is in the context of state funding and the DES’s rules and regulations and its authority over the educational system that that the question of traditional patronage is being discussed at present. The question of value for money and diversity are driving the issue forward. We live in a more pluralist society and parent’s rights in relation to ethos are very prominent.

In the debate on the question of patronage is it in mind:

- To cease the current system of patronage and to put a new system in its place?
- To set down new criteria and conditions to recognise and register a patron?
- To have a single system of patronage which would cover every occasion?
- To have a new system/ a state system for the future?

If the DES wants another system of patronage to cater for lifestyle changes in Ireland then FPSLG feel that the DES should be more open in relation to this

question and about what they want. At this point FPSLG would be reluctant to make any move from the system which exists until they see what is involved as they cannot see any advantage in changing. In their experience the system which exists is sufficiently diverse and flexible enough to cater for existing lifestyle changes and FPSLG is open to playing their part in catering for them in the form of Gaeloideachas

### ***The Question of Diversity***

It is FPSLG's view that every patron has the right to continue their traditional role. According to legal advice received schools have a right to defend the characteristic school spirit of faith and language and to use them as entrance criteria. Recognition should be given to this privilege and support provided for this parental choice. The right of parents to select their choice of education for their children is stated in the Constitution and the Education Act 1998.

FPSLG outline their role as a patron and say they are national, pluralist and democratic patron which has served a heterogeneous society for a long time and which will continue to serve to a changing society in the context of Gaeloideachas.

The appropriate religious programme is taught to pupils of gaelscoileanna. Pupils from every background are welcome.

In relation to the community primary schools an Foras is happy to be a patron if this is the parents' choice. In this case the community Gaelscoil will cater for children from different religions, within official school time. A multi-religious ethos rather than a multi-denominational ethos would be involved.

### ***The Question of Numbers***

Every gaelscoil under the patronage of FPSLG has succeeded in continuing and growing. Although some foundation committees have had problems in trying to get 17 pupils in the first year there are no problems in growing and developing after that. Therefore an obstacle should not be put to the establishment of a gaelscoil because of small numbers in the first year. If the minimum class group number is set too high it could be discriminatory against minorities. FPSLG think it is unfair that the same minimum number is required in urban areas as in rural areas and feel that DES should be flexible in this regard.

FPSLG emphasize the importance of all Irish school for the preservation of the language. In 2006 a statement concerning the Irish Language and the Government stated the following: "A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post-primary level will be developed to meet demand as required".

FPSLG are in agreement with a two year opening period for a new school, instead of one year as it would reduce difficulties.

In regard to parental choice and rights it is important to accommodate the choice of parents who wish to have an all Irish education for their children, this however is not to say that parents have the right to establish a gaelscoil at every crossroad.



FPSLG provides suitable and safe accommodation which complies with building and fire regulations for new schools with temporary recognition. Without grant aid from the DES to provide for rental etc it would not be possible to establish new gael scoileanna. However, it is felt that the DES should provide suitable and satisfactory accommodation irrespective of whether the school's recognition is temporary or permanent.

### ***Planning for Gaeloideachas***

A definite structure is required where the gaeloideachas partners will have a central role and input in planning and in drafting DES policies concerning the promotion of Gaeloideachas and where policies would be agreed by these partners. An Foras would be very happy to take a role as stakeholder in this planning and asks the DES to accept the goodwill and willingness of An Foras to be patron of new gael scoileanna in newly developed areas and Greenfield sites.

### ***The Perspective of an Foras Pátrúnachta***

The FPSLG, in its role as patron, was and is very satisfied to cater for diversity and for parental choice since it was established in 1993 and it caters for a system that is pluralist and diverse. FPSLG is not in favour of various educational choices being under one roof and this situation would not promote a characteristic gael scoil spirit, however, they have no objection to campus style arrangements with separate entrances/ exits, etc and to have definite arrangements in place in relation to the use of common facilities such as a hall.

As a patron An Foras would welcome the opportunity to open a national community gael scoil and are happy to accommodate parents who choose a community gael scoil.

