

Educate Together Patronage Manual

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- Introduction** 2
- 1. The Patron and its Role** 3
 - 1.1 Definition of a patron**3
 - 1.2 Recognition of patron**3
 - 1.3 Legal Basis**.....3
 - 1.4 Roles and Responsibilities**.....4
- 2. Policies and Procedures** 6
 - 2.1 Board Appointments**6
 - 2.1.2 Appointment of Patron nominees to a new school**8
 - 2.1.3 Appointment of Patron nominees on board of management**.....9
 - 2.1.4 Appointment of the Chairperson of the Board of Management**.....10
 - 2.1.6 Removal of board member/dissolution of Board of Management**.....12
 - 2.2 Board Oversight** 13
 - 2.2.1 Oversight of a Board of Management of an Educate Together school**13
 - 2.2.2 Definition of the ‘patron’s curriculum’ and the characteristic spirit ‘ethos’ of the school**14
 - 2.2.3. Admissions Policy**.....15
 - 2.2.4 Approval of any debts incurred by Board**.....18
 - 2.2.5 Annual reporting of child safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures**.....19
 - 2.2.6 Process for requesting to change the registered name of a school**20
 - 2.3 Staff Appointments**..... 22
 - 2.3.1 Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments of a new school or established national school**.....22
 - 2.3.2 Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments of a new school or established second-level school**24
 - 2.3.3 Appointment of staff to a new school or established national school**.....25
 - 2.3.4 Appointment of staff to a new school or established second level school**27
 - 2.4 Accommodation and Growth**..... 29
 - 2.4.1 The provision and planning of temporary and permanent accommodation**30
 - 2.4.2 The Approval of Significant Projects**.....31
 - 2.4.3 Patron approval for generating a new stream or increase capacity in a school**.....31
 - 2.4.4 Use of School Buildings**32
 - 2.4.5 Procedures for transfer of patronage from existing schools**.....33
- Conclusion** 36
- Approval and Status** 36

Introduction

Since becoming a company limited by guarantee in 1998, Educate Together has opened many schools with its patronage. In 2014 Educate Together opened its first second-level schools and is patron of voluntary secondary schools and joint patron of community schools. In that time, Educate Together worked to develop clear policies and procedures in order to carry out its legal responsibilities as patron.

This manual is set out in two sections:

1. The Patron and its Role

The first section:

- Defines a patron
- Explains the legal basis for its duties and
- Sets out the roles and responsibilities of the patron

2. Policies and Procedures

The second section sets out the policies and procedures that Educate Together implements in discharging its duty as a Patron of national and second level schools.

- Board Appointment
- Board Oversight
- Staff Appointments and
- Accommodation and Growth

This document is a living document. It will be updated as our policies and procedures develop. In this regard Educate Together welcomes comments and suggestions from our members, friends and colleagues.

It is important to note that the relationship of the board of management of an Educate Together national or second level school with its patron is significantly different to that between the board and patron in schools with Catholic or Protestant patronage. In the case of denominational schools, a Deed of Variation (Deed of Trust) exists that radically alters this relationship and bestows considerable powers of direction and control on the patron. There is no such Deed of Variation in place in Educate Together schools. Educate Together's legal relationship operates as a result of the rights and obligations set out in legislation by the Oireachtas, principally in the Education Act (1998) and the Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018, as well as other related Acts and Departmental rules and regulations. It is for this

reason, that we describe the relationship as a school operating “with” the patronage of Educate Together.

1. The Patron and its Role

1.1 Definition of a patron

The definition of patron is set out in the Education Act 1998 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 or as trustees or as the board of governors of a post-primary school,

(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.

1.2 Recognition of patron

The Department of Education reserves to itself the right to recognise a person or company as an appropriate patron for a school.

Recent criteria drawn up for the recognition of new patrons by the Department of Education includes a requirement that patrons have a clear understanding of the financial and legal implications of being a patron, particularly in the area of employment legislation.

1.3 Legal Basis

Other documents that refer to the definition of a patron of a school in Ireland, and the legal basis of its role and duties, include:

[The Constitution of Ireland](#)

[The Education Act 1998](#)

[The Education \(Admission to Schools\) Act 2018](#)

[The Education \(Welfare\) Act 2000](#)

[The Rules for National Schools, published in 1965](#)

[Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools - published 2004/2005](#)

[Department of Education Circulars](#)

[Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023](#)

[Articles of Management of our second-level schools](#)

[Governance Manual for Community & Comprehensive Schools](#)

[A Manual for Boards of Management of Voluntary Secondary Schools](#)

[Guidelines for Financial Management in Voluntary Secondary Schools](#)

[Financial Support Services Unit \(FSSU\) Primary Guidelines](#)

[Motions passed by members of the organisation at Educate Together AGM's](#)

As a patron of schools, Educate Together also must abide by a wide range of statutory provisions – most notably, the Equal Status Acts and the Employment Equality Acts.

1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of a patron of a school include the following:

In the case of new schools to:

- Seek the permission of the Department of Education to establish a school
- Appoint a manager/Establish an interim management structure for a new school
- Appoint a manager/Establish an interim management structure for a new school
- Approve the appointment of the principal, deputy principal, teaching and ANA (SNA) staff
- Approve the admissions policy of the school
- Ensure the timely establishment of the board of management once the school opens
- Organise the accommodation for the new school and enter into any necessary agreements, licenses or leases for this purpose.

Where schools are established to:

- Approve the appointment of all teaching and ANA (SNA) staff
- Appoint independent assessors to selection boards
- Appoint patron nominees to board of management
- Appoint the chairperson of the board of management

- Appoint the board of management when properly constituted
- Remove board members or dissolve the board of management when required and with the permission of the Minister
- Give prior approval for any debts (e.g. credit cards, temporary overdraft) incurred by the board of management and major projects
- Approve the admissions policy of the school
- Sign the Annual Accounts for second-level schools
- Seek Child Safeguarding and Anti-bullying reviews
- Act to preserve the 'characteristic spirit' or ethos of the school
- Provide or approve the premises for the school and enter into any agreements, licences or leases for this purpose
- Approve the application for any major projects, emergency works or grants
- Set out, monitor and support a curriculum of Ethical Education that comprises 2.5hrs of teaching contact time for all pupils per school week in primary school and at least 1 period of teaching contact time for all students at second-level
- Be aware of the needs of the school, seek regular reports and to be in a position to take action to support, advise and if necessary, to intervene in the interests of the school, its children, parents and staff
- Seek the closure of the school or its amalgamation with other schools if and when this is necessary in the common good.

