

# Educate Together



# ANNUAL REPORT 2015



This report covers the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015

## **Chairperson's Report: 2015 in Review**

*2015 was a year of mixed fortunes for Educate Together with great progress in many areas and some serious challenges in others.*

*On the positive side our network continued to expand with the opening of three new primary schools and one second-level school. This year, the demand for our schools was stronger than ever. Unfortunately the divestment process is not moving nearly fast enough and without a major acceleration the process will not succeed. Educate Together remains committed to the process and will do what we can to make it work.*

*Financially this year was, as members are well aware, a very challenging year. Our funding from State sources is woefully inadequate for the work we do in opening and supporting public schools and it compares very poorly with the level of support provided internationally. The result of the situation we found ourselves in was an Emergency General Meeting (EGM) called for January 2016.*

*The board of directors of Educate Together met eleven times during the year and I would like to thank the members of the board for their contributions and commitment of time. I think it is important that the members note the amount of work that directors do on a voluntary basis outside meetings and on important subcommittees.*

*I would also like to, on the board's behalf, express our gratitude for all the great work done by the staff in the Educate Together national office during the year and by all the member of boards of management of our schools.*

**Diarmaid Mac Aonghusa  
Chairperson, Educate Together**

## **Strategic Priorities 2014 - 2016**

For the period 2014 - 2016, the Educate Together national office is tasked with achieving five key strategic priorities. These are:

- Increase school places with spread aligned with the national spatial strategy;
- Be leaders in Ethical Education;
- Have systems in place to ensure that all Educate Together schools are fully implementing the Charter;
- Ensure the success of the Educate Together model at second-level;
- Achieve financial sustainability and security.



## Strategic Priority 1: Increase School Places

2015 saw a groundswell of public opinion demanding equality in education. Thanks to domestic and international media interest, the Irish education system came under increasing scrutiny and criticism. Many in 2015 called for an overhaul of the education system, in which 9 out of 10 families still have no choice but to send their children to a religious-run primary school and a system where it is legal for state-funded schools to discriminate against children on grounds of religion.

Once again, evidence of increased parental demand for equality-based schools in 2015 was undeniable: Educate Together's schools and start-up groups reported that thousands of children were being signed up to our already over-subscribed waiting lists. Educate Together's New Schools team responded to increasing requests by parents and campaign groups to open up new equality-based primary and secondary schools throughout the year.

Educate Together opened three new primary schools in 2015: Pelletstown ETNS in north Dublin, New Ross ETNS in Co. Wexford and Tuam ETNS in Co. Galway. Educate Together was also due to open a primary school in Castlebar, Co. Mayo as part of the divestment process, but the opening of this school was postponed as the permanent accommodation proposed by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) was deemed unsuitable by Educate Together.

The Educate Together New Schools team continued to support campaign groups around Ireland, including new groups in 2015 - in Limerick, Kildare, Galway, Cork and Dublin. The team gathered Expressions of Interest for primary schools in three key areas in Dublin - Goatstown / Stillorgan, Drumcondra / Marino,

and Cabra / Phibsborough - in anticipation of patronage selection processes to be run by the Department in 2016.

2015 saw the DES announce the capital school building programme for the years 2016-2021. The Department announced that 14 Educate Together national schools were to have permanent buildings constructed: Ballinteer ETNS, Bremore ETSS, Dublin 7 ETNS, Claregalway ETNS, Ennis ETNS, Knocknacarra ETNS, Maynooth ETNS, Pelletstown ETNS, Rochestown ETNS, Rush & Lusk ETNS, Shellybanks ETNS, Stepaside ETSS, Tralee ETNS, and Wexford ETNS.

In 2015, Educate Together took occupancy of new permanent buildings for Kildare Town ETNS, Waterford ETNS and Navan ETNS.