## **25. Comhdháil Náisiunta na Gaeilge (CNG)**

CNG recognises that the DES has a fundamental duty to implement a planning system to ensure that there will be sufficient provision for all the nation's children in the education system. It further recognises that the DES must take changes in the country's demographics into account while fulfilling this duty, together with ensuring value for money without damage to the standard of education being provided.

**CNG feel that the main questions that must be focused on are:**

### ***Underlying demand for Gaelscolaíocht***

The growth and development in the Gaelscolaíocht sector shows that there is a continuous and strong underlying demand for Gaelscolaíocht. There is a need for a strategic planning system in the DES to pay attention to this demand, and to serve and increase this demand. CNF recommends the *Plan for Establishing all-Irish medium Schooling* as a good strategic planning model for the establishment of schools from pre-school to post-primary level. There should also be an integrated approach between the DES and Local Authorities in the schools establishment process, particularly in Gaeltacht areas and other areas where there is a large amount of people proficient in Irish.

### ***Planning for Gaelscolaíocht provision – Continuity from level to level***

It is recommended that the DES operate a plan which recognises the importance of continuity from pre-school to post-primary in the Gaelscolaíocht system. DES should operate an identification system for new schools which enable the all-Irish pre-school, primary school and post-primary school operate on one campus with services divided amongst them.

### ***Preservation of the Irish language by promoting demand for the Gaelscolaíocht system***

It is not sufficient for the State to look after the language needs of a community, they should actively promote the Irish language by fostering demand for Gaelscolaíocht and encourage the Irish speaking community to achieve the most benefit from this system.

### ***Criteria and Procedures for the establishment of schools***

1. **Minimum numbers required to establish a school** - this should not be increased from the current level, and the development potential of school should be taken into account when granting temporary recognition. There should be a 2 year preparatory period for opening a new school and that appropriate accommodation should be provided for the school within this time period and a new building should be provided within 5 years or less.
2. **Patron's Role** – it should be a fundamental requirement of any new patronage at primary level that the people fulfilling that role would have an educational background. It should be required that any new patron would have legal protection and should be a company with share capital, and articles of association which show clearly the approach they would have.
3. **Diversity in Education Provision** – Some gaelscoileanna have made changes to their enrolment policies to ensure that a certain amount of immigrant children are part of their school's profile. This shows that the all-Irish system is an effective model for children from diverse backgrounds with different native languages. It is recommended that it should be a central part of the new schools establishment process that a certain amount of immigrant children are part of the school's profile in order to contribute positively to the school and surrounding area.
4. **Protecting the ethos of all-Irish schools** - It is strongly recommended that new all-Irish medium schools and English medium schools would not be founded on the same site because of the specific needs of all-Irish schools to preserve the Irish ethos. In circumstances where it is unavoidable, management policies must be agreed between the schools involved looking after the ethos of all-Irish school. It is recommended that an all-Irish nursery, primary school and post-primary school should be founded together on the one site in places where this is feasible model for the benefits of both pupils and the language together.
5. **Accommodation Questions** – It is very important that appropriate accommodation be provided for a new school from the day it opens. In the matter of a newly developed area it is recommended to the DES that a certain amount of educational resources be ring-fenced for Gaelscolaíocht.

6. **Schools' Role in the Community in which they operate** – All-Irish schools have a specific role to play in promoting the Irish language in the area in which they are situated. It is important that the DES is attentive to and is supportive of this specific role in the new school establishment process.