2. Policies and Procedures

Establishment of New Schools

Responsibility for the establishment of a school rests with a patron, which must first be recognised as such by the Department of Education and be on the register of patrons maintained by the Minister.

Since 2010, there has been a considerable change in the way in which new schools are recognised by the Minister. Up until 2009, patrons could propose the recognition of new schools in the manner envisaged in Section 10 of the Education Act (1998). Since 2010, however, the Department of Education identifies areas where it is proposed to open new schools and invites applications from patrons to open schools in those areas. These arrangements put in place the New Schools Establishment Group, whose role is to advise the Minister on determining the patronage of new schools.

The new procedures also provide for evidence of parental demand to be demonstrated for each new school and for increasing the diversity of patronage in schools. The Forward Planning Section of the Department deals with the establishment of new schools. The Department of Education has also identified areas where it expects reassignment of the patronage of existing schools to take place and is developing a process whereby such reassignment may take place.

2.1 Board Appointments

2.1.1 Responsibilities of the Patron and boards of management/manager a school

Responsibility for the day-to-day running and management of a school rests with the board of management/manager and principal teacher.

The patron of a school has the responsibility to:

- nominate the patron nominee(s) of the Board
- appoint the Board as a whole
- select the chairperson of the Board in the case of primary and voluntary secondary schools
- seek reports on the Board's activities
- seek the approval of the Minister for Education to dissolve the Board or remove a member (where necessary)

2.1.1.1 National school board of management composition

Boards of management of a national school who have a recognised staff of more than one teacher consist of eight people:

- School principal
- Member of the teaching staff elected by the teaching staff as a whole
- Two parent nominees, one male and one female,
- Two patron nominees
- Two members of the wider community who are chosen by the other members of the Board.

In schools having a recognised staff of one teacher the board of management shall comprise of:

- School principal
- One parent nominee
- One patron nominee
- One member of the wider community who is chosen by the other members of the Board.

This structure is defined by the Department of Education. All members are volunteers and act as a Board with collective responsibility and an obligation to maintain confidentiality.

2.1.1.2 Voluntary secondary school board of management composition

Boards of Management of Educate Together Voluntary Secondary Schools consist of eleven people:

- Two Educate Together nominees, one of which will be the chair
- Two staff nominees (current pro-rata contracts, non-casual part-time, job-sharing and permanent contracts/contracts of indefinite duration teachers, on the staff of the school on the date of the election), all teaching staff to vote
- Two parent nominees
- Two associate student nominees (to serve one-year terms)
- School Principal (who is a non-voting member of the board).

When these roles are established, the board may agree to nominate two other members as Community representatives.

The Board shall have due regard to gender balance in the composition of its membership.

2.1.1.3 Community school board of management composition

Boards of Management of Educate Together Community Schools with joint patronage when constituted shall consist of thirteen members:

- Three nominees from each patron
- Two parent/guardian nominees (one male, one female)
- Two members of the staff
- Two associate student nominees (to serve one-year terms)
- School Principal (who is a non-voting member of the board).

Up to two additional members can be co-opted to the Board as community nominees once it is formed, with the agreement of the ETB and Educate Together.

The Board shall have due regard to gender balance in the composition of its membership.

2.1.2 Appointment of Patron nominees to a new school

The patron has the responsibility to ensure that a board of management is established for a new school. In the transition period from a school being sanctioned, to a board of management being appointed, the school manager will work closely with the starting community of the school, and relevant officers of the national office.

<i>Policy 2.1.2 – Appointment of Patron Nominee to the board of management of a new school</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO	School Manager School Community	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

In the first three months after the school opens, the national office will seek to identify suitable persons willing to act as patron nominees to the board of management. Such people will be selected according to the following criteria, some essential (E), some desirable (D), in keeping with the current role description for patron nominees:

- Personal integrity (background check) (E)
- Commitment to the ethos of Educate Together (E)
- Interpersonal skills (E)
- Experience in the management of national/second level schools (D)
- Experience of management in another context or HR skills (D)
- Team skills balance (D)

The school manager, in consultation with the school principal, will submit the patron nominee application form to the relevant officer proposing persons to be appointed as nominees of Educate Together to the board of management of the school. In the event of an excess of candidates seeking nomination, interviews may be held. Once an appointment is proposed, an officer designated by the CEO may make enquiries as to the probity of the process. The CEO will then either approve the appointments or require that further candidates be identified.

The manager will arrange a parents’/legal guardians’ election and a teachers’ election according to the relevant Governance Manual/Articles of Management. Steps should be taken to ensure that there is maximum participation in these elections.

The further process of establishing the board of management should proceed according to the agreed procedures. The patron’s appointment of the board and chairperson if required, will proceed according to the policy detailed in 2.1.4.

2.1.3 Appointment of Patron nominees on board of management

The patron nominates patron nominees to the board of management.

National School Board of Management Term

A board of management is in place for a set term. In national schools this is a four-year term, and all national schools change at the same time. The current term for national school boards of management started on 1 December 2019 and will end in 2023.

Voluntary Secondary School Board of Management Term

In voluntary secondary schools the term of a board shall be deemed to expire on 15 October in the third year after the board was constituted.

Community School Board of Management Term

The board of management of a community school will have a three-year term and shall change over on 30 November.