## Strategic Priority 2: Be Leaders in Ethical Education

On Universal Children's Day, Educate Together held its first Ethical Education Conference, *Understanding Ethical Education in a Modern Irish Republic: Cherishing all Children of the Nation Equally?* This pioneering event brought together 200 Educate Together teachers and educationalists to explore issues central to an inclusive Ethical Education in a modern republic. It also saw the first ever Teachmeet for teachers in Educate Together schools in Ireland and the UK.

Educate Together continued its work to promote the Learn Together Ethical Education curriculum in 2015. Summer courses on the Learn Together were delivered and enrolments in our Postgraduate Certificate in Ethical and Multi-denominational Education remained high. In addition, courses were delivered in Church of Ireland College of Education, Mary Immaculate College, Froebel College and Marino Institute of Education. The Education and Support team also began to develop lesson plans about Humanism in partnership with the Humanist Association of Ireland.

Educate Together appointed new Boards of Management across the 64 schools it is patron of, for the board switchover in December 2015, and managed the teacher redeployment panel. The national office maintained a confidential helpline for school leaders, managed the increasing number of patron approvals of staff appointments, selection panel approvals, board of management appointments and school policy approvals. The national office also provided intensive support for a small number of schools where necessary in 2015.



## Strategic Priority 3: Ensure Schools Are Implementing The Charter

A number of pioneering measures were debated and voted upon at the 2015 Annual General Meeting (AGM). Significantly, members voted for a change in wording of the Educate Together Charter. The AGM recognised that the use of the term “Multi-denominational” as a description of the Educate Together model has caused increasing confusion. Consequently, members voted in favour of its replacement by the term “Equality-based”. Henceforth, the descriptive terms “Equality-based” and “Equality and Human-rights-based” will be used in all company public statements.

Educate Together has been acutely conscious of the need to promote good practice within the network of schools during a phase of rapid growth. The Quality Framework consultation process continued throughout 2015, and a consultant was appointed to draw up a report based on the specific needs of the sector. A draft framework was drawn up in 2015 and is due for completion in 2016.

The Principals’ Conference took place in Portlaoise in April 2015, and board of management training and support continued. The new quarterly Education and Support newsletter was professionally printed in 2015 and distributed across all Educate Together schools.



### 2015 Statistics

- 77 primary schools;
- 4 second-level schools;
- Current enrolment >21,000 pupils;
- 1,200+ Teachers, Principals and school staff;
- 26% of schools in disadvantaged urban areas;
- 14% of schools have specialist autism /Special Education Needs facilities;
- National office of 17 professional staff (full time equivalents).

## Strategic Priority 4: Ensure the Success of the Educate Together Model at Second-level

A new Educate Together second-level school opened in Celbridge, Co. Kildare under joint patronage with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board, bringing the total number of Educate Together second-level schools to four in 2015.

Building on the Ethical Education Framework developed in 2014, an Ethical Education course was developed for junior cycle with the Ethical Education Development group, in conjunction with other stakeholders and partners. Educate Together secured funding through the Worldwise Project to support all Educate Together second-level schools to deliver Ethical Education as part of the curriculum.

Educate Together commenced work on opening four new secondary schools in 2016 - in Balbriggan, Cork, North Wicklow, and Stepaside.

A documentary on the development and first year of Hansfield Educate Together Secondary School, *A Different Class*, was broadcast on RTÉ television in October 2015, and was very well received.



## Strategic Priority 5: Achieve Financial Sustainability and Security

2015 was another very challenging financial year for Educate Together. The board was faced with increased demand for the services of the national office from its members coupled with an unprecedented surge in demand for places in Educate Together schools and for the opening of new schools both at primary and second-level. At the same time, none of the cutbacks on core funding imposed during the economic crash were reversed and, despite the efforts of our team, there was no increase in level of grant aid for the opening of new schools. In the absence of any grant for opening new second-level schools, this cost had to be entirely borne by the organisation. This impacted seriously on Educate Together's strategic reserves. In this context, the organisation placed a very strong emphasis on increased income generation.