## **26. Gaelscoileanna Teo.**

### ***Summary and recommendations***

1. That the Government keeps its word to strengthen the gaelscolaíocht system.
2. That the co-operation between the Department of Education and Science, Gaelscoileanna Teo and all the gaeloideachais partners would be strengthened in relation to planning for the establishment of all-Irish schools so that the choice of gaeloideachas is available nationwide, a choice which has demonstrated a high educational standard. To this end, it is recommended that the *Plean Bunú Gaelscolaíochta* (Plan for the foundation of all-Irish Schooling) be used as a working document and as a guide for both parties.
3. That the new school establishment process will take the promotion of the Irish Language into consideration by planning to ensure that a proper network of primary and post-primary all-Irish schools will be available nationwide for those who want it.
4. To maintain the gaelscolaíocht system, which is an educational system of the highest standard, through appropriate integrated planning at the Department of Education and Science and Local Authority level.
5. That an examination of the quality option of establishing a **Gaelchampas** shared from naíonra to a post-primary school on the same site would be undertaken.
6. That the Department of Education and Science will ensure in establishing any new patron in the future or amending the current system of patronage, that the choice of gaelscolaíocht would be taken into consideration in the provision, and that it will be assured that the patron has a strong policy for defending, promoting, and preserving the Irish language ethos and immersion education in the all-Irish schools.
7. That flexibility would be shown to the gaelscolaíocht system regarding the minimum number of children required for the establishment of a school to recognise the unique nature of the schools and the areas in which they operate.
8. That the rule whereby 17 pupils not previously at school is at issue be removed.
9. That a period of 2 years would be officially recognised as a period in the process for establishing a school on the basis that appropriate accommodation would be provided from the time the school opens.
10. That there would be an accelerated system to deal with strong applications for the establishment of a new school in areas where a clear need is demonstrated within a period of little over a year, according to a new transparent system.
11. That building space and planning permission would be ring-fenced by the Department of Education and Science for the gaelscoil as part of any

accommodation arrangement agreed by the Department of Education and Science with the appropriate authorities and landlords for a new school in order to facilitate the process while the school is growing and developing.

12. That a permanent building would be provided for any school permitted to open within 5 years with a graduated process laid out for this purpose.
13. That temporary recognition for the school would last for a period of two years after being granted without a needing to submit it to Department of Education and Science again in this period.
14. That a structure would be developed between the Department of Education and the gaeloideachas stakeholders to facilitate and ensure development of the sector.

**27. Establishing Committee, Gaelscoil Ráth Tó, Ratoath, Co. Meath**

The establishing Committee submits that, based on baptismal records and Census figures, there is a need for an additional school within the locality of Ratoath.

They hope that the review will take into account the extenuating circumstances of Ratoath, and they hope that the necessary steps will be taken to ensure that there is no crisis in school places in Ratoath in 2010. It is their wish that the legislation will be in place to facilitate the involvement of Vocational Educational Committees in the provision of primary education to coincide with the 2010 school year. Diversity of educational choice should be a core principal in future development and supporting the growth and development of the Irish language for children in making it a living and a working language.

## **Appendix F: Summary of School Types in the Irish Primary Education Sector**

Historically Irish schools catered for a relatively homogenous group of pupils and came under the patronage of a small number of religious groups. Since the 1970s a number of developments have taken place in response to a greater demand for diversity. Traditionally the ethos of most primary schools has been religious with over 90% being under the patronage of the Catholic Church. As the profile of the population has changed so has the patronage system changed with a subsequent increase in a diverse range of school types.

The history of the patronage system has meant that the educational philosophy of the patron, be it religious or linguistic, translates into a distinctive character of the education provided in the school. A variety of terms has been used to describe this distinctive character of a school:

- Ethos
- Characteristic spirit
- Mission
- Purpose
- Philosophy

The Department of Education and Skills currently classifies primary schools as denominational, inter-denominational and multi-denominational offering education through the medium of English or Irish (all Irish schools in Gaeltacht areas and all Irish schools outside of Gaeltacht areas). A description of each category and the main types of schools currently within each category is outlined below. In addition a description of Gaelscoileanna is outlined below.

Please refer to the table on page 20 which outlines the number of schools by patron body.

### **1. Denominational schools**

Faith formation forms part of the school day. The majority of denominational schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. The other main denominational schools currently recognised by the Department are Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish and Quaker schools.