<i>Policy 2.1.3 – Appointment of patron nominees to a new school board</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Relevant Officer Leadership Team CEO	School Community Board of Management Principal	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

In the period before the end of the current term of a board of management, the national office will seek to identify suitable persons willing to act as patron nominees to the board of

management. The process of identification may include -but may not necessarily be restricted to- consultation with the chairperson of the board of management and the Principal teacher, and/or advertisement on relevant websites. Patron nominee application or reappointment forms must be completed by all applicants. Such persons will be selected according to the following criteria, some essential (E), some desirable (D):

- Personal integrity (background check) (E)
- Commitment to the ethos of Educate Together (E)
- Interpersonal skills (E)
- Demonstrable Leadership Skills (Chairperson) (E)
- Willingness to work with policies and procedures (E)
- Available time (E)
- Experience in the management of national/second level schools with preference for experience gained in Educate Together schools (D)
- Knowledge and confidence of the school community (D)
- HR skills (D)
- Team skills balance (D)
- Experience of working with policies and procedures (D)

The relevant officer, in consultation with the relevant RDO (Regional Development Officer) and manager will submit a report to the CEO proposing the names to be appointed as nominees of Educate Together to the Board of Management of the school. In the event of an excess of candidates seeking nomination, interviews may be conducted. Once an appointment is proposed, the CEO or an officer designated by him/her may make enquiries as to the probity of the process. The CEO will then either approve either or both appointments, or require that further candidates be identified.

The decision of the patron is final.

2.1.4 Appointment of the Chairperson of the Board of Management

The patron has complete authority over the appointment of the chairperson of the board of management for national schools and voluntary secondary schools, from the members of the board excluding the principal or teacher representative(s).

For community schools one member of the board will be appointed as chairperson by both patrons annually.

<i>Policy 2.1.4 – Appointment of Chairperson of the Board of Management</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO Head of Services Volunteer Officer Administration Officer – School Patronage	School Community Board of Management Principal	CEO

Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Simultaneously with the procedure detailed for the appointment of patron nominees for national and voluntary secondary schools, the relevant officer assigned to the school will compile a report on the availability of persons with suitable commitment, managerial and interpersonal skills to perform the important role of chairperson of the board of management. The process of identification may include- but may not necessarily be restricted to- consultation with the outgoing chairperson of the board of management and the principal teacher.

The criteria for the choice of chairperson are in keeping with the current role description, some of which are essential (E), and some of which are desirable (D):

- Personal integrity (background check) (E)
- Commitment to the ethos of Educate Together (E)
- Ability to work on their own initiative with the direction of the national office (E)
- Interpersonal and leadership skills (E)
- Participation in Educate Together training courses (E)
- Available time (E)
- Experience in the management of national/second level schools with preference for experience gained in Educate Together schools (D)
- Knowledge and confidence of the school community (D)
- Experience of management in another context or HR skills (D)

The relevant officer will submit a patron nominee application or re-appointment form to the CEO proposing a person to be appointed chairperson of the board of management of the school. In the event of an excess of candidates seeking nomination, interviews may be conducted. Once an appointment is proposed, the CEO or an officer designated by him/her may make enquiries as to the probity of the process. The CEO will then either approve the appointment or require that further candidates be identified.

2.1.5 Appointment of the Board of Management

Once Board members have been properly nominated/elected by the various constituent groups, they must meet to select wider community representatives to complete the Board. When this process is complete, it is the responsibility of the patron to formally appoint the board of management, and to notify the Minister for Education accordingly.

<i>Policy 2.1.5 – Appointment of the Board of Management</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority

CEO	School Community Board of Management Principal	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

As part of the nomination process, each member of a board of management must complete a declaration of acceptance of membership form, in which they make a formal undertaking to abide by the rules governing boards of management and all relevant legislation, uphold the principles of the Educate Together Charter in the management of the school, and maintain the confidentiality of Board business. The Chairperson will then submit a report form to the CEO confirming that all stages of the establishment of the Board have been completed in accordance with the Governance Manual for Primary Schools (form 1 - Patron's Declaration) or the Articles of Management for second level schools, and with integrity. The CEO or an officer designated by him/her may make enquiries as to the probity of the process.

The CEO will then either formally appoint the Board, and inform the Department of Education of the appointment and the names and contact details of the chairperson of the board of management, or require that the process is restarted at any necessary step.

The national office staff will ensure that the contact details of all Board members are entered into the company database in the correct manner.

2.1.6 Removal of board member/dissolution of Board of Management

Once the board of management has been appointed, the patron cannot dismiss any member of the Board (including its own nominees) without the prior agreement of the Minister for Education. If the patron feels that the board of management (or a member thereof) is not effectively discharging its duties, it may apply to the Minister to dissolve the Board or remove the member.

<i>Policy 2.1.6 – Dissolution of a board of management/removal of member</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO	School Community Board of Management Principal Department of Education Legal Advisor	CEO Chairperson, Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

In the event of serious deficiencies in the work of a board of management, the patron may apply to the Minister for permission to either remove a member of the Board or to dissolve it. These powers are detailed in Section 16 and 19 of the Education Act. In the case of a dissolution, such an application will involve the appointment of a manager by the patron to manage the school until a new Board can be established.

In the case of gross misconduct involving assault, financial loss or danger to children, the patron reserves the right to immediately suspend a Board member pending an investigation. An application for such action can be made by a relevant Educate Together Officer and approved by the CEO subject to the permission of the Minister. Such an application will not be processed unless legal advice on the matter has been received by the patron.

In all other cases, a proposal to remove a member or dissolve the Board must be made in writing by the CEO, and may include (but is not limited to):

- Recommendation from the chairperson of the Board (unless the chairperson is the subject of the proposal)
- Information received from a Board member or other relevant person
- In the case of a proposal to remove a member:
 - Results of a witnessed interview with the member
- In the case of a proposal to dissolve the Board:
 - The minutes of a Board meeting at which the Officer and a witness present the case for dissolution to the Board.
- Any such interview or Board meeting must be held in such a way as to ensure natural justice to a member or a Board
- Legal advice

On receipt of this report the CEO may either notify the Minister that they are initiating a report process under Section 19 of the Education Act or decide to seek the Minister's permission to remove a member or dissolve the board or issue warnings or advice to the parties concerned. In all cases, the decision of the CEO must be approved by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Educate Together or a Director appointed for this purpose.

2.2 Board Oversight

2.2.1 Oversight of a Board of Management of an Educate Together school

Boards of management of schools are responsible in law to “uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school...”. Educate Together maintains an ongoing dialogue with its members on how such accountability should best be implemented in keeping with the organisation's commitment to participatory democracy.

