

Educate Together Case Statement

New Schools for 21st Century Ireland

The planning and delivery of new educational facilities should be carried out by the State via the Dept. of Education & Science

Context:

- Sole responsibility for the establishment of new national schools, is currently placed on independent Patron Bodies.
- Patron Bodies are responsible for the sourcing and delivery of temporary accommodation for new national schools for a period of up to 10 years.
- 2002 Census Figures show 11% of the population as belonging to neither of the major churches, while 98% of national schools are obliged to uphold the ethos of one of the major churches.
- Educate Together estimates that a minimum of 200 Educate Together type schools will be needed nationally, in order to provide all families with a choice of primary education.
- According to the 1998 Education Act, schools must uphold the religious ethos of their patrons and are allowed to discriminate on religious grounds in areas of enrolment, employment and wide areas of policy.
- There is a Constitutional imperative to provide choice for families who do not wish to educate their children in a faith-based school and a significant legal liability to the State if this alternative is not available to them. (Article 42.3.1)
- Educate Together is faced with demands to open new schools in around 55 areas across the country.

Proposed Solutions:

- The Dept. of Education & Science has to take responsibility for the provision of new educational facilities.
- The Dept. of Education & Science needs to acquire sites and school buildings as soon as the need for a school is identified, in order to provide a purpose built school building from the day of opening.
- Service level agreements need to be entered into with Patron Bodies, in order to ensure timely efficient delivery of quality educational facilities into the future.
- It is not appropriate for voluntary groups to set up state national schools with no adequate resourcing or support structures from the State.

Educate Together is the national representative body for multi-denominational schools in Ireland. Today, there are 41 Educate Together schools and huge demand for more. Educate Together schools are national schools operating according to the Rules for National Schools, and provide equality of access for all children regardless of social, cultural or religious background.

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