#### **General**

Schools under the patronage of the main religious beliefs operate an ethos in accordance with the main principles of that particular religion/ belief system. In the context of the Education Act 1998, the Department of Education & Skills recognises the rights of the various church authorities to design curricula in religious education in primary schools and to supervise their teaching and implementation and the Act makes provision for the teaching of religious education and religious instruction in these schools. Denominational schools support the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

Denominational schools value tolerance and inclusiveness and see the presence of children from other denominations as an enrichment of the

educational experience offered by the school and would see such diversity as offering opportunities for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.

### **Catholic schools**

There are 2,841 Catholic primary schools. Catholic primary schools have been major education providers since the foundation of the State and before. The philosophy of the Catholic school is based on the respect for every child made in the image of and likeness of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full - in short, it is about imparting wisdom. It strives for excellence and transmits a passion for learning. It is committed to developing the child as a person and the school cooperates with the child's parents to achieve this. The child's intellectual and social skills are carefully nurtured and tended to so as to ensure that full potential is realised.

The family remains at the heart of the Catholic school. As the Catholic school is a parish school it is an integral part of the whole community. The school, parents and community jointly celebrate the milestones in the child's life and thus the child has a clear sense of self in his/her own identity, as part of his/her family and as part of the wider community.

In the work of education the Catholic school provides an important service to society and in particular to the community that it is rooted in. The child is encouraged to become a good citizen and to play a meaningful role in society. As a civic institution the Catholic school's aims, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. However it is also a Christian community and as such it takes the human personality of the young person seriously and integrates faith values with a coherent integrated vision of the meaning of life in harmony with the needs of the society that the child is a part of.

The Catholic school values tolerance welcomes diversity and strives for inclusivity. It is open to people of other faiths and none. While it maintains its own distinctive ethos, the beliefs and traditions of others are respected. The Catholic school sees diversity as an opportunity for dialogue and understanding. The presence of children from other faiths and none is seen as an enrichment of the educational experience and as a practical expression of the commitment to inclusivity. Catholic primary schools welcome children from migrant backgrounds, for children with special needs, for children from socio-economically deprived areas and for children from the travelling community.

### **Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian schools**

There are 174 Church of Ireland primary schools, 17 Presbyterian primary schools and 1 Methodist primary school.

The Church of Ireland is part of the world-wide Anglican Communion and has provided primary level education in Ireland since the early nineteenth century. It is currently the second largest Patron body at primary level. Church of

Ireland schools are denominational schools and are, usually, under the Patronage of the local Church of Ireland Bishop who normally appoints the Chair of the schools Board of Management. Church of Ireland National Schools are often attached to their local parish, with the local clergy forming a visible and structural link between school and parish congregation.

Religious Education in Church of Ireland schools is taught through the *Follow Me* programme which is produced by the Church's General Synod Board of Education. The programme is child-centred and seeks to impart a pedagogy that brings children into contact with and seek to understand, the love of God and the fellowship of Christ. The *Follow Me* programme is also taught in the 16 Presbyterian National Schools and the Methodist National School in Rathgar, Dublin. In common with other denominational schools, Church of Ireland schools seek to reflect the Christian faith in their teaching of the primary school curriculum. The Church of Ireland National school should therefore express the beliefs of the Church of Ireland, among which are moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, justice, fairness, sensitivity to others, and civic responsibility; which are based on the teachings of Christ and Scripture. The nurturing of faith in the life of the school is also given expression through such events as Christmas Carol Services and plays, observation of Eastertide, holy days, Harvest Thanksgiving and other acts of worship. For Church of Ireland pupils this is often augmented by Sunday School in the local parish.

The vision of Church of Ireland National schools can be stated as: seeking to nurture and encourage the formation of the intellectual, academic, sporting, social and religious abilities of each child within the framework of the community of faith. As a Reformed Church, the Church of Ireland encourages intellectual diversity of thought and encourages the individual to seek to understand. This understanding of school ethos promotes a philosophy that welcomes diversity and pluralism in thought, living and the school community. Drawing on its Anglican tradition, the Church of Ireland School encourages parental involvement, highlighting the importance the role of the family in the life of the Church community but more significantly, underlining the role of the family in educational and social child development.