Policy 2.2.1 – Oversight of Boards of Management

Applies to	Affects	Authority
Boards of Management of schools operating with Educate Together's patronage CEO	Boards of Management of schools operating with Educate Together's patronage	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Boards of management of Educate Together schools must develop and maintain an open and constructive dialogue on matters of school planning and development with the relevant section of the national office. This dialogue may include matters of concern as well as development opportunities.

Boards of Management will be required to formally report to the national office on an annual basis in relation to:

- Admissions, appointments, policies, finances and resources
- Child Safeguarding and Anti-bullying
- Actions taken to implement the Learn Together/Ethical Education Curriculum and student participation in the school
- Attendance at cluster, regional and national meetings

These will be requested via the annual reporting schedule. From time to time, the CEO may require the preparation of a detailed report by a relevant officer in relation to matters concerning a specific school. Boards of management are required to cooperate fully with the drawing up of such a report. The CEO must inform the Board in writing that such a report is being requested and must ensure that the Board has a reasonable opportunity to express its views in relation to matters under consideration.

2.2.2 Definition of the 'patron's curriculum' and the characteristic spirit 'ethos' of the school

The national school system sets down the necessity for a patron to define a religious or ethical education core curriculum. This curriculum defines the concepts and values which must permeate the entire school programme. In Educate Together schools the Ethical Education curriculum that comprises 2.5 hours of teaching contact time for all pupils per school week in primary school and 1 period of teaching contact time for all students at second-level.

The ethos of the school must also be clearly defined and displayed prominently in the public areas of the school.

<i>Policy 2.2.2 – Ethical Curriculum</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Schools operating with Educate Together’s patronage	Board of Management Principal	General Meeting of Members
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Motions passed at the 2019 Educate Together AGM instructs all schools operating with Educate Together’s patronage must implement the Learn Together or Ethical Education curriculum, support their teachers in its implementation and contribute to its on-going development.

‘This AGM instructs all primary schools under the patronage of Educate Together to teach the Learn Together curriculum (within the Patron’s time) and to refer to Ethical Education in all areas of the school as the Learn Together curriculum.’

‘This AGM instructs all second-level schools with Educate Together as patron, trustee or partner, to teach Ethical Education to all year groups at second-level and to include Ethical Education in all subject planning.’

No faith-formation classes may take place within the compulsory school day in an Educate Together school.

The ethos of Educate Together schools is defined by [The Educate Together Charter](#).

2.2.3. Admissions Policy

The Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000 obliges a board of management of school to: "following consultation with the patron, parents of students attending the school, the staff of the school, and such other persons as the Minister may determine, prepare a draft admission policy in respect of the school." Educate Together as patron shall approve the policy and the board shall have two weeks to publish the approved policy. Educate Together’s policy in relation to such patron approval is bound by motions that have been passed at its Annual General Meetings.

<i>Policy 2.2.3 - Approval of Admissions Policies</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Boards of management of schools operating with Educate Together’s patronage	Boards of Management of schools operating with Educate Together’s patronage	Head of Services, CEO, Patronage sub-committee, Board of Directors
Review by:	Patronage Sub-committee	Annually

Approved by:	Board of Directors	
Approved/Last Review:		March 2022

Section 62 of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 requires that a school must have an admissions policy drawn up in accordance with current legislation and Department regulations. Any review of the admissions policy must repeat the process of consultation and approval.

Before any admissions policy can be published, it must be submitted to the national office for patron approval.

After consultation, the board of management must forward the draft admission policy to the patron for approval. The patron will either approve the policy or return it to the board to make modifications to the draft policy. If the patron wishes the board to make modifications to the draft policy, it will be returned to the board to complete the modifications. The board must make any specified modification within two weeks and return the policy to the patron for approval.

Once the policy is approved by the patron, the patron will return the policy to the board of management for publication on a publicly available website within two weeks of approval. The admission policy must be maintained on the school's website until such time as it is updated and replaced by a new policy. The policy must also be available on request from the school.

Educate Together's national office maintains template admissions policies approved by the patronage sub-committee that conform to current legislation and to a school's obligations to the Educate Together Charter. This template must be used when drawing up a policy and is available from the national office or on the Educate Together Moodle site, <https://learning.educatetogether.ie/>. The national office will maintain a register of approved admissions policies, a copy of the policy approved and the dates of such approvals.

Variations to the standard policy template

Following a report on admissions from the Admissions Working Group formed by the directors after the 2021 AGM which the board of directors accepted in January 2022. Boards of management of schools operating with Educate Together's patronage may seek approval for variations from such a policy. Such variations may be approved in such cases where a school Board makes 'a serious and reasoned case for such a variation in order to address their obligations to equality' in their own communities under the Educate Together Charter and all relevant legislation. (Motion passed at Educate Together AGM 2009).

When drawing up an admissions policy a board of management should:

- Uphold the commitments to equality in the Educate Together Charter
- Adhere to all relevant legislation and
- Demonstrate best practice in transparency, accountability and fairness.

Schools may apply for variations to their admission policies within the following parameters, noting that the planning area must be included in the priority categories. Schools may apply for:

- a. a reduced catchment area within a planning area and/or
- b. proximity to the school from the pupil's home as measured by a GPS system and/or
- c. feeder primary schools within the planning area that are located in a reduced catchment area, noting that all primary schools in that reduced catchment area must be offered equality of access based solely on geographical proximity.

Applications for variations

Schools who wish to deviate from the standard policy templates should ensure that the following steps are completed:

Stage 1:

After consultation with the school community and a Board meeting held, at which the issue and any consequences of the proposed change to the admissions policy have been discussed.

This discussion shall consider:

The issues that have arisen with their current admissions policy which had led to this decision,

The consequence of any proposed change to:

- Students already enrolled in the school
- Students who wish to enrol in the school in the coming years
- The connection of the school with its wider community
- Any reputational implications for the school

If after this discussion the board of management agrees that there are substantial reasons for changing the current approved policy, it should prepare a written report on the proposed change and contact the national office to take advice on the viability of the variation.

A copy of the minutes of the details and outcome of the consultation and the board discussion should be forwarded to admissionpolicies@educatetogether.ie with the application.

Stage 2:

The national office will evaluate the submitted report and seek further information from the board of management if necessary. They will inform the board of management whether the variation that they propose is viable, and in keeping with the current Educate Together policy.

