

# ACCS

## Introduction

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) is the national representative Association for the 92 Community and Comprehensive Post-primary Schools nationwide. Founded on the 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1982 in Milltown Park, Dublin, ACCS is one of the partners in education that participate actively in national decision making at Post-primary level.

## Objectives

ACCS has as its objects:

- (i) To contribute by every means at its disposal to the advancement of education.
- (ii) To advance and develop the concept of broad comprehensive curricula as enshrined in the deeds of the schools.
- (iii) To advance and develop the wider “community” concept of the schools.

ACCS is a Company limited by Guarantee with registered charity status.

As a representative body, ACCS has a diverse range of powers and functions outlined in its Memorandum and Articles of Association which seek to protect, promote and enhance the interests of its membership within the education sector and the country at large. The views of the members are expressed through its wide-ranging Convention, Executive and Sub-committee structures and have a significant impact on policy and decision making in the field of Irish education.

## History

Prior to the introduction of the so-called “Free Post-Primary Education Scheme” second level education was clearly divided into two sectors. The voluntary second level schools, most of them owned by religious orders, offered academic studies to students up to Leaving Certificate level, while Vocational/Technical Schools, as their name implied, offered courses which prepared students for the world of work.

During the course of the 1960’s Irish Government policy was clearly directed towards the provision of a universal system of second level education available to all children. In 1963 Vocational schools were permitted to extend from a two-year cycle, covering the Group Certificate, to a five-year cycle, covering both the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses.

A number of Comprehensive schools were established in the mid 1960’s to meet the needs of particular localities and circumstances. These new Comprehensive Schools combined the subjects and courses available in Secondary schools with courses that had traditionally been taught in Vocational Schools.

The Community School system, as we know it to-day, was the result of an initiative by Mr. Pádraig Faulkner, T.D., Minister for Education in 1970. He proposed that Community Schools be established with the help of funds from the World Bank under certain conditions.

The rationale behind the introduction of the Community and Comprehensive School system was:

- To bring together in a single institution the academic style education of the traditional Secondary school and the practically orientated programme of the Vocational school. In this way pupils would be able to sample both the practical and academic in a broad general curriculum, so that each would be offered an educational structure appropriate to his/her needs, abilities and interests.
- To bring second level education into the fast developing urban housing estates and to the remote rural areas where previously it was unavailable.
- To amalgamate existing small Secondary and Vocational schools so as to ensure equality of educational opportunities for both boys and girls regardless of background or social status.
- To be leaders in the area of curriculum development and change.
- To make provision for Adult and Community education facilities in their areas.

A Deed of Trust was negotiated for Community Schools which provided for the setting up of Boards of Management.

In 1982 an inaugural General Meeting was held in Milltown Park, Dublin which established a new Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACS) under an interim constitution. Rev. Fr. John Hughes was elected the first President of ACS for the year 1982/83. The first Annual ACS Convention in Athlone, Co. Westmeath on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1983, firmly established the Association's constitution

In 2003 ACS became a registered Company limited by Guarantee which offered greater legal protection to its Executive Committee and membership. With incorporation, ACS became now known as ACCS and it also secured Charity Status from the Irish Revenue Commissioners (CHY 8692)

The Association was established to:

- (i) facilitate and assist Member Boards in the execution of their responsibilities,
- (ii) act as a representative and negotiating body on behalf of all member Boards or, on request, on behalf of an individual member Board,
- (iii) co-operate with, or enter into agreement with any other bodies having similar objectives on a general basis or in relation to particular issues.
- (iv) Apply the funds of the Association in carrying out these functions and in defraying the expenses of management and administration.

### **Structures of ACCS.**

The Association is governed by an Annual Convention and it operates under the direction of an Executive (Board of Directors).

The President is elected by the members at the annual Convention .

The Executive Committee comprises a maximum of eighteen (18) members, including the President.

The Executive Committee elects:

A Vice President, an Honorary Treasurer and an Honorary Secretary.

The membership elects at annual Convention fourteen (14) representatives of the member Boards of Management from:

City and County of Dublin	3
Rest of Leinster	3
Ulster	2
Munster	3
Connacht	2
Comprehensive Schools	2

The National Executive Co-opts 2 from the membership.