### **Jewish school**

There is one Jewish primary school. Stratford is the only Jewish school in Ireland and it incorporates a national school and secondary school. In the 1950's, the Jewish Community was much larger than it is now and the student population at Stratford was entirely Jewish. As with everywhere else in Ireland emigration took its toll and in order to maintain its wide curriculum the Board of Management decided that the school should become multi-denominational. Now, while retaining its Jewish ethos Stratford is a thriving multi-denominational place of learning where respect for the individual is of paramount importance, high academic standards are maintained and sport is actively encouraged and fostered.

### **Quaker School**

There is one Quaker primary school. Quaker schools place emphasis on developing well rounded individuals by providing a wide range of extra curricular activities, sport and outdoor pursuits, in a caring and supportive atmosphere. Particular importance is placed on a lively respect for others, good personal relationships, and a sense of responsibility to the world where we live and the people in it. Pupils are encouraged to fulfill their potential both academically and in extracurricular activities.

The schools welcome students of all religious persuasions and appreciate the contribution of all denominations to the school community. The schools aim to foster a sense of caring for others and to communicate a set of values which reflects a balance between the material and the spiritual. In keeping with the Quaker tradition every individual is of value and has something to contribute.

### **Islamic schools**

There are two Muslim primary schools.

The Muslim Community in Ireland believes that the education of children, not only religious education, is primarily the duty of the community, and they are happy to take on the responsibility of educating Muslim children. They feel that this view parallels that of the Irish Education system in that the Irish Constitution states in Article 42.1 “The State acknowledges that the primary educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according their means, for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children”.

The schools are run by the Muslim Community, through a Board of Management. The ethos of the schools is distinctly Islamic and this is reflected in various practices in the schools.

## **2. Multi-Denominational schools**

Religion may be taught as part of the school day or may be taught outside of the school day. The main types of multi-denominational schools currently recognised by the Department are outlined below: (See also paragraph re Gaelscoileanna in part 3).

### **Educate Together schools**

There are 58 Educate Together schools. Educate Together Ltd, a private charitable company, is patron of 44 of the 58 Educate Together National Schools; the other schools within the Educate Together network have their own patron. Educate Together defines the ethos of the schools as follows:

- Multi-denominational i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected
- Co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities,
- Child centred in their approach to education
- Democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers

The schools do not provide for any faith formation or religious observance during school hours but do facilitate faith formation on school premises outside of school hours.

### **Community National School**

A new model of community national school, under the Patronage of Vocational Education Committees (VECs) is being piloted. Two of these schools were established in September 2008 and a further three schools were established in September 2010.



The new model of primary school patronage is not intended to replace the existing models but to provide an additional option. The new community national schools aim in particular to meet the changing demands and expectations of society, notably the demand for diversity and whole community inclusion. The community national schools are committed to a high standard of education where each child is helped to reach his/her personal potential. They are operating in a spirit of partnership between patron, teachers, students, parents and the wider community served by the school.

The building of links between the schools and their respective communities is of key importance and the integration of newcomer parents is being assisted by introducing them to the local community leaders and providers of services and social activities including library services, family learning programmes such as adult literacy classes and GAA clubs.

#### Religious Education in the Community National School

The delivery of religious education in the new schools is being developed on an action research basis over the course of the pilot phase. The action research, which is being facilitated by County Dublin VEC, provides an opportunity for the faith communities, teachers, parents and others involved to share in addressing the practical classroom challenges involved. The nature of the research allows different approaches to be developed and assessed allowing conclusions to be drawn for the future. The research project is being undertaken by a Research Officer with suitable qualifications in the field of curriculum development and with considerable practical experience in this area and is being facilitated by County Dublin VEC as patron-designate.