If legal advice or wider consultation is required, the board of management must seek this out and provide a report.

Stage 3:

The national office will evaluate the submitted report and make its own report to the patronage subcommittee of the board of directors.

Stage 4:

The patronage subcommittee will give approval for the policy with the agreed variations to be approved and returned to the school to be published within two weeks of approval.

Reasonable time should be allowed for this process to be completed before the annual admissions process opens for the following school year. Completed reports (Stage 3) should be submitted to the national office by 14 May at the latest to allow time for the Patronage Subcommittee to meet and approve. Initial requests for variations should therefore be submitted to the national office by 31 March.

Annual Admissions Notice

The board of management must prepare and publish the school's Annual Admissions Notice at least one week before a school can start its annual admissions process. Schools cannot accept applications before 1 October for the following school year. The notice must be published on the school's website for the duration of the school year and must also be available on request from the school.

Annual Admissions Notices must contain certain information. For more information on what must be included please see information on the Department of Education [website](#).

2.2.4 Approval of any debts incurred by Board

Debts incurred by a board of management (including credit cards or overdrafts) must be approved by the patron in advance. In addition, any capital expenditure, such as extension or replacement, must have the prior approval of the patron. The patron is the only one who can sign leases or other contractual arrangements in relation to the accommodation of the school, see section 2.4 of this document.

<i>Policy 2.2.4 – Approval of debts</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO Head of Services Buildings Officer	Board of Management with Educate Together as Patron	Head of Services CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Boards of managements who wish to apply for a credit card must submit the approval form for a school credit card available from the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) financial

guidelines. The completed form should be submitted via patronreports@educatetogether.ie for patron approval

It is not recommended that boards of managements incur debts and apply for an overdraft. However, on the rare occasion where such steps are necessary, the Board must apply to the patron in writing. Such a request will be reviewed by the CEO, who will either approve or disallow the request. In the event of requests for debts in excess of €20,000 such a decision must be approved by the Board of Directors of Educate Together.

2.2.5 Annual reporting of child safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures

Patrons of schools are responsible for the establishment and oversight of schools under their patronage in accordance with the Education Act 1998. They also have a specific oversight role under the 2017 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools and 2013 Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

<i>Policy 2.2.5 – Annual reporting of child safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Boards of Management of schools with Educate Together patronage Patronage Sub-committee of Board of Directors CEO	Educate Together Boards of Management	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Each September the national office will write to boards of management of schools with Educate Together patronage requesting assurances that the annual review for child safeguarding and anti-bullying checklists are completed using the Department of Education's mandatory template, and requesting a copy is submitted to the national office within the first three months of the school year. For schools who are in their first year of operation a copy of their ratified policies will be requested.

These copies of the annual review checklist or ratified policies will be stored electronically in the school's file and the national office will maintain a register of such assurances.

If child protection training needs are identified from the returned checklists, schools will be advised of available online Moodle training or training available to schools from the PDST.

The national office will present a report in January of each year to the patronage sub-committee of the board of directors, listing the boards of management who have complied with this requirement.

In the event of a board of management failing to provide such evidence of compliance, the patronage sub-committee will write formally to the board of management of the school concerned seeking compliance within a specified period. If they fail to comply within that period, the sub-committee will consider the appropriate action, which could include advising that Section 16 and/or Section 19 of the Education Act 1998 should be invoked.

If either, a patron body that is a member of the Company and who has signed up to the Educate Together Charter and/or an Educate Together board of management which does not have Educate Together as its patron, have not ensured that they and/or their school(s) are compliant with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017, they are not operating in a manner that is compatible with Educate Together’s Charter or membership of the Company. Such a situation will be reported to the board of directors and may be dealt with according to the company’s Bylaws.

2.2.6 Process for requesting to change the registered name of a school

If a school wishes to change their name, they will need to seek approval from the Patron and the Department of Education to do so.

Educate Together schools must include in their name, Educate Together National School in the case of National Schools and Educate Together Secondary School in the case of Second Level Schools, where Educate Together are the sole Patron and the school is a voluntary secondary school.

<i>Policy 2.2.6 – Request to change the registered name of a school</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO Head of Services New Schools Officer	Board of Management Principal Department of Education	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

The Board of Management/Manager, after consultation with the school community, should write to Educate Together as Patron stating the reasons for the request to change the name of the school. The approval of a name change is the responsibility of the CEO.

The CEO may consult with relevant national office staff members and make further enquiries before deciding on the request. Written confirmation of this decision will be sent to the school's board of management/manager.

If the decision is to approve the request the board of management should write to the school Governance Section in the Department of Education to request the change.

Once confirmation is received from the Department of Education this must be sent to Educate Together, at which point, the company's internal and public records will be updated.

2.3 Staff Appointments

2.3.1 Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments of a new school or established national school

The patron has responsibilities in the selection process for principal and deputy principal of a new or established national school.

<i>Policy 2.3.1 – Appointment of Principal/Deputy Principal of a national school</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Manager/chairperson of the board Relevant Officer Head of Services CEO	School Manager Board of Management	CEO Chairperson, Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Once a roll number has been granted to a new national school a principal can be appointed in January prior to a national school opening.

The appointment procedures for national schools must be in accordance with the relevant Department of Education circular [44/2019](#), and the Educate Together Principal and Deputy Principal Recruitment Policy for National Schools.

In the case of a principal or deputy principal vacancy in a new or established school, the chairperson of the board of management/manager should inform the patron of the vacancy and arrange for the advertisement for the post to be placed in the relevant media and that all information necessary or required by Department of Education regulation is included.

The CEO will appoint a Selection Panel in consultation with the relevant officer, chairperson of the board of management/school manager where appropriate. The Selection Panel shall have due regard to balance, and should ideally be drawn up from the following:

2.3.1.1 National School Principal Recruitment Selection Panel members, no more than 5 members;

- Chairperson of the board of management/school manager, who will act as chair of the Selection Panel
- Two Educate Together Principals with experience of a start-up environment and/or an established school
- An officer from the national office not involved in the patron's approval process for an established school

- One or two other people, ideally with managerial or recruitment experience.

