



Working towards a better education system for all

National Parents' Council Post-Primary

Parents' Association Guidelines

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National Parents' Council Post-Primary Our Vision, Our Mission

VISION

NPCpp aims to provide a forum that actively supports parents and guardians in their parenting role, and to interact effectively with schools and other education partners on issues that impact on the education, development and general well-being of young people within the post-primary education system.

MISSION

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

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

The History of NPCpp

National Parents' Council Post-Primary is a voluntary group. It has a board of 20 members who work on behalf of parents and children without remuneration.

Mrs Gemma Hussey TD inaugurated NPCpp on the 8th June 1985. The minister said the new Council would have the same rights to consultation as the school management bodies and teachers' unions. NPCpp is now a limited company named in the Education Act 1998.

NPCpp was put in place to be the umbrella group for parents' associations in the post-primary section of the Irish education system. The Department of Education and Skills wanted parental representation at post-primary level to be similar to the primary sector, but this was not possible due to the structure and classifications of post-primary schools.

The secondary system contains a number of different types of schools. It was agreed that an umbrella group with delegates selected by the associations would work best.

COMPASS + FED-CSSPA+ ETBSNPA + PACCS = NPCpp

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

NATIONAL PARENTS' COUNCILS

NPCP	National Parents' Council Primary
NPCpp	National Parents' Council Post-Primary

NATIONAL PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

COMPASS	Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parents' Associations
FED-CSSPA	Federation of Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Associations (Amalgamated)
PACCS	Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools
ETBSNPS	ETB Schools National Parents Association

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT BODIES

ACCS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
AMCSS/JMB	Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools/ Joint Managerial Body
CMCSS	Council of Management Catholic Secondary Schools
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
ETBI	Education Training Boards Ireland
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

UNIONS

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
IFUT	Irish Federation of University Teachers
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ISSU	Irish Student Union Ireland
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland

EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

ACLD	Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
AHEAD	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
AONTAS	National Association of Adult Education
CAO	Central Applications Office
COGG	An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta
CORI	Conference of Religious of Ireland
DCU	Dublin City University
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HECA	Higher Education Colleges Association
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
IUA	Irish Universities Association
NALA	National Adult Literacy Association
NABMSE	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance Education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Education Psychological Service
NQAI	National Framework of Qualifications Ireland
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PPEF	Post-Primary Education Forum
Qualifax	National Learners' Database
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
ITC	Institute of Technical College
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (Further Education and Training Authority)
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TES	Teacher Education Section
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway

SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
ESS	Environmental and Social Studies
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JC	Junior Certificate/Cycle
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
TYP	Transition Year Programme
VTOS	Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme

OTHER TERMS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
BOM	Board of Management
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EGM	Extraordinary General Meeting
EPT	Eligible Part-time Teacher
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PESP	Programme for Economic and Social Progress
PWT	Permanent Whole-time Teacher
RPT	Regular Part-time Teacher
SDP	School Development Planning
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Education Needs Officer
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TWT	Temporary Whole-time Teacher

National Parents' Council Leaving Cert Helpline

The Leaving Certificate Helpline is provided courtesy of the National Parents' Council Post-Primary (NPCpp). It is supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), eir, and the Irish Independent. Members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) are employed to provide advice and support to parents and students for the duration of the helpline.

The Leaving Cert Helpline is always the culmination of months of planning with a series of meetings with our sponsors and the IGC.

In the planning stage, we are at all times aware of the need for a voice on the phone in a time of distress for students and parents, and in that vein we try to plan the hours for the helpline to maximise the availability of guidance counsellors' expertise. We are very aware of the availability of information on the Internet, which provides so much of it at the touch of a button, but despite all the information out there the need for human contact is very obvious and it is what drives our determination to provide the service we do.

The coverage given to the Helpline by all our media contacts is also invaluable, and it is at a time like this that local radio along with national stations and TV coverage come into their own.

As with all things, in the current economic climate, the cost of the helpline is a huge factor and one which we would be unable to fund without the generosity of our sponsors, Irish Independent, Eircom and the Department of Education and Skills. To all of the people involved at that end, we say a huge thank you.

The Helpline comes into operation on the day Leaving Cert results are issued and again on the day CAO offers are issued. Please go to www.npcpp.ie for dates and times.

Helpline Phone Number: 1800 265 165

**National Parents' Council Post-Primary
Parents' Councils/Associations/PTA
Training Programme**

This very successful NPCpp initiative has received excellent evaluation reports from those participants who availed of the training. The delivery of this programme has empowered participants to know their responsibilities and rights and where to obtain the knowledge required to ensure that parents and guardians play their full role on Parents' Councils/Associations in the post-primary education sector. The in-service programme has been delivered through the kind cooperation of the CEOs in the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and School Management in Community/Comprehensive Schools, Minority Religion and Protestant Schools, Voluntary Catholic Secondary Schools and Religious Trust Bodies (CEIST, Le Chéile, ERST).