The work to maintain key relationships in the fundraising area was given a high priority and at the end of the year, this had raised over €253,000 to support our core activities. One Day Together, Educate Together's national

fundraising day, was held with more schools than ever before, with 45 schools taking part. Considerable work was undertaken to garner appropriate commercial sponsorship of Educate Together activities, with the first Ethical Education Conference meeting all its income targets and becoming a self-sustaining operation. In addition a series of appeals were made through our online and social media channels to increase the amount of regular contributions to our finances.

Educate Together continued to develop the services that it can trade to other educational bodies. In this regard, it has been providing professional services in the areas of governance, leadership, teacher education and project management to the new Educate Together Academy Trust in the UK.

Artwork by Rathfarnham ETNS, One Day Together 2015



# Development Objectives 2015



## National Office Staff Changes 2015

Emer Nowlan, Chief Operating Officer, returned from her year's sabbatical leave in December.

Louise Daly, Governance and Patronage Manager, returned from maternity leave in September.

Mairéad Holohan joined the national office as an Administration Assistant in a temporary capacity from March to November.

Dee Mangaoang, Chief Operating Officer sabbatical cover, Adrienne Flynn, Governance and Patronage Manager maternity leave cover, and Ann Ryan, Second-level Education Officer, left to follow other career paths.

Laura Dooley joined the national office as Second-level Education Officer in November.

Ger Mullen joined the national office as Financial Controller in January.

## Formal Statement by the Board of Directors on Fundraising Principles

We at Educate Together are fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. We commit to doing this by:

- Maintaining good fundraising practice;
- Providing high levels of accountability and transparency to our donors and prospective donors from the public;
- Providing clarity and assurances to you about how we spend your money.

## Formal Statement by the Board of Directors on Governance

The Board of Directors of Educate Together is committed to the following principles of good governance, in accordance with the Governance Code for the community, voluntary and charity sector in Ireland:

- Principle 1  
Leading our organisation.
- Principle 2  
Exercising control over our organisation.
- Principle 3  
Being transparent and accountable.
- Principle 4  
Working effectively.
- Principle 5  
Behaving with integrity.

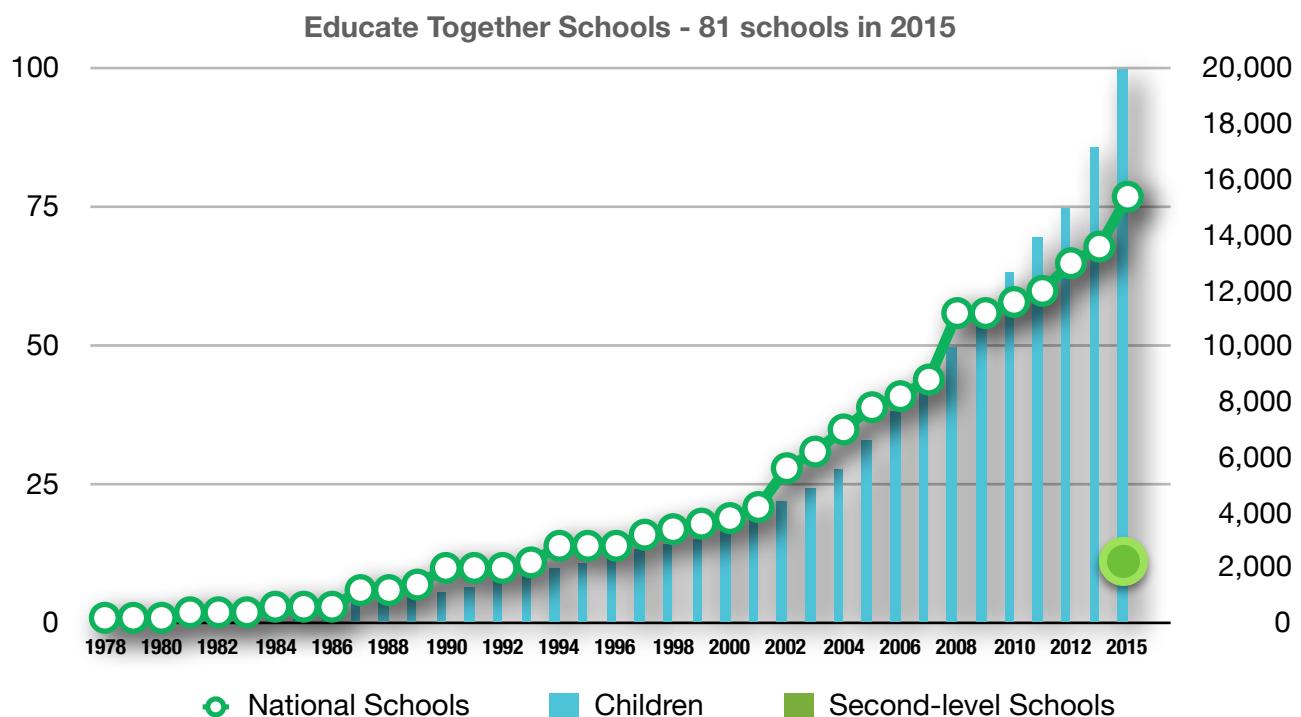
More information can be found on [www.educatetogether.ie/finances-and-governance](http://www.educatetogether.ie/finances-and-governance)