The Past President is also an ex- officio member of the Executive for 1 year after he/she steps down from the Presidency of ACCS.

### **The Work of ACCS**

The work of the Association covers three main areas

- Advice and support to schools/industrial relations
- National issues – Negotiation/Policy setting and implementation
- Research, development and training

The work of the Association is varied and involves a multiplicity of issues at both the level of macro issues at a national level and micro issues that are school specific. There is also a large degree of inter connectivity between both. An issue that is particular to an individual school may have as its consequence implications for all schools nationally.

The work of the full-time Secretariat of ACCS is directed by decisions arising from

- Annual Convention
- Regular meetings of the Executive Committee
- Meetings of the Officers of ACCS
- Meetings of the ACCS Sub-committees
- ACCS delegations and deputations
- Working Parties/Task Groups established for particular tasks/purposes
- The ACCS Training and School Management Development Initiatives (In-service)
- Meetings at school, area and business level
- ACCS Special Education Conferences
- ACCS Regional meetings

The day-to-day administration of ACCS is carried out by a full-time Secretariat operating from 10H Centrepoint Business Park, Oak Drive, Dublin 12, and which entails:

General Secretary:	Mr. Ciarán Flynn
Assistant General Secretary	Mr. Liam Ryder
	Mr. Tommy Flynn
Human Resources Manager	Ms. Fiona Alcock
Administrative Officer	Ms. Susan Cunniffe
Clerical Officer	Ms. Debbie Riordan

## Services

The ACCS Head Office is the administrative centre through which its General Secretary and Secretariat acts on behalf of its membership. It is the administrative centre for information, research, action and advice.

The service provided by the ACCS office staff constitutes a key link with all of the schools within our network. The following is a brief outline of the ongoing service provided by the Secretariat to member Boards of Management as well as to the ACCS Executive and its constituent Sub-committees/Working parties/Task forces. These services are in turn available to all the affiliated members of ACCS and to the general public when and where appropriate and requested.

Secretariat services:

- Telephone queries
- Consultations
- Deputations to the DES
- Communications with the Education Partners
- Resolution of Industrial Relations issues/conflict
- Management Training and Development Programmes
- Secretariat to the Executive and Sub-committees of ACCS
- Representation of ACCS on various committees
- Dissemination of procured advice as required e.g. legal opinion, IBEC

Issues of broad consequence may also impact on each school in its practical day-to-day application and operation. Members of the Secretariat deal with a multiplicity of different issues during the average day relating to schools. However, regardless of the query the Secretariat of ACCS endeavours to offer a friendly informative and professional service with appropriate guidance and support to the membership as needs dictate.

ACCS also:

- represents, protects and actively promotes the interests of the members of the Association and the general membership within the education sector in Ireland
- informs, assists and directs the membership of ACCS in responding to and implementing the provisions set down in legislation relevant to the Post-primary sector
- contributes by way of negotiation, consultation and submission to the drafting and publication of legislation which promotes the interests and enhances the development of the Post-primary education sector
- promotes the development and implementation of appropriate education and training policies for the sector
- conducts research, develops and delivers appropriate education and training programmes targeted at the general membership within the sector. This is largely achieved through the delivery of national/regional training and developmental seminars relevant to the needs of the Community and Comprehensive Schools education sector
- promotes the interests of Community and Comprehensive Schools through publicity, public relations and the dissemination of publications, newsletters etc. as the need arises.

## **Representation**

ACCS is represented on the following education related commissions/initiatives:

- NCCA (Council & circa. 45 Syllabus Committees)
- NCCA Junior Cycle Review Committee
- NCCA Senior Cycle Review Committee
- NEPS National Educational Psychological Service
- Traveller Education Advisory Committee (DES)
- CROSSCARE, Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin (Traveller education)
- Employee Assistance Steering Committee
- Blackrock Education Centre
- Drumcondra Education Centre
- Teaching Council
- National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
- National Centre for Guidance in Education Forum (NCGE)
- ISSU Management Advisory Committee Second Level Schools
- Socrates Advisory Committee
- Commission on School Accommodation (CSA)
- School Development Planning Initiative (DES)
- Leadership Development in Schools (LDS)
- Teachers Conciliation Council TCC

**A list of Community and Comprehensive Schools and contact details are available on the Association website at [www.accs.ie](http://www.accs.ie).**