Topics addressed at these in-service training sessions have included:

- Purpose of training
- Objectives of a Parents' Association
- Roles of members
- Partnership and relationships
- Why Parents' Associations?
- Role of officers
- All about meetings
- NPCpp supporting parents

In co-operation with the management bodies and trustees, NPCpp have organised the dates for the autumn and winter term, and we are very eager to offer this free training to parents and guardians who are associated with Parents' Councils/Associations/Parent Teacher Associations. Please note that all parents and guardians of pupils in second-level schools are welcome to attend and will benefit from this invaluable training opportunity.

Training is provided from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evening. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided for the participants on the evening, and NPCpp provides its own equipment and supplies participants with documents of interest.

If you and the Parent Association in your school would like to avail of this beneficial in-service training, then please email training@npcpp.ie to arrange a suitable training date and venue.

Why Parents' Association?

A Parents' Association is defined as a group of parents working in partnership with all stakeholders to enhance the educational development and educational opportunities of their children. Parents' Associations/Councils deal with issues in a structured way.

- A Parents' Council is a resource at the disposal of the school community.
- A Parents' Council is a resource at the disposal of the individual parent.
- A Parents' Council represents the views of parents, e.g. by having an input into school policies.

Membership of the Parents' Association

All parents and guardians of children attending your school are members of the Parent Association.

Objectives of a Parents' Association

- To act as a conduit between the parents and the school.
- To inform parents of their role (rights and responsibilities) with regard to the school.
- To inform parents about their school: policies, curriculum, system of governance (Board of Management, etc.).
- To encourage dialogue with the Board of Management and other partners relating to parents' expectations for their students.
- To ensure that parents are represented at all levels in the consultative process of school development planning and decision-making.
- To help parents acquire the necessary skills which their role demands.

Parent's Association Guidelines

- Parents need help, support and information. This is one of the areas where Parents' Associations can help.
- It is important in setting up a Parents' Association that the partnership is seen as mutually beneficial to parents, teachers, school and pupils.
- Parents' Associations have to be professional if they want to be taken seriously within the school community.
- If there is trust and integrity between parents, teachers and school, all parties benefit.
- Parents' Associations must be able to raise points of disagreement with the school in an organised manner or the partnership ceases to be effective.

- It is important to remember that the educational, technical and professional aspects of education belong to the teachers and the school, not to the parents/ guardians.

Role of Parents' Association/Council/PTA

- Meeting with other groups working in the school.
- Principal, Teachers and Students.

Find practical ways to co-operate and support the work done by the teachers

- Be a core part of the literacy and numeracy plans of your school.
- Assist with transition year.
- Introduce/support homework clubs.
- Introduce/support book rental scheme.
- Concerts, drama nights, exhibitions.
- Sporting events.
- Career nights.

Organising events for parents' information

- Open days/nights.
- Transition year information evening.
- Alcohol and drug abuse.
- Study.
- Sex education programmes.
- Bullying – school policy and procedures.
- Positive parenting.

Parents' Associations are not...

- Solely a fundraising organisation.
- A complaints' forum for gripes against teaching staff.
- A tea and biscuit making committee.
- A chat forum for the disgruntled.
- An exercise to do the bidding of the principal.

Promoting the Work of the Parents' Association

- Work with your school to create a Parents' Association Page within the school's own website.
- Create your own Parents' Association email address with the school, for example: stmaryspa@stmarys.ie .
- At the First-Year Parents' Introduction Night, AGM and other events, request email addresses from the parents.
- Create newsletters, highlight the work you have done to date and promote future events. Showcase the achievements of the school and students. The NPCpp circulates newsletters throughout the year which are available on our website; please feel free to take from them. They can also be uploaded to your webpage.
- Consider an agreed report between the Parents' Association and Principal that can be emailed out to the parents after the Parents' Association meetings. Circulate a report to parents from the Parents' Association meetings.

Election of the Parents' Association Committee (Guidelines – the following may vary from school to school depending on the Constitution adopted by your school)

The members of the committee will be elected each year at the AGM of the Parents' Association.

Each member will be elected for one year. At the AGM all committee members step down, but they can be re-elected as long as they continue to be eligible to serve, that is, as long as they continue to be a parent or guardian of a child in the school.

No member of the committee will hold the same officer position for more than three consecutive years.

Sub-committees/Working groups

A Parents' Association, if it so chooses, can put sub-committees or working groups in place for specific tasks. These may also co-opt people to assist in their work. The sub-committees or working groups carry out the decisions of the Parents' Association/Council and are accountable to them at all times.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

It is imperative to hold an Annual General Meeting once a year and to ensure that all parents and guardians are given adequate notice (minimum of 14 days before the AGM) and are invited to attend. (notice can be email, text, or letter). An invitation can also be extended to the Principal and Board of Management. A copy of the agenda should accompany the invitation.

The AGM may take place at any time during the school year but it is usually held in September or October.

Priorities of the AGM

- Hold elections for the Parents' Association committee.
- Acknowledge and express thanks to the outgoing committee.
- Encourage all parents and guardians to attend.
- Encourage parents to become members of the Parents' Association.
- Welcome new parents.
- An opportunity for parents to meet each other.