The research project is assisted by a Reference Group which includes representatives of the main churches and faith groups together with educational experts in the field of curriculum development and teaching of religion. The group also includes representatives of non-theist perspectives in order to accommodate the development of an appropriate programme of moral development for children whose parents do not wish them to participate in multi-faith religious education where it is possible to provide such an option.

Discussions on the development of the religious education programme have also taken place between the Department and relevant Church, faith and other interest groups. These include the Commission on Education of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, representatives of the other main Christian churches, the Muslim community and the Humanist Association.

#### Evaluation of pilot model

The pilot phase of this new model provides an important learning opportunity and its evaluation is an important element of the project. A sub-committee of the Department-VEC Steering Group has developed a framework of evaluation criteria to assess the project from its inception through to its ongoing operational stage. A formal process has also been established to collate enrolment and other key information from the schools at start-up stage and to allow useful comparative data to be collected over the period of the pilot.

The teaching staff and management of the new schools are central to the evaluation process. Their engagement and feedback are providing important insights as are those of parents in the schools. The views of pupils and the

local community together with neighbouring schools and other relevant education partners are also being sought as part of the evaluation. The Inspectorate and other education services working with the schools will also play an active role. The quality of learning outcomes, effectiveness of structures and supports, the degree of community acceptance, the perspectives of other patrons and partners, and, most fundamentally, the experience of parents and their children will all be essential measures of the success of this initiative. The cost implications of the new model will also be assessed as part of the evaluation process.

### **Steiner schools**

There are two Steiner schools recognised as primary schools. These are both in County Clare. Steiner schools offer an academic and practical education for the whole child which is multi-denominational, child-centred co-education. Based on the work of scientist and philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the education began in 1919 with the founding of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany. Steiner Waldorf schools are spiritually oriented and are based out of a generally Christian perspective. The historic festivals of Christianity, and of other major religions as well, are observed in the class rooms and in school assemblies. Classes in religious doctrine are not part of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, and children of all religious backgrounds attend Steiner Waldorf schools.

### **John Scottus school**

There is one John Scottus School recognised as a primary school. This school is in Dublin. John Scottus School is a multi-denominational school. The school aims to put philosophical principles into practice in education. It believes in the essential perfect nature of each child and pursues the development of good character through practical philosophy. While religion is supported and encouraged, the school is not aligned to any religious denomination and none is given prominence.

## **3. Gaelscoileanna**

Gaelscoileanna follow the standard curriculum as set by the Department of Education and Skills. Irish is the teaching language in the school and the language of communication between the teachers, the students, the parents and the board of management. The principal aim of Irish-medium schools is to provide excellence in education and the ethos of Irish-medium schools helps to keep Irish as a living language in the community.

In terms of ethos, a gaelscoil can be denominational, multi-denominational or inter-denominational depending on the local circumstances. There are 14 interdenominational gaelscoileanna, which are under the patronage of an Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge Teo. There are 106 all-Irish schools in Gaeltacht areas, the majority of which are currently under the patronage of Catholic Church. Outside of the Gaeltacht areas, there are 139 gaelscoileanna. Fifty eight of these gaelscoileanna are under the patronage of an Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge Teo. Foras Pátrúnachta schools have a dual ethos, firstly the promotion of the Irish language through the

provision of Irish medium education, secondly a spiritual ethos which could be denominational, interdenominational or multi-denominational.

The remaining eighty one gaelscoileanna outside of Gaeltacht areas are mostly under denominational patronage.

#### **4. Special Schools**

There are 130 special schools (2009/10). Special schools meet the educational needs of pupils whose needs could not be adequately catered for in ordinary primary schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The Council was first established as an independent statutory body by order of the Minister for Education and Science in December 2003. NCSE's local service is delivered through a national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs.

