



Enclosure 2: Patron Code of Conduct

Please note that this Code of Conduct is MANDATORY.

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

Please note that this Code of Conduct covers online/social media/virtual activity in addition to more traditional means of engaging with parents.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

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

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

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

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

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

EXPENDITURE

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

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



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

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

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

BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

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

The process is as follows:

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