Reports:

- Chairpersons – update on the Parents' Association activities of the previous year.
- Secretaries – update on the work of the Parents' Association for the previous year.
- Treasurers – income and expenditure of the Parents' Association for the year.
- Report from sub-committees/working group, i.e. fundraising committee, policy review committee, Cons body, NPCpp etc.

Other events which may take place at the AGM include:

- Arrange for a speaker/presenter on a particular topic which parents will find interesting.
- Ask parents what activities and events would they like see in place for the new school year.
- Provide a question and answer session on becoming a member and the work of the Parents' Association.
- Invite the Principal/Chairperson of the BoM to address the parents on the importance and necessity of having an effective Parents' Association in place and how much the school values their work and contribution.
- Provide refreshments at the end of the evening which will also give people an opportunity to get to know one another in an informal way.

Sample agenda for an AGM

Start the meeting on time, and allocate a time for each item to ensure that the meeting does not run on too long and to keep the evening interesting.

Venue:

Time:

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Chairperson's report
4. Secretary's report
5. Financial report
6. Report from the sub-committees/working groups
7. Election of new Parents' Association committee
8. NPCpp news and update
9. Principal/Board of Management address/Guest speaker
10. Close of meeting.

Constitution of Parents' Association

All Parents' Associations should have a constitution in place. The constitution will encompass the rules to guide the association/council in its work and will be the framework of how it operates. Parents' Associations should also review their constitution to ensure that the Parents' Association is operating effectively. This is normally done at the AGM but if needed an EGM can be called. We would recommend that the Parents' Association/Council work with the Principal and BoM when first putting their constitution in place.

As each Parents' Association is unique, so too will their constitution. When drawing up your constitution the following may be considered:

- Ethos of the school.
- Deeds of Trust of the School.
- The structure of the committee.
- How many are on the committee.
- How the committee will be selected, i.e. overall nominations or a number from each year.
- Revising and amending the constitution (**recommend every 5 years**).

- What will constitute a quorum? % of your committee.

SAMPLE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION

This body shall be known as [name of your school] Parents' Association / Council.

Membership shall be confined to parents/guardians of pupils attending the school.

Election of Committee members shall take place at the Annual General Meeting of all parents, to be held each September/October.

The committee members shall be elected on an area basis from each area catered for in the school and shall attend meetings regularly. The number of members may vary from time to time in order to give adequate representation. In such cases new members shall be co-opted to the committee.

The committee shall elect its own officers, consisting of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. This should take place at the first committee meeting after the AGM.

Co-options to the committee shall be:

- (a) The school principal/deputy principal/nominated teacher.*
- (b) A member of the teaching staff (nominated through the Principal/BoM) as non-voting members.*

A Minimum of 4 committee meetings shall be held during the school year. Such meetings will be opened with the reading of the minutes, treasurer's report and the business of the meeting.

An extraordinary meeting of all parents may be called:

- I. On a majority decision of the committee.*
- II. At the written request of at least 20 parents.*

Amendments to the Constitution may be made at a General meeting of parents, provided they are passed by a two-thirds majority in attendance.

The Association/Council shall not have power to deal with complaints against members of the school staff or Principal. Such complaints should be taken directly to the Principal/Secretary to the BoM by the parents concerned.

The aims of the Association/Council shall include:

(a) Promoting the educational and general welfare and social interests of the pupils of the school.

(b) Helping the pupils and staff of the school in any way it can.

(c) Supporting the right of parents to consultation and information on educational policy.

(d) Keeping the parents of the pupils attending the school informed of problems in running the school and of current educational trends.

(e) Acting as an advisory body, representing the views of parents on school policies and activities.

(f) Helping to make school life more complete by organising various activities.

The committee shall not directly concern itself with fundraising activities, unless that fundraising is secondary to a project enhancing facilities, equipment or services offered by the school for the benefit of the students, teachers, or management. Such fundraising activities shall be organised by separate committees of parents, at least two of whom shall be committee members.

For a sample constitution that will encompass your schools ethos please go to:

Protestant & Minority Religion Secondary Schools: www.compassparents.org

ETB Schools: www.etbsnpa.ie

Community & Comprehensive Schools: www.paccs.ie

Federation of Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Associations: www.fcsspa.ie

Roles of the Officers

Role of Chairperson

- Familiar with procedures, Education Act, etc.
- Knowledge of constitution.
- Official public representative of Parents' Association.
- The contact person with Chairperson Board of Management, Secretary Board of Management and Principal.
- Presides over meetings.
- Consults with Secretary on agenda.
- Supports Secretary.
- Works closely with Vice-Chairperson.
- Aware of when to refer to others.
- Be respected by members for her/his role.
- Aims for consensus.
- Ensures compliance with official regulations, legislation, etc.
- Elected annually.