2.3.1.2 National school Deputy Principal recruitment Selection Panel through open competition members for an established school:

- Principal Teacher
- Chairperson of the board of management/school manager
- An independent assessor agreed with the INTO

The Selection Panel will be empowered to decide not to appoint a principal or deputy principal if it is not satisfied that any of the candidates are of sufficient quality to undertake this important and central role. In this case it may recommend re-advertising and the appointment of an acting principal or deputy principal until a new selection process is completed.

When the selection is complete, the chairperson of the Selection Panel must assure the patron that the selection procedure has been carried out faithfully and according to the high standards of integrity expected in Educate Together schools. They must provide a report on the selection process to the national office. The CEO, on behalf of the patron, will arrange for the appointment to be formally approved. In the case of principal appointments, only the chairperson of the board of directors of Educate Together may issue approval and no provisional appointments may be made.

When approved, the chairperson of the Selection Panel will be informed in writing.

If the national office is not convinced that the process has been completed correctly, the CEO may instruct the board of management/school manager that the process must be restarted at a specific point, up to and including a complete re-advertisement.

2.3.2 Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments of a new school or established second-level school

The patron has responsibilities in the selection process for principal and deputy principal of a new or established second-level school.

<i>Policy 2.3.2 – Appointment of Principal/Deputy Principal of a second level school</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Manager/Chairperson of the Board Relevant Officer Head of Services CEO	School Manager Board of Management	CEO Chairperson, Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Once a roll number has been granted to a new second-level school a principal can be appointed in September prior to a second level school opening.

In the case of a Principal or Deputy Principal vacancy in a new or established school, the chairperson of the board of management/manager will advise the patron via patronreports@educatetogether.ie and the Department of Education.

The appointment procedures for second-level schools must be in accordance with the relevant Department of Education circulars including (forthcoming) and 0062/2021 (appeals).

In the case of a voluntary secondary school, the board of management will appoint a selection panel in consultation with the patron and with regard to the school's Articles of Management and Department of Education circular [04/1998](#).

For Community Schools who have joint patronage, the agreed ACCS procedures must be followed.

For Community Colleges the agreed procedures as set out in the relevant Model Agreement and recruitment note must be followed.

Steps:

1. Board of management advises the patron and the Department of the vacancy.
2. Patron engages in needs analysis process if required.
3. Boards advises patron of board nominees via patronreports@educatetogether.ie.
4. Patron advises board of two patron nominees.
5. Patron and board of management agree on an independent external assessor. This person must not be a member of the board of management.
6. Board appoints the selection panel and advises criteria based on needs analysis conducted.
7. Selection panel appoints a chair in accordance with relevant management body procedures.

8. The recruitment process is conducted in accordance with Department regulations.
9. The chair of the selection panel sends a report to the chairperson of the board of management for approval of the selection process, and provisional approval of the appointment, at a board of management meeting.
10. Immediately following approval of the selection process by the board, a report is sent to the patron for patron approval of the board's recruitment process via an online form. This report is redacted and must not contain names of candidates.
11. Once the appeals process has concluded, the board of management offers the successful candidate the position.
12. Once the candidate has accepted the position, the board of the management informs the patron of the person appointed and the start date.

In all cases the Selection Panel shall have due regard to balance and should be drawn up from the following:

2.3.1.3 Voluntary secondary school Selection Panel members:

- Two nominees of the patron
- Two nominees of the board of management or nominated by the school manager
- An independent external member agreed between the board of management and the patron

The Panel shall select its own Chairperson from among its members.

2.3.1.4 Community schools Selection Panel members:

- Two nominees of Educate Together
- Two nominees of the other patron
- An independent member agreed by both patrons

The Chairperson of the Selection Panel will be agreed among its members and the CEOs of both patron bodies.

If the patron is not convinced that the process has been conducted correctly, the CEO may instruct the board of management/school manager that the process must be restarted at a specific point, up to and including re-advertisement.

2.3.3 Appointment of staff to a new school or established national school

The patron has the responsibility to ensure that the chairperson of the board of management/school manager has taken the necessary steps to ensure the timely appointment of all staff.

<i>Policy 2.3.3 – Appointment of teachers and ANA (SNA) staff</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority

Manager/chairperson of the board Relevant Officer Head of Services CEO	School Manager Chairperson of the Board of Management	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

The Chairperson of the board of management/school manager will ensure that the necessary steps are taken for the school to ensure the school has a full complement of staff. This includes interacting with all relevant redeployment panels. The appointment procedures must be in accordance with the relevant Department of Education circular. The Selection Panel for the teachers will consist of:

- The principal or newly appointed principal
- The chairperson of the board of management/ school manager
- An external assessor – usually an Educate Together principal with relevant experience of either a start-up environment or an established school.

The national office will maintain a list of approved independent assessors for Selection Panels for teaching vacancies in schools.

For posts of responsibility the national office will maintain a list of independent assessors for selection panels agreed with the INTO and Educate Together. The patron is not required to approve these appointments.

Application for the approval of the appointment of an independent assessor must be made using the relevant form submitted to the national office. Approval will be forwarded to the principal and/or chairperson/school manager in writing.

When the selection process for ANA (SNA) staff or teachers is complete, the chairperson of the Selection Panel must assure the patron that the selection procedure has been carried out faithfully and according to the high standards of integrity expected in Educate Together schools.

For ANA (SNA) staff and all teacher appointments at primary level the chairperson must complete and submit the approval of appointments form to the national office. Links to the relevant forms can be found on our website - <https://www.educatetogether.ie/school-boards/approvals/>

The relevant officer in the national office will arrange for the appointment to be formally approved on behalf of the patron and no provisional appointments may be made. Appointments for ANA (SNA) staff or teaching staff at second level do not required patron approval.

When approved, the chairperson of the Selection Panel will be informed in writing.

If the national office is not convinced that the process has been completed correctly, the CEO may instruct the school manager that the process must be restarted at a specific point, up to and including a complete re-advertisement.

2.3.4 Appointment of staff to a new school or established second level school

The patron has the responsibility to ensure that the chairperson of the board of management/school manager has taken the necessary steps to ensure the timely appointment of all staff.