## Board of Directors Membership & Attendance at Board Meetings

Date	Meeting	Location	Mac Aonghusa	Cummins	Murphy	Richter	Hurley	O'Rourke	Bradshaw	amanian	Galvin	Vacancy	Bourke	Vacancy
Jan 17th	Strategy Review	Ashling Hotel Dublin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		Marie Gordon		
Feb 25th	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Mar 25th	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		
Apr 22nd	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
May 20th	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	2/5	✓	1/5
May 23rd	AGM	Portlaoise ETNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		Alex Vargens	✓	Robert Cochran
Jun 22nd	Meeting	Athlone	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sep 23rd	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oct 21st	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Nov 25th	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dec 16th	Meeting	Nat Office	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
			11/11	11/11	10/11	7/11	11/11	4/11	7/11	9/11	6/6	9/11	6/6	0/11

## Growth of the School Network: 1978 - 2015



## Educate Together in the media in 2015

**LOUISE O'NEILL FINDS HER GROOVE**  
Ireland's literary It-girl in the arts interview

**LUX LOUNGING IN CASHMERE**  
Designer Lucy Nagle's brilliant winter yarns

**TAWNY, RUBY OR VINTAGE?**  
Tomas Clancy on port's evolutionary potential

**So you want to start a School**

The individuals on a mission to reshape Ireland's education system to fit how we live now

**The Sunday Business Post**  
September 27 2015

Educate Together opens four schools in Dublin, Galway, Kildare and Wexford



**'Abandoned, remote and neglected': This is the school Educate Together don't want to use**

Educate Together says the school is not suitable as it is too far from the town.

Aug 27th 2015, 7:54 AM 31,219 Views 96 Comments

[f Share 132](#) [t Tweet 32](#) [Email 8](#)

**EDUCATE TOGETHER HAS**  
deferred the opening of a primary school in Castlebar, Co Mayo.

The multi-denominational school was due to open next week but has refused to do so, saying the location is too remote.

Educate Together made the announcement yesterday in a statement.



## No baptism, no school: Irish parents fight for equal access to education

Number of Catholics has plummeted, but church still dictates admissions criteria for vast majority of schools – with non-believers at bottom of pile



Nikki Murphy and her son, Reuben, who has been rejected by nine schools. Photograph: Fergal Phillips

## Group calling for Educate Together school says 433 children signed up

[Twitter 0](#) [Facebook 124](#) [Google+ 8](#)

Friday 26 June 2015 16.47



The group began to look for expressions of interest from local parents at the end of May

A group campaigning to have a multi-denominational school established in a Dublin suburb says 433 children have been provisionally enrolled since the list opened four weeks ago.





*Official opening of New Ross ETNS, September 2015*

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