Chairperson should:

- Chair impartially.
- Set time for meetings (standing orders).
- Stop repetition.
- Exercise patience and encourage participation by all.
- Keep meeting focused.
- Not allow strong personal beliefs to influence course of meeting.
- Ensure consultation and respect the contribution of all members.
- Establish a communications pathway with all the school's partners (clear reporting structures).
- Ensure that all decisions are taken following adequate consultation.

Role of Secretary

- Convenes all meetings in consultation with the chairperson.
- Liaises with school management, parent body as need arises.
- Acts as recording secretary.
- Only minute decisions taken and record who acts upon these decisions.
- Deals with all communications arising from Parents' Association.

- Is accountable for the ongoing running of the Association.
- Chairperson and Secretary need to act and support each other and act on behalf of the Association between meetings.
- All records should be kept for a minimum of seven years.

Role of Treasurer

- Transparency and accountability.
- Treasurer's report – agenda item for each meeting.
- Keep accounts: Income and Expenditure.
- Reconcile with bank account.
- Bank: minimum two signatories (no pre-signed cheques).
- No payment without invoice.
- Issue receipts for all monies received.
- Audit annual accounts for AGM and Board of Management.

Role of Committee Members

- Receive and read minutes/documentation.
- Keep informed of developments in education and the school.
- Understand implications of decisions taken.
- Value transparency and accountability.
- Value and respect opinions.
- Be a good listener and exercise patience.
- No decisions without full information/knowledge.
- Keep in mind what is best for the students and school.

The Parents' Association does not get involved in:

- Decisions about the day-to-day running of the school.
- Curriculum.
- Appointment of teachers.
- Individual complaints.

Meetings of the Parents' Associations

Effective Meetings

Effective meetings have the following characteristics:

- All parties are well prepared.
- All documentation for discussion is sent out in advance and read by all participants.
- Everyone is aware of the need, purpose and objective of the meeting.
- Meetings start on time and keep to an agenda. Meetings finish at the stated finishing time.
- The meeting is efficiently managed by the Chairperson.
- Everybody is given the opportunity to speak.

What happens at a meeting?

- Ideas are discussed.
- Information is shared.
- Activities are planned.
- Decisions are made.
- Work is reviewed.
- Differences are resolved.

Meetings give members the chance to take part in running the association and they are where most of the work is carried out. However, they should not take place as a matter of routine – every meeting should have a clear purpose.

- There should be a quorum for every meeting.
- Minutes should always be taken to provide a formal record of decisions made at the meeting.
- Every meeting should have an agenda.
- Discussions that take place during a meeting are confidential. The committee will decide how information is shared.
- All meetings should begin at a stated time and finish within an agreed reasonable time.

How often should we meet?

Committee meetings are usually held about once a month.

General Meetings – whenever the committee decides it is appropriate.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) – once a year.

Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) – only in an unusual situation with just one item on the Agenda.

You will also need to meet more often if you have events planned such as training seminars and talks.

Why have meetings?

- Work for the good of students and the school community.
- Confirms collaboration and partnership within the school community.
- Obtain information.
- Share information.
- Discuss school policies.
- Make plans and monitor activities.
- Reach and communicate decisions.

Parents' Association Meeting: Draft Agenda – items for consideration

- Apologies and read-in time.
- Minutes of last meeting.
- Matters arising out of the minutes.
- Financial report.
- Correspondence.
- Principal's report.
- Board of Management agreed report to Parents' Association.
- Ask schools to remind parents of meetings via text messages.
- Any other business.

Suggested other items:

- NPCpp business and newsletter.
- School policy issues.
- School success.

- Newsletter.
- Date of next meeting.

Fundraising

Many schools in the Free Education Scheme engage in various forms of fundraising and other activities organised by parents, students and teachers. Fundraising for the school by the Parents' Association will be done with the prior agreement of the Principal and/or the Board of Management. The Parents' Association and school authority will agree as to the specific purposes for which funds are to be raised by the Parents' Association.

Fundraising is not the primary or only purpose of a Parents' Association

1. Fundraising should have a clear purpose.
2. Where a Parents' Association raises funds in the name of the school for a stated cause, the money accrued must be spent for that purpose.
3. A fundraising sub-committee of the Parents' Association can be put in place, answerable to the Board of Management.
4. The Parents' Association may maintain its own bank account subject to Board of Management approval and subject to the same control procedures applying to school finances. An annual financial report is presented to the Board at the end of each school year for inclusion in the school's audited accounts.
5. The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for all such funds raised and must make sure that they are properly recorded and included in overall school accounts.

School Evaluations, Parents, and Parents' Associations

Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL)

WSE-MLL is a process of external evaluation of the work of post-primary schools carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills.

The WSE-MLL process in a post-primary school is designed to evaluate key aspects of the work of the school and to promote school improvement. The focus is on the quality of management and leadership and the quality of learning and teaching. The WSE-MLL evaluation is intended to complement the school's own development planning and provides the school with opportunities to demonstrate its own self-evaluation processes.

WSE-MLL focuses on whole-school issues relating to management, leadership, planning, teaching, learning and assessment, along with schools' progress in, and capacity for, self-evaluation.

