



Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheacha

Introduction

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) is the national representative Association for the 96 Community and Comprehensive post-primary schools nationwide. Founded on the 26th 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 and is a party to the Teachers' Conciliation Council (TCC).

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) is a Company Limited by Guarantee with registered charitable 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.

your school, your community

The ACCS Strategic Plan

The Association has developed a Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 and a successor for 2017-2020 to formalise the strategic direction of the organisation and will aim to build on the work carried out by the ACCS since its inception. The project was completed with active participation from all constituent members and external stakeholders. The strategic review was carried out by ACCS in conjunction with Newmarket Consulting. The Plan has led to the development of a Vision, Mission and prioritised Strategic Objectives for ACCS. The renewed Vision and Identity of ACCS developed through this process is outlined below.

Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Following a review, the Executive adopted a successor to the Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016. The Executive identified three key strands in the ACCS Strategic Plan 2017-2020. These are:

1. Shaping the future by influencing and managing change
2. Continue to embed and develop governance Structures in Community and Comprehensive Schools
3. Managing the Evolution of ACCS and promoting the Community and Comprehensive School Sector

Clear actions have been identified for each strand and will be reviewed at regular intervals by the ACCS Executive.

ACCS Vision for Education

The ACCS believes that we deliver a model of the school for the future because we continue to pioneer educational innovation and best practice in a caring and responsive environment, led by local autonomous Boards of Management.

Vision Statement

The ACCS's Vision is to lead and support Boards of Management to enable schools to provide equal access to a comprehensive, co-educational, community-based, multi-denominational education. In doing so it aims to contribute towards a just and caring society.

Outcomes

In achieving our Vision, we see the following outcomes being delivered for each key stakeholder.

Students

Students have the opportunity to avail of a broad and balanced education that prepares them to actively participate in their next life stage.

We will achieve this through:

- Provision of a comprehensive curriculum
- Creation of a positive and inclusive learning environment
- Encouraging active engagement with their teachers and fellow students
- Focussing on the development of each individual student
- Equipping students with key life skills through an education that is appropriate to their needs

Parents

Parents trust that their children are safe in a local education environment where their individuality is recognised and nurtured.

We will achieve this through:

- Encouraging parents to play an active role in their child's education
- Building up trust and co-operation with teachers and school management
- Cooperating with Parents Associations locally and nationally
- Operating an all-inclusive enrolment policy
- Looking after students within the local community area

School Management

School management are active and innovative leaders of collaborative learning, encouraging students and teachers to engage in the school as a professional learning community.

We will achieve this through:

- Encouragement of a model of distributive leadership
- Motivation of staff to become a key inspirational force
- Supporting management to achieve their objectives
- Providing a comprehensive programme of Continuous Professional Development
- Fostering commitment to diversity of learning

Teachers

Teachers are facilitated to pursue a progressive career path, and are involved in positive relationships with students and other teachers to enhance learning. We will achieve this through:

- Fostering a culture of leadership and devolved responsibility
- Assisting teachers to develop active and engaging learning

environments, based on relationship building and partnership

- Developing teachers' career paths through access to career-long Continuous Professional Development
- Empowering teachers to be responsive to change

Values

Our Vision for Education and outcomes are underpinned by the ACCS's values of:

- An understanding of Community-based, Comprehensive education for all
- A commitment to sector-wide, partnership approaches
- A commitment to innovate and to disseminate good practice in our schools
- A commitment to use resources as efficiently and as effectively as possible

This Vision is supported by the 2020 PPEF Vision for Education, and will be delivered in collaboration with our partners in education.

Identity of Community and Comprehensive Schools

The core tenet of Community and Comprehensive Schools, that differentiate Community and Comprehensive Schools from other schools models in Ireland, are as follows:

- Community and Comprehensive Schools pioneered the delivery of an innovative model that continues to combine comprehensive, co-educational, multid denominational and accessible education for all in the community. This is a model that other schools have been moving towards in more recent times and a model that aligns with education policy.
- Community and Comprehensive Schools have a tried and tested model, and, as such, are in a position to provide learning and best practice examples in terms of the current principles on which education policy is based and can provide guidance and evidence of putting policy into practice.
- Due to the multid denominational and comprehensive nature of the Community and Comprehensive

Schools model, the model is complementary to all other schools models in Ireland (including religious, vocational and multi-denominational models), positioning the Community and Comprehensive Schools model as the ideal partners in education for all other models.

- Due to the accessibility and community-based nature of the Community and Comprehensive Schools model, students attending Community and Comprehensive Schools are genuinely reflective of the diversity of their communities.
- Due to the local autonomy of the governance structures, which allow for collective decision making on Boards of Community and Comprehensive Schools, fiscal and governance decisions are made based on the needs of the school in a transparent and accountable manner, and reported to the Joint Trustees and the Department of Education and Skills.

Identity of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)

The ACCS, as the management body for Community and Comprehensive Schools, reflects the differentiating factors above in providing its services to the Boards of Management and Principals in Community and Comprehensive Schools, in that it also:

- Provides a model of experienced partnership working with diverse schools/stakeholders
- Delivers a comprehensive range of supports to the Boards
- It is very closely aligned with its membership base in terms of level of contact and communication and is always accessible to Principals and Boards of Management
- Develops and supports a strong community of Board members from its Community and Comprehensive Schools around Ireland
- The directly elected Executive, as the decision-making function of the ACCS, is representative of the diversity of ACCS schools, their regions and their Boards of Management

History of Community and Comprehensive Schools

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. 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 today, 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 School system at that time 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 the provision of 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 22nd and 23rd 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 charitable status from the Irish Revenue Commissioners (CHY 8692).

The Association was established to:

- (a) facilitate and assist member Boards in the execution of their responsibilities,
- (b) act as a representative and negotiating body on behalf of all member Boards or, on request, on behalf of an individual member Board,
- (c) co-operate with, or enter into agreement with any other bodies having similar objectives on a general basis or in relation to particular issues,
- (d) 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 Committee (Board of Directors).

The President is elected by the

members at the Annual Convention. The Executive Committee comprises a maximum of nineteen (19) members, including the President.

The Executive Committee elects:

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

The membership elects at Annual Convention fifteen (15) 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 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 both at national and individual school level. 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 ACCS Sub-committees
- ACCS delegations and deputations
- Task Groups established for a particular task/purpose
- The ACCS Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPDP)
- Meetings at school, area and national 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 currently includes a General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Director of Human Resources, Director of ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit, Data Protection Advisor, Senior Administrator, Clerical Assistants, Garda Vetting Administrator and Web & IT Support Officer.

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/Task Groups. 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
- Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPD)
- 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, HR advice and support

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 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 many DES and national education related bodies such as The Teachers Conciliation Council (TCC), the NCCA, the Teaching Council and is accepted by the DES as a full partner in all matters relating to second level education.

A list of Community and Comprehensive Schools and our contact details are available on our website at www.accs.ie. If you wish to find out more about ACCS, then please contact:

Mr. John Irwin,
General Secretary, ACCS,
10H Centrepoint Business Park,
Oak Drive, Dublin 12.

Tel: 01 460 1150 Fax: 01 460 1203
E-mail: office@accs.ie
Website: www.accs.ie



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