#### **Patron Bodies of Special Schools include the following:**

- Catholic Patrons
- Church of Ireland Patrons
- HSE
- Central Remedial Clinic
- Enable Ireland
- St Michaels House
- Western Care Association
- Ability West
- North West Parents and Friends
- KARE
- St Josephs Foundation(Limerick)
- Sunbeam House
- Rehab Group
- Tipperary Association for Special Needs
- Longford Association for Mental Handicap
- Stewarts Hospital Services

- National University of Ireland Galway(Prof James Browne – President)
- Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary
- Brothers of Charity
- Cheeverstown House
- Irish Autism Action
- Saplings

## Appendix G: Summary of band rating system for prioritisation of capital projects

### Summary of Band Rating System

<b>BAND</b>	<b>Sub Category</b>	<b>Details</b>
1	1.1	New schools or extensions in developing areas
	1.2	Accommodation for special needs students
	1.3	School that are structurally unsound
	1.4	Rationalisation projects
2	2.1	Major extension of existing school and extensive refurbishment.
	2.2	Major extension of existing school.
	2.3	Extensive refurbishment.
	2.4	Extension of existing school and moderate refurbishment.
	2.5	Extension of existing school
	2.6	Moderate refurbishment.
3	3.1	Ancillary accommodation for special education and some improvements only
	3.2	Ancillary for special education only.
	3.3	Deficit of ancillary other than special education ancillary and some improvements.
	3.4	Deficit of ancillary other than special education ancillary.
	3.5	Improvement works.
4	4.1	All other requests

## **Appendix H: Observations from Gaelscoileanna Teo & An Foras Pátrúnachta in regard to the proposed revised criteria for the establishment of new primary schools**

*Letter from An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna LánGhaeilge Teo*

Marino Institute of Education  
Griffith Avenue  
Dublin 9

14/02/2011

Tony Dalton  
Principal Officer  
Dept of Education & Skills  
Tullamore  
Co. Offaly

### **Re: Commission on School Accommodation**

Dear Tony

On behalf of An Foras Pátrúnachta, we would like to convey our organisation's thanks to the Department officials, to the Commission and to the Technical Working Group for the work done, the effort made and the progress made since establishment of the Technical Working Group in 2008. An Foras Pátrúnachta welcomes elements of the report and understands how difficult it was to arrive at a solution to many of the challenges which arose during this process. We appreciate the report acknowledges the importance of Irish and all-Irish education. We also appreciate the recognition of the importance of the 20 year strategy for Irish (2010-2030) and the acknowledgement of parental demand for all-Irish education.

Notwithstanding these points, An Foras is concerned about the following issues:

The Department will identify areas of demographic growth and it is in these areas that new schools will be built. A parental survey will be undertaken in order to decide what type of school it will be. Undoubtedly those looking for all-Irish education will be a minority at first and so it is likely that this system will not meet their needs. An Foras does not agree with the proposal that all-Irish units be established.

In areas in which there is no demographic growth there is reference to a change of patronage, a change of ethos from English to Irish, Irish speaking units in English-language schools etc. We do accept that great progress has been made in regard to starting discussions on change of patronage. Nevertheless, it is clear that it will take a long time before this will be a practical option for all-Irish education. As regards a change of ethos from English-speaking to an Irish-speaking school, this is another process which will take a long time and there is no clarity or certainty in it for all-Irish education. All-Irish units are among the other models proposed which might be used to serve the demand for all-Irish education. An Foras does not agree with this approach.

The official status of the Irish language is recognised in the Constitution and Irish is recognised as an official language in the EU. The 2006 Government Statement on Irish strongly supports the language and the 20 Year Strategy has been adopted with the aim of increasing significantly the number of Irish speakers. Given all of this and the importance of the language to our identity as a country, the Department should be meeting the well-articulated demand for all-Irish education. The (Commission's) report refers to the (Irish language) Strategy in regard to planning for Irish-medium education yet the Strategy refers to the Department and to the recommendations contained in the Commission's report. We do not agree with those recommendations. The majority of the population do not have any practical alternative to English-medium education for their children. This is not right. There should be a choice available to them for all-Irish education.

On account of the foregoing, An Foras cannot support this report because it effectively places an obstacle to the provision of all-Irish education to the children of the country. We understand that the Department wants to publish the report so An Foras would appreciate if the Department could outline our stated views in the foreword or early in the report so there is no ambiguity.