The process looks at the recommendations of previous external evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate, for example subject inspections and programme evaluations, and facilitates close examination of the development and improvement in which the school has engaged following these evaluations. WSE-MLL identifies and affirms good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement. A succinct inspection report is provided to the school and the public at the end of the WSE-MLL process.

Meeting with parents

Where a parents' association affiliated to the National Parents' Council Post-primary (NPCpp) has been formed, the association is invited to nominate three representatives to meet with the WSE-MLL evaluation team. The selection of these representatives to meet with the inspection team is a matter for the executive committee of the parents' association.

However, each representative must be the parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled in the school at the time of the inspection. The purpose of the meeting is to obtain the views of parents on matters of a whole-school nature. The meeting is chaired by a member of the inspection team, normally the reporting inspector. At the meeting, issues relating to the WSE-MLL framework, and other matters agreed in advance, are included on the agenda for discussion. The work of individual teachers is not discussed at this meeting.

Where the school does not have a parents' association or the association is not affiliated to the NPCpp, the inspectors convene a meeting with the parents' nominees on the Board of Management.

(DES, 'A Guide to Whole School Evaluation', 2011)

What happens during a Whole School Evaluation?

During the evaluation inspectors will:

- visit classrooms and observe the teachers and the students at work
- meet the students' council to hear views and opinions of students
- engage with students in classrooms and other areas of the school
- look at samples of the students' work
- talk to the teachers and discuss their teaching with them
- meet with the principal and other teachers to discuss the work and management of the school
- look at school documents including the school plan.

How can parents be involved in the whole-school evaluation?

Before the evaluation takes place you can share your views on the school with the officers of the Parents' Association. You can also contact the parents' representatives on the Board of Management and inform them of your views.

School-Self-Evaluation (SSE)

SSE provides opportunities for schools to examine their own practice within their own context and to report on their strengths and areas for improvement to their own school community. It brings benefits to teachers as they share experiences and ideas and helps them to become even more effective in their classrooms. It brings benefits to students as they have a say in what works for them and what would help them to learn. It brings benefits to the school as all teachers focus on the same small number of strategies for improvement.

(DES, 2014)

Parents and students should play an active role in the aspects of self-evaluation that are appropriate to them. The board of management should provide overall direction to the process and ensure that the evaluation takes account of the particular ethos and characteristic spirit of the school. The board should also check the school's practice regarding legislative and regulatory requirements on a regular basis. The Board of Management should also draw on the school's self-evaluation report and school improvement plan when preparing its report to parents as required under Section 20 of the Education Act, 1998. Parents and students should be consulted when it is appropriate to do so, for example in gathering evidence about attitudes to literacy and numeracy or their experience of learning. Summaries of the school's self-evaluation report and its improvement plans should be made available to the whole school community.

(DES, 'An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools', 2012)

The Federation of Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association (FED-Csspa)

The Federation of Secondary Schools Parents Associations is the representative body for Parents with children in Catholic Voluntary Secondary schools in Ireland. The FCSSPA promotes the interests of parents and their children in the Catholic Voluntary Secondary School sector at local and national level. It comprises of local school parents' councils, regional councils and a national executive.

Our role is to help parents establish Parent Associations in secondary schools, provide information on the role of those Parent Associations and represent the views of those Parent Associations at national level on the National Parents Council post primary. We provide information and guidance to help parents and guardians.

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

Membership is open to Parents Associations in all Catholic voluntary secondary schools who subscribe to the aims of the FCSSPA.

Education and Training Board Schools

The structure of an ETB post-primary school BoM is as follows:

- BoM in ETB schools are made up of nominees:
- 3 ETB nominees (Chairperson and 2 ETB members)
- 2 Staff nominees (male & female)
- 2 Parent nominees (male & female) elected from the Parent body of the school.
- 2 Community Representatives from the locality.

The principal is secretary to the board and has no vote. All nominees have equal rights and voting powers.

The National Parents Association for Education and Training Board Schools is a completely Voluntary organization of parents of second level pupils working together in schools and colleges throughout the country with all the other education partners.

These partners are the Board of Management, Teachers, Principals, Vocational Education Committees, and the Department of Education and Science together with the Principals Association, the Teachers Association (T.U.I, A.S.T.I) and other Parents Association and Parents Councils. ETB.S.N.P.A. has a particular interest in the vocational type of education and therefore it is important that we join together as a single body national to promote and safe guard the Vocational Education System.

Protestant and Minority Religion Post Primary Schools

There are twenty-eight Protestant/minority schools:

- Five Protestant Comprehensive Schools
- Twenty-two Voluntary Secondary Schools
- One Jewish Voluntary Secondary School

Management in Protestant Comprehensive Schools:

The Boards of Management in 'Protestant' Comprehensive Schools consist of:

- Six nominees of the local religious authority, one of whom is nominated as Chairperson by that authority
- A nominee of the local ETB
- Two elected teachers
- Two elected parents
- The role of Secretary will be as for the Catholic Comprehensive Schools [that is, 'In a Community or Comprehensive School the permanent Secretary of a Board of Management is normally the School Principal or the CEO of the local ETB']. (ACCS, 2014, p. 18)

The principal is usually secretary to the board and has no vote. Sometimes the deputy principal, with the permission of the board, can act as recording secretary and has no vote and does not participate other than to record the minutes.