<i>Policy 2.3.4 – Appointment of teachers and ANA (SNA) staff</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Manager/chairperson of the board Relevant Officer Head of Services CEO	School Manager Chairperson of the Board of Management	CEO
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

The Chairperson of the board of management/school manager will ensure that the necessary steps are taken for the school to ensure the school has a full complement of staff. This includes interacting with all relevant redeployment panels. The appointment procedures must be in accordance with the relevant Department of Education circular or articles of management as applicable.

2.3.4.1 The selection panel for the teachers in a Voluntary Secondary School will consist of:

- The principal or newly appointed principal
- A nominee of the patron and
- A nominee of the board of management, usually the chairperson of the board of management.

The selection panel will select its own chairperson from among its members

The national office will maintain a list of patron nominees for selection panels for teaching vacancies in voluntary secondary schools.

The Principal shall, with the approval of the board and in accordance with all relevant procedures and Department Circulars, appoint all members of the non-teaching/ANA (SNA) staff.

2.3.4.2 For Community Colleges the agreed procedures as set out in the relevant Model Agreement and recruitment note must be followed.

2.4 Accommodation and Growth

Until 2009, any prospective patron could apply for recognition of a school by providing evidence of sufficient demand. The new process established in 2010, however, is based solely on demographic growth. Under this process, the Department announces the need for new schools and invites applications from prospective patrons.

The Planning and Building Unit of the Department of Education is responsible for identifying the need for school accommodation. The Site Acquisition and Property Management Section is responsible for acquiring sites to meet the requirements of the School Building Programme. The School Capital Appraisal Section is responsible for processing applications for rental of temporary accommodation and additional accommodation and identifying projects to be prioritised to meet the accommodation needs identified by the Forward Planning Section.

When a new school is announced to open, the responsibility for start-up accommodation lies with the Major Projects Section of the Planning & Building Unit in Tullamore. Part of the Major Projects Section is a sub-section called Start-up Schools Interim Accommodation (SSIA) who arrange and co-ordinate the provision of the start-up accommodation.

Once the patronage of the school is sanctioned, the Department of Education issues the school with a Roll Number that entitles it to commence recruiting staff and drawing down grants.

SSIA will liaise with the school via the Educate Together Buildings Officer to ensure that adequate and proper accommodation is provided for the school until its permanent accommodation is provided.

There are numerous ways this accommodation can be provided; modular buildings on the school's permanent site, if secured; modular buildings on rented land/land in state ownership; other rented buildings. Rents are paid by the Department of Education directly or via the school or Patron

Sometimes the patron will be requested by the Department of Education to engage in lease arrangements on behalf of the school.

When a site is secured for a school, the project moves to Major Projects for a five-stage process:

- | | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| STAGE 1 | Preliminary Design Stage |
| STAGE 2 | (a) Developed Design Stage |
| | (b) Detailed Design Stage |
| STAGE 3 | Tender Action Stage |
| STAGE 4 | Construction Stage |

STAGE 5 Final Accounts Stage

At the end of this process a “Standard Ministerial Lease” will be entered into by the Patron on behalf of the school.

2.4.1 The provision and planning of temporary and permanent accommodation

The patron has the responsibility to ensure that appropriate accommodation is provided for new schools.

<i>Policy 2.4.1 – Accommodation for new schools</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Buildings Officer School Manager Head of Services CEO	Buildings Officer School Manager Start-up group Department of Education	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Educate Together will only propose recognition of a new school if it is reasonably satisfied that there are concrete and credible plans for the permanent accommodation for that school. If interim accommodation is necessary, Educate Together will only enter into license or lease agreements under the following circumstances:

- The premises conform to Health, Safety and Planning regulations
- That there is sufficient space for educational activities to operate in professional fashion
- That the school has complete control over access to the premises, especially over areas with access to children or to school records.
- That there are reasonable plans to allow for the natural growth of the school for the duration the Department of Education intends the school to remain in interim accommodation.
- That the rents proposed have been approved by the Department of Education
- That the legal contract documents have been examined and approved by Educate Together’s legal advisors
- Educate Together is satisfied that the Board of Management of the school will carry out the terms of the lease.

2.4.2 The Approval of Significant Projects

<i>Policy 2.4.2 – Approval of significant projects/decisions</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
CEO Buildings Officer	Board of Management Principal Department of Education	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

In the case of significant capital decisions involving building projects, commercial arrangements or leases, approval will only be considered based on a written report submitted to the CEO by the school. This report must include a formal recommendation by the relevant national officer and be accompanied by legal advice where appropriate. The officer may request further information from the board of management to enable them to make a recommendation.

In the case of proposals involving accommodation, the written views of the Department of Education may be required.

The CEO will then either approve or disallow the proposal to be presented to the board of directors. In the case of all lease agreements which constitute a significant liability to the patron, only the board of directors may approve and sign the legal instruments and will do so only based on a legal undertaking by the board of management of the school to adhere to the terms of the lease and indemnify the patron for any breach they may perform - deliberately or otherwise.

Please note that the board of directors of Educate Together may assign the decision processes detailed above to a sub-committee.

2.4.3 Patron approval for generating a new stream or increase capacity in a school

Many of our schools have an increasing demand for places in mainstream or specialised classes including classes for children with autism and early intervention classes, and may need to generate a new stream, or at second level increase the long-term projected enrolment (LTPE) to meet this demand. Where a school is expanding the number of intake classes or specialised classes, the school must have received prior approval for such expansion from both the school patron and from the Planning and Building Unit of the Department of Education.

Policy 2.4.3 – Generating a new stream		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Boards of Management of schools seeking increased capacity Buildings Officer Head of Services CEO	Schools who wish to generate a new stream or increase capacity	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

As a school grows and there is an increasing demand for places, it may need to increase the number of streams or capacity in the school. Along with seeking approval from the Department of Education to be granted permission for this, the board of management should submit a report to the patron outlining:

- History and growth of the school
 - A brief history of the school including when it opened, how it has grown, including enrolment figures
- Accommodation plans
 - What plans have been made for the accommodation of the extra class(es) and evidence of planning permission sought if applicable
 - Evidence that accommodation is ready for the increased intake
- Department of Education approval for number of streams in the school
 - The number of streams approved at opening and subsequently
- Confirmation from Planning and Building Unit of the Department
 - Confirmation that prior approval has been obtained from the Planning and Building Unit of the Department of Education

The CEO will then decide whether to approve, reject or defer the generation of a new stream pending further information, and so inform the board of management of the school.

