



16th October, 2020

Re: Invitation to apply for the establishment and patronage of new post-primary schools to open in 2021

Dear Patron/prospective Patron,

As you may be aware, in April 2018 the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over a four-year period from 2019 to 2022. This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the current and future need for primary and post-primary school places across the country. Since the 2018 announcement, two additional new primary schools established in 2019 and 2020 have been announced as well as the establishment of a new Gaelcholáiste in 2020 (following an assessment of need in the relevant area and the growth of an Aonad in an existing post-primary school), bringing total numbers of new schools for demographic purposes from 2019 to 2022 to 45 schools.

The Department has recently completed the first step of a demographic review at post-primary level having regard to updated information on demographics and additional residential development. Following this review the Minister for Education has approved a number of changes to the list of post-primary schools to be established in 2021, as follows:

New post primary schools will be established in 2021 in the following school planning areas:

- Dunshaughlin
- Gorey

The establishment of the schools that were due to be established in the following school planning areas are deferred:

- Dublin2_Dublin4
- Donaghmede_Howth_D13/Baldoyle/Stapolin
- Sallynoggin_Killiney_DLR/Cherrywood



I am writing to you in relation to the commencement of the Patronage Process for the following four post-primary schools to be established in September 2021:

County	School Planning Area(s) to be served	School Size (Pupils)*	Year of Opening
Cork	Ballincollig	600 pupils	2021
Dublin	Boosterstown_Blackrock & Dún Laoghaire (Regional Solution)	1,000 pupils	2021
Meath	Dunshaughlin	600 pupils	2021
Wexford	Gorey	500 pupils	2021

****based on projected need at time of announcement but will be responsive to patronage or demographic demand***

The Department is conscious that given the restrictions currently in place nationally, as well as the impact of remote working arrangements generally, that it will not be possible for patrons to engage in the normal way with communities, and much of the patronage campaigns are likely to take place in an online environment. It is anticipated that this, and other factors, may have an impact on parental engagement with this particular process. However, despite the continuing situation with regard to Covid-19, it is important that the 2021 post-primary patronage process gets underway as soon as possible in order that the successful incoming school patrons have sufficient time to make the necessary preparations for the schools' opening in 2021. The Department has removed the requirement for applicant patrons to submit hard copy application forms and supporting documents. Completed application forms and supporting documents should be sent by e-mail only to patronapps@education.gov.ie

Each of the four schools is being established to meet a projected demographic need to cater for children living within the school planning area(s) to be served by the school and who are due to commence their post-primary education from 2021 onwards. Please see attached maps of each of the relevant school planning area(s) to be served.

Parental preferences are central to the patronage process. The process is designed to be fair, transparent and open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of any planned new school under this process, provided they meet the minimum requirements set down by the Department.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by the Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. Parents are also given an opportunity to express a preference for their child to be educated through the medium of Irish or English. Parental preferences will be submitted by parents online.

The Online Patronage Process differs from the earlier processes, in that, patron bodies are no longer required to collect parental preferences and make a submission at the end of the process.



The Online Patronage Process requires the patron body to complete an application form at the beginning of the process, which will provide information for parents on the OPPS website.

The Patronage Process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of the Department's assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on the Department's website.

Please find attached (**Enclosure 1**), for information, a copy of the document "Arrangements for the establishment and patronage of new post-primary schools due to open in September 2021". This document also contains general information for applicants (**Appendix A**) who are not already patrons of existing schools with regard to the requirements which must be satisfied in relation to any application under the patronage process. Please note that meeting the requirements in this document does not confer any automatic right to become a patron of a new school. However, failure to meet these requirements by date of application may mean that a prospective patron cannot be included in the process.

Patron bodies will be requested to confirm that they will adhere to the Code of Conduct in order for their application to be finalised.

It is the applicant's sole responsibility to:

- read in its entirety and understand all of the information provided; and
- ensure that their application is complete and is in compliance with the mandatory requirements and criteria as published.

If you wish to become a patron in any of the areas outlined above, you must complete the attached Patron Application Form in full. The deadline for receipt of applications, together with any required supporting documentation is **3p.m. on the 21st October 2020**. As staff in the Department are currently working remotely given the Covid-19 related restrictions all applications must be sent electronically via email to patronapps@education.gov.ie.

The Department will not commence the assessment process of the Patron Application Forms until after the closing date for receipt of applications (21st October 2020) and further contact cannot be made with applicants regarding the substance of their application after the closing date.



If you have any queries in relation to the above, please e-mail them to patronapps@education.gov.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Fidelma Lyons

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Enclosures:

- **Enclosure 1:** Arrangements for the establishment and patronage of new post-primary schools due to open in September 2021
 - Appendix A - General Information for Prospective Patrons



Enclosure 1 - Arrangements for the Establishment and Patronage of New Post-Primary Schools due to open in September 2021.