All nominees to the BoM have equal rights and voting powers. The life of the board is three years. Parent and teacher nominees can serve a maximum of 2 terms of 3 years on the board. The chair is appointed by the board and rotates at the board's agreement. There is a process called "Agreed Report" by which all members can report to their respective groups on matters discussed at BoM meetings. Issues relating to aspects of finance, or sanctions for misconduct by individual students, or personal matters relating to students teachers or staff, may be deemed confidential and cannot be discussed outside the meeting. Vacancies which may arise on the board may be filled by the respective groups during the life of the board.

Management of Protestant/Minority Voluntary Secondary Schools:

The Boards of Management in Protestant/Minority Secondary Schools usually consist of:

- Five nominees of the Board of Governors/Patrons (the owners of the school)
- Two elected teachers
- Two elected parents

The Secretary to the Board is normally the Principal of the school – this is a non-voting position.

There are a number of Protestant boarding schools, responsibility for running the Boarding Houses rest with the Board of Governors/Patrons; other responsibilities of this Board will be the upholding of the school's ethos or characteristic spirit, and appointing the Board of Management at regular intervals, usually every three years.

Community & Comprehensive Schools

Board of Management Structures

Comprehensive Schools

Boards of Management in Catholic Comprehensive schools are made up of the following nominees:

- 2 Religious nominees nominated by the local Catholic Bishop, one of whom acts as Chairperson.
- 1 ETB Nominee nominated by the local ETB, usually a local councillor.
- 1 ETB Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the local ETB Committee.
- 2 Parent Nominees (one male, one female) elected by whole parent body. All parents must be informed of election and given option to vote.
- 2 Teacher nominees elected by school staff. Usually one from each of the teacher unions.
- 1 other who may be co-opted.

The Principal will normally attend all BoM meetings. The Board may nominate one of its members to act as Secretary and arrange that the Principal will act as correspondence Secretary. Where it has been the custom and practice for the CEO of the Vocational Education Committee to act as Secretary, the said CEO will continue to act as Secretary.

While agreement has not yet been reached on the Deed of Trust for Protestant Comprehensive Schools, it is envisaged that the Boards of Management of these schools will consist of 6 nominees of the local religious authority, one of whom is nominated as Chairperson by that authority; 1 nominee of the local ETB; 2 elected teachers; and 2 elected parents. The role of Secretary will be as for the Catholic Comprehensive Schools.

Community Schools

Boards of Management in Community schools are made up of the following nominees:

- 3 Religious Nominees nominated by the bishop or by the order of nuns, brothers or priests which may represent one of the parties in an amalgamation.
- 3 ETB Nominees nominated by the local ETB. These are usually local councillors, the CEO, or the parent representative on the ETB.
- 2 Teacher Nominees elected by school staff. Usually one from each of the teacher unions.
- 2 Parent Nominees elected by whole parent body. One must be a mother. All parents must be informed of election and given option to vote.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and Guideline Answers

Q. How can our Parents' Association affiliate to the NPCpp?

A. Every year in the new school term, NPCpp sends the affiliation form to the Chairperson of the schools' Board of Management.

Q. Does the Principal attend the Parents' Association meetings?

A. To work effectively, a Parents' Association must have the best possible working relationship with the Principal and BoM. The Principal is there at the invitation of the Parents' Association, but you may consider inviting the Principal to attend particular meetings, to be present at the beginning, or to join you at a certain time. The Principal, Deputy Principal or designated teacher may agree on who will attend such meetings.

Q. What is the Board of Management?

A. The Board of Management manages the school on behalf of the patron and is accountable to the patron and the Minister. The Board must uphold the characteristic spirit or ethos of the school and is accountable to the patron for so doing.

Q. What is the role of the Principal?

A. The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including providing guidance and direction to the teachers and other staff of the school, and is accountable to the Board for that management.

Q. If a Principal or teacher has children in the school, is she/he entitled to be a member of the Parents' Association committee?

A. All members of the Parents' Association committee who are staff members and are also parents are entitled to be a member of the Parents' Association, but they are there in their capacity as a parent and not as a staff member.

Q. Where should Parents' Association meetings take place?

A. All meetings should take place in the school, and this should be facilitated by the Principal and Board of Management.

Q. How long is the term of office of the Parents' Association Committee?

A. This is as set out in the Constitution of the Association, but usually Parents' Associations are elected at the AGM for a one-year term. Members can be re-elected each year but cannot hold the same executive post for longer than 3 consecutive years. All members must have a child attending the school.

Q. How can parents be encouraged to become active members of the Parents' Association?

- Ask! If you want parents to participate, you must ask. The number one reason people are not volunteering is that “nobody asked”.
- Let parents know the commitment involved and respect their time constraints.
- Make a special effort to reach out to parents new to the school.
- Make parental involvement, not fundraising, your priority.
- Research shows that students with involved parents perform better in school, do better in exams, have fewer behavioural problems and are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.