2.4.4 Use of School Buildings

School premises are managed at a local level by the school board of management, and requests for third parties to use the facilities should be formally approved by the board of management with the consent of the patron and in some cases the Minister.

It should be noted that in all cases the use of primary school premises during the school day, for purposes other than regular school business must also have the prior approval of the Minister.

Policy 2.4.4 – Use of School Buildings		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Boards of Management of schools seeking patron approval Building Officer Head of Services CEO	Schools who wish to allow third parties to use their facilities	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

Schools who wish to give permission to third parties to use their facilities should follow the [Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours](#) published by the Department of Education.

Boards of management are required to seek the approval required as set out in the guidelines. They should consider the impact that this would have on the day-to-day running of the school. They should also consider their legal arrangements, insurance, health and safety, and the future development of the school.

After consideration, the board should seek patron approval for the use by emailing patronreports@educatetogether.ie and confirming that appropriate insurance is in place for the agreed activity.

2.4.5 Procedures for transfer of patronage from existing schools

From time to time, Educate Together is approached with proposals to transfer the duties of patronage from an existing patron of a school. A few independent patrons who are themselves members of Educate Together have requested such a transfer. Educate Together considers such requests on a case-by-case basis and is open to approaches from patrons of schools that are themselves not currently members of Educate Together. The following is the procedure that Educate Together has adopted to handle such requests.

Proposals to transfer patronage of schools

In the event of a formal request from a patron of a school to transfer its duties as patron to Educate Together, Educate Together will adopt the following approach.

The guiding principle of this procedure is that transfers will only be undertaken where there is clear and substantial evidence that such a transfer is supported by the school community, that the school community is properly aware of and understands how the Educate Together model operates and how it will operate in their own school. In this case, the term school community includes parents, children, staff and board of management.

<i>Policy 2.4.5 – Transfer of patronage</i>		
Applies to	Affects	Authority
Patrons of schools seeking transfer of patronage Boards of Management of such schools New Schools Officer School Support & Development Officer Leadership Team CEO Board of Directors	Schools seeking transfer of patronage	CEO Board of Directors
Review By:	Board of Directors	Annually
Approved/Last Review:		June 2022

In the event of an informal contact from a patron of a school seeking transfer, the CEO will instruct a suitable qualified national office officer to hold informal discussions with the relevant officer of the patron and, through them, the chairperson and Principal of the school as appropriate. The national office may also consult with the Department of Education to ascertain the Department’s support or otherwise for the transfer.

If the national office officer is satisfied that there is substantial interest in the transfer, a meeting of the school community will be requested, at which an officer of Educate Together will:

- a) explain clearly what such a change will entail and
- b) ascertain the level of support from parents and staff for the transfer.

If further meetings with the patron, board of management, staff and parents confirm support for the transfer, the appointed national office officer will invite the patron to formally apply to the board of directors of Educate Together for such a transfer.

The board of directors will consider a report from the CEO on this matter and may decide to reject the proposal, agree to progress the application or to defer consideration until further information is available.

In the event of a decision to proceed, the CEO will undertake a process of due diligence on behalf of the board and members of Educate Together.

The information requested must include documentation providing evidence of the following:

1. Patron’s approval of the appointment of all staff employed in the school.
2. Patron’s appointment of independent assessors to Selection Panels for such appointments.
3. Patron’s appointment of nominees and chairperson of the current board of management.

4. Patron's oversight of the procedures for establishing the board of management and its composition.
5. Patron's appointment of the board of management, undertakings signed by members of the board and its notification of same to the Department of Education.
6. Patron's approval of the Admissions Policy of the school.
7. Minutes of any dealings the patron has had with the board of management of the school during the past year.
8. Minutes of the meetings including financial reports of the board of management of the school during the past year.
9. Accounts of the board of management for the previous five years and the most recent financial report for the board.
10. Any current contracts, leases or other legally binding agreements entered into by the patron in relation to the school.
11. All policies approved by the board of management of the school, especially the following:
 - a. Annual Admissions Notice,
 - b. Code of behaviour Policy,
 - c. Ethical Education Curriculum ('Religious Education Core Curriculum', 'Core Curriculum') Policy,
 - d. Child Safeguarding Statement.
12. Confirmation that there are formal contracts in place for all staff of the school (teaching and non-teaching).
13. The list of seniority of teaching staff and ANA (SNA) staff.
14. Confirmation that all posts of responsibility were made according to the regulations and information concerning any appeals.
15. Summary details of any Section 29 Appeals against decisions of the board of management.
16. Details of any legal or administrative challenge to decisions of the board of management of the school in the past 5 years.

In addition, the CEO will provide a report on the viability of the school and its enrolment, the standards of education delivered, the quality of management, staff, parent and child relationships, any outstanding issues of accommodation or resources, the general atmosphere of the school and the attitude of the Department of Education and other education partners to the transfer.

The board of directors will then decide whether to proceed with the transfer, reject the transfer or defer the transfer pending further information.

Conclusion

The role of patron is a very serious role which offers schools great support and protection at a time of increasing legal and other liabilities.

Educate Together is committed to continuous improvement in the policies and procedures whereby it carries out its role as patron of schools. Such policies and procedures are also subject to the democratic oversight of general meetings of its members¹. As a result, this manual is an evolving document. It is Educate Together's intention to continue to develop and refine its procedures in order to ensure that patronage functions are carried out with efficiency, transparency and fairness. Suggestions and recommendations from our members and partners are welcome.

Educate Together is also conscious that its patronage function must be carried out in partnership with the boards of management of schools that operate with its direct patronage.

It also has a responsibility to provide guidance to those schools with independent patronage that are members of Educate Together. It is hoped that this manual will be of use to all our member schools. It is being placed in the public domain as a contribution to the evolution of the role of patron in the Irish education system.

Educate Together is committed to updating the manual as often as required.

Approval and Status

This manual was approved for publication by the board of directors of Educate Together at its meeting in June 2022.

More information on our patronage function can be found on the Educate Together [website](#).

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