Need For New School

The following essential conditions apply to the establishment and approval of a new post-primary school to meet demographic need:

- The demographics of the area must support the need for the establishment of a new school - a new school would not impact negatively on the enrolment of schools in the catchment, other than perhaps the establishment of an all-Irish school and the impact of this on an existing Aonad.
- If the demographics require the establishment of a school, then the process for the selection of the type of school should allow for different patrons/bodies to be considered as the patron of a new school.

New School Process

The process will involve the following steps for a new post-primary school:

- Identification of locations of new schools and sizes of new schools by the Department. Most new second-level schools must have a student enrolment capacity of 600 – 1,000 students. A lower threshold of 400 students may apply to Gaelcoláistí, having regard to the alternative of establishing an Aonad within a school.
- Written applications from prospective patrons addressing all of the criteria.
- Consideration of the applications by Department officials and report drafted for consideration by the New Schools Establishment Group.
- Consideration by Group of report and endorsement by Group or identification of need for further analysis by Department and subsequent consideration by Group.
- Report from the Group submitted to the Minister for consideration.
- Decision by the Minister.

Criteria Considered in the Patronage Assessment Process

The main criterion for the decision on patronage in an area where there is already at least one second-level school will be the following:

Whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision in the area (having regard to neighbouring areas) where there is demand for such diversity and plurality. In



this context individual patron bodies from the one faith group will be regarded as representing the same school patronage type for assessing plurality.

As part of the examination of this criterion regard would be had for:

- Whether there is a school of the same or similar patronage in the same catchment area (having regard to neighbouring areas) and whether there is additional demand for such patronage;
- The extent to which the establishment of the school would result in greater diversity and plurality of patronage in the area (having regard to neighbouring areas) where there is demand for such plurality and diversity;
- Effectiveness of mechanisms planned to ensure that the proposed school will expand to the size range of 600 to 1,000 pupils, including;
- planned possible measures if expansion is not happening as fast as planned; and
- planned collaboration with existing second-level schools in the catchment area.

Where an area is to be served by a single new school, the key criteria will be the following:

- Whether the school can cater for the needs and requirements of all of the pupils in the area.
- Having regard to neighbouring areas, whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision where there is demand for such diversity and plurality. In this context individual patron bodies from the one faith group will be regarded as representing the same school patronage type for assessing plurality.

As part of the examination of these criteria regard would be had for:

- The effectiveness of the manner in which the patron proposes to determine the requirements of all pupils / groups of pupils regarding pupils of a particular faith; pupils of no faith.
- The extent to which these requirements are to be met.
- Effectiveness of the manner in which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered during the start-up phase.
- Effectiveness of the manner in which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered when the school is past the start-up phase.
- Effectiveness of the manner to which a comprehensive and broad curriculum is proposed to be offered to all students, e.g., supporting gender integration into all subjects.
- The extent of demand in the area for the applicant patrons.
- Having regard to neighbouring areas, whether the establishment of the proposed school model would result in greater diversity and plurality of second-level school patronage and provision where there is demand for such diversity and plurality.



Most new school provision will be co-educational in nature and patronage decisions will be made on that basis. There may be a small number of instances where single-gender provision will need to be made if there is an identified imbalance between the capacities of single-gender schools. Any such identification would be made in advance of seeking applications from patrons.

An applicant who is not already an existing school patron will need to ensure they have put certain requirements in place in advance of making an application for patronage under the new school process. In this regard, Appendix A outlines general information for prospective patrons on the requirements to be put in place.

Department of Education and Skills

October 2020



Appendix A – General Information for Prospective Patrons

Patronage Responsibility

A school patron has significant responsibilities which relate to the whole school community comprising teachers, students, parents and the wider community served by the school. A prospective school patron therefore needs to be able to demonstrate sufficient structure, continuity and reliability to conduct the responsible functions of a patron:

Patronage Functions

- Appointment of the school's board of management
- Suspension, if necessary, of the board of management
- Responsibility for the school's characteristic spirit, for which the board of management is accountable to the patron
- Ultimate responsibility/liability for industrial relations
- Responsibility for school property (and insurance)
- Financial matters – annual budgets and reports
- Decisions on school status such as extension, amalgamation, closure

Status of Patron Body

A prospective Patron needs to be able to demonstrate a capability to conduct the Patron responsibilities in an ongoing way.

For an individual or group that is not a statutory body or otherwise formed with a constitution providing satisfactorily for succession and continuity, it would be considered necessary to establish a corporate entity, such as a company limited by guarantee. The patronage body should articulate its educational philosophy and educational objectives in a memorandum and articles of association, or other constitutional documentation. Three persons should be provided as directors or trustees. A patron body should be registered for charitable status with the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Meeting the requirements above does not confer any automatic right to become a patron of a new school.

Education Act, 1998

The role of the school patron is referenced throughout the Education Act, 1998 and prospective patrons should ensure that they are familiar with all aspects of the Act, in particular, Parts 2 and 4 of the Act, which relate to schools and to boards of management respectively.

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/1998/a5198.pdf>

Disclaimer:

Please note that this information is not intended as a legal interpretation of the Education Act 1998. It is intended as general information only.