Q. How can a member of the Parents' Association assist a parent within the school community?

- Can act as a conduit between the parents and the school.
- Inform parents of their role (rights and responsibilities) with regard to the school.
- Inform parents about their school: policies, curriculum, system of governance (Board of Management, etc.)
- Ensure that parents are represented at all levels in the consultative process of school development planning and decision-making.
- Help parents acquire the necessary skills which their role demands.

Q. Can I approach the Parents' Association if I have a complaint?

A. Where there is a parental complaint on a specific issue, the Parents' Association can help a parent to make the complaint through the proper channels of communication. If a parent wants to make a formal complaint, there is a school complaints procedure available and the parent should be encouraged to use it. Also, the Parents' Association should give parents the NPCpp (National Parents Council Post-Primary) phone number, (01) 8302740, as their role is to support Parents of secondary school students. Email npcpp@eircom.net.

Q. What activities does a Parents' Association get involved in?

A. The following are some of the activities in which Parents' Associations might be involved:

- Organising information/social events for new parents to the school
- Organising welcome events for new students to the school
- Arranging talks on topics of interest to parents, e.g. guest speaker on parenting/discipline, etc.
- Preparing school handbooks or calendars
- Providing support or organisational input to major school events, e.g. graduation, debs, etc.

- Channelling parents' views on school policy issues to the Principal or Board
- Preparing or contributing to school newsletter
- Helping to organise, supervise or provide transport to and from extra-curricular activities
- Organising fundraising events for the school.

Q. Can a Parents' Association be involved in drawing up school policies?

A. Parents have a role and responsibility towards policies or procedures. It is important that parents be consulted when school policies are being developed and involved in developing any school policy that directly affects the children, such as bullying prevention, Code of Behaviour, healthy eating, use of mobile phones, etc. All policies should be made available to parents.

Q. What is a school's Code of Behaviour?

A. The code of behaviour is the set of programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students in the school to behave well and learn well.

The code of behaviour helps the school community to promote the school ethos, relationships, policies, procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and prevent unacceptable behaviour. The code of behaviour helps teachers, other members of staff, students and parents to work together for a happy, effective and safe school. The code expresses the vision, mission and values of the school and its Patron. It translates the expectations of staff, parents and students into practical arrangements that will help to ensure continuity of instruction to all students. It helps to foster an orderly, harmonious school where high standards of behaviour are expected and supported.

The code of behaviour enables school authorities to strike an appropriate balance between their duty to maintain an effective learning environment for all and their responsibility to students whose behaviour presents a challenge to the teaching and learning process. The code of behaviour is a key tool in enabling the school authorities to support the learning of every student in the school.

Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools

Q. What is a School's Ethos?

A. Although the word *ethos* is not used in the Education Act 1998, the Act describes the "characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school". The Board of Management must uphold the ethos of the school and be accountable for this to the Patron of the school.

Q. How many post-primary schools are there?

A. There are over 700 post-primary schools in the country. Approximately 40 percent of these are single-sex schools and teach boys and girls separately. Sixty percent teach boys and girls together.

USEFUL LINKS

School Management Bodies

Joint Managerial Body (JMB)

Secretariat of Secondary Schools
Emmet House
Dundrum Road
Milltown
Dublin 14
Tel: 01 283 8255
Fax: 01 269 5461
Email: info@jmb.ie
Web: www.jmb.ie

Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)

10H Centrepoint Business Park
Oak Drive
Dublin 12
Tel: 01 460 1150
Fax: 01 460 1203
Email: office@accs.ie
Web: www.accs.ie

Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

Piper's Hill
Kilcullen Road
Naas
Co Kildare
Tel: 045 901698
Fax: 045 901711
Email: info@etbi.ie
Web: www.etbi.ie

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

Eblana Villas
Grand Canal Street Lower
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 662 7025
Fax: 01 662 7058
Email: info@napd.ie
Web: www.napd.ie

Educate Together (Multidenominational schools)

H8a Centrepont
Oak Drive
Dublin 12
Tel: 01 429 2500
Fax: 01 429 2502
Email: info@educatetogether.ie
Web: www.educatetogether.ie

Church of Ireland Board of Education

Church of Ireland House
Church Avenue
Rathmines
Dublin 6
Tel: 01 497 8422
Email: boeATrcbdub.org
Web: www.ireland.anglican.org/

Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán Ghaeilge

92 Bóthar Seannaigh
Rath Éanaigh
Baile Átha Cliath 5
Fón: 01 831 4487
Facs: 01 831 4487
Ríomhphost: foraspatrunachta@hotmail.com
Web: www.foras.ie

Islamic Foundation of Ireland

163 South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Tel: 01 453 3242 or 01 473 8276
Fax: 01 453 2785
Email: info@islaminireland.com
Web: www.islaminireland.com

Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta
35 Cearnóg Mhic Liam
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Fón: 01 634 0831
Facs: 01 634 1002
Ríomhphost: eolas@cogg.ie
Web: www.cogg.ie

Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta Teo

Baile Bhuirne
Maigh Chromtha
Co. Chorcaí
Tel: 026 65885
Fax: 026 65809
Email: eolas@esg.ie

Gaelscoileanna Teo

Halla Naomh Phádraig
Institiúid Oideachais Marino
Ascaill Uí Ghríofa
Baile Átha Cliath 9
Fón: 01 853 5195
Facs: 01 853 5119
Ríomhphost: oifig@gaelscoileanna.ie
Web: www.gaelscoileanna.ie

Support & Advice

Anti-bullying Centre

Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC)
Room C162, School of Education Studies
Henry Grattan Building
Dublin City University
Dublin 9
Tel: 01 700 6580
Fax: 01 700 5222
Web: www4.dcu.ie/abc/

Please note that the Anti-Bullying Centre is a research and resource facility only. They do not provide individual counselling to those affected by bullying. However, they will provide the contact details of professional counsellors who specialise in supporting those who have been affected by bullying.

Ombudsman for Children's Office

Millennium House
52–56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1
Complaints: Freephone 1800 20 20 40
Tel: 01 865 6800
Fax: 01 874 7333
Email: oco@oco.ie
Web: www.oco.ie

Citizens' Information:

LoCall number: 1890 777 121
Email: information@citizensinformation.ie
Web: www.citizensinformation.ie

*All calls from landlines within Ireland are charged at local rates. Calls from mobile phones may incur additional charges.

Education & Health

Department of Education and Skills

Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 889 6400
Email: info@education.gov.ie
Web: www.education.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

35 Fitzwilliam Square
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 661 7177
Fax: 01 661 7180
Email: info@ncca.ie
Web: www.ncca.ie

National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)

Kildare Education Centre
Friary Road
Kildare Town
Tel: 045 533753
Fax: 045 533681
Email: nabmse1@eircom.net
Web: www.nabmse.org

Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta Teo

Baile Bhuirne
Maigh Chromtha
Co. Chorcaí
Tel: 026 65885
Fax: 026 65809
Email: eolas@esg.ie

PDST Technology in Education

Dublin City University
Glasnevin
Dublin 9
Tel: 01 700 8200
Fax: 01 700 8210
Email: info@ncte.ie
Web: www.ncte.ie (National Centre for Technology in Education)
www.scoilnet.ie (Network for Irish schools)

National Council for Special Education

1–2 Mill Street
Trim
Co. Meath
Tel: 046 948 6400
Fax: 046 948 6404
Email: info@ncse.ie
Web: www.ncse.ie

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

Frederick Court
24–27 North Frederick Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 889 2700
Fax: 01 889 2755
Email: neps@neps.gov.ie

TUSLA (Formerly National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB))

16–22 Green Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 873 8700
Fax: 01 873 8799
Email: ewsinfo@tusla.ie
Educational Helpline: 1890 36 36 66

*** Note that the rates charged for the use of 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers**

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Department of Children and Youth Affairs
43–49 Mespil Road
FREEPOST F5055
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 647 3000
Fax: 01 647 3101
Email: contact@dcya.gov.ie
Web: www.dcya.gov.ie

Relationship and Sexuality Education Support Service

Education Centre
Drumcondra
Dublin 9
Tel: 01 857 6422
Email: info@ecdumcondra.ie

The Teaching Council

Block A, Maynooth Business Campus
Maynooth
Co. Kildare
LoCall: 1890 224 224
Tel: 01 651 7900
Fax: 01 651 7901
Email: info@teachingcouncil.ie
Web: www.teachingcouncil.ie

Teachers' Unions

Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)

73 Orwell Road
Rathgar
Dublin 6
Tel: 01 492 2588
Fax: 01 492 2953
Email: tui@tui.ie
Web: www.tui.ie

Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)

Thomas McDonagh House
Winetavern Street
Dublin 8
Tel: 01 604 0160 / 1850 418400
Fax: 01 897 2760
Email: info@asti.ie
Web: www.asti.ie

Other Supports

Jesuit Refugee Service

The Mews
20 Gardiner Street Upper
Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 8148644
Fax: 01 8734680
Web: www.jrs.ie

*The Jesuit Refugee Service has produced a booklet *Your Child and Schools in Ireland* in six additional languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian).

Immigrant Council of Ireland

2 St Andrew Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 674 0202
Email: admin@immigrantcouncil.ie
Web: www.immigrantcouncil.ie

Indian Punjabi Society of Ireland

C/o Simi Sim Communications
38 Aungier Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 475 9792
Contact:
Dr J.S. Puri: 086 246 5919
or Mr Chaddha: 086 823 9947



Working towards a better education system for all

National Parents' Council Post-Primary

Unit 6,
Building 125,
The Omni Shopping Centre,
Santry, Dublin 9.
Tel: (01) 8302740
Fax: (01) 8302752
General Manager: 085 861 3992

email: training@npcpp.ie
Website: www.npcpp.ie
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NPCpp