An Foras would again like to thank those who took part in the Commission, and the officials of the Department for their efforts to try to meet the various demands and needs of the various patrons. We recognise the difficulty in trying to meet the various demands and acknowledge progress has been made. It is a matter of regret that even though An Foras' difficulties with the report's recommendations were frequently raised during the process, there was not a satisfactory resolution of the question of all-Irish education as would befit our national language.

Yours sincerely

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Caoimhín Ó hEaghra

Chief Executive  
An Foras Pátrúnachta

*Letter from Gaelscoileanna Teo*

St Patrick's Hall  
Marino Institute of Education  
Griffith Avenue  
Dublin 9

14/02/2011

Frank Murray  
Executive Chairperson  
Commission on School Accommodation  
Dept of Education & Skills  
Tullamore  
Co. Offaly

**Re: Draft report of the Commission on the criteria for the setting up of new primary schools**

14/02/2011

Dear Frank

I refer to the draft report of the Commission re the criteria and amended process for the setting up of new primary schools dated 28.01.2011 which we received late on 04/02/11. In this letter I outline the views of Gaelscoileanna Teo in regard to the report.

Gaelscoileanna Teo welcomes the work done by the Commission on the future development of primary schools but, as indicated at the Commission meeting on 20/01/2011, the organisation cannot support the report for a number of reasons.

We note that a paragraph has been inserted into the foreword which states that Gaelscoileanna Teo advocates early implementation of the report's recommendations regarding transfer of patronage. Though we agree with that, there is (also) a need for new all-Irish primary schools to have an opportunity to establish in areas of growing population as well as in areas of stable population where there is a demand for all-Irish education. We believe that a change of patron or of ethos will not take place in schools for a long time and that in the meantime many children will lose out on the opportunity to be bi-lingual at a young age and all the advantages this entails.

Gaelscoileanna Teo strongly believes that every child should have access to all-Irish education, including children who do not have an Irish background. In contrast with English-medium schools, children who do not have Irish or English at home would have the same starting point as English-speaking children in the Gaelscoil since most of the pupils in those schools are starting out without the language of the school in any case.

Gaelscoileanna Teo perceives a difficulty with consultation in newly established areas especially when it involves a parental survey. If schools are to be established on that basis in the future it will be difficult to establish an Irish-speaking school as it is likely that only a minority will seek all-Irish education in preference to English-medium education.



The report makes a reference (that) the Department “embraces a range of solutions for Irish language education” and there is reference also to the establishment of all-Irish units. Gaelscoileanna Teo welcomes the Department being positive on the development of all-Irish education but the experience of Gaelscoileanna Teo to date is that all-Irish units do not work in all-English schools. Over the past 10 years **seven all-Irish units have closed at second level due to lack of support from the Department** . In addition it is hard for all-Irish units to create an Irish language ethos since they are surrounded by English. The same experience has been noted in Northern Ireland also. On that basis Gaelscoileanna Teo cannot agree to the report’s recommendations that all-Irish units be established in all-English schools.

Gaelscoileanna Teo recommends as an additional point be referenced in footnote 7 on page 20 of the report to the effect that 106 primary schools in the Gaeltacht are operating through the medium of Irish as well as the 81 primary schools which are doing so outside the Gaeltacht and which are under the patronage of the Catholic Bishops.

Due to the above points, Gaelscoileanna Teo cannot accept the approach to the establishment of new all-Irish schools which is currently proposed in the Report. **The Department needs to have a development plan for establishment of new all-Irish schools, a plan which is agreed with all-Irish education partners, including Gaelscoileanna Teo.**

Gaelscoileanna Teo would like to develop a development plan for Irish-medium education in co-operation with the Department. We would like a meeting with the Department to discuss this proposal. If you have any query about the contents of this letter you are welcome to contact me.

Looking forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

Nóra Ní Loingsigh  
Acting Chief Executive

cc. Richard Dolan