

Appendix 10

ACCS Policy Objectives – revised and updated November 2019

ACCS Policy Statement

All ACCS policy is formulated pursuant to the main objectives for which the Association is established and as set out in its Articles of Association, namely:

1. To contribute with every means at its disposal to the advancement of education.
2. To advance and develop the concept of broad comprehensive curricula as enshrined in the deeds of the schools.
3. To advance and develop the wider “community” concept of the schools.

Association policy is formulated by its members at annual convention and implemented by its executive and secretariat in accordance with procedures set out in its Articles of Management, the schools’ Deeds of Trust and relevant legislation.

This current document sets out the established policy of the Association in a number of areas together with policy objectives currently being pursued.

Patronage/Trusteeship of Schools

ACCS is fully committed to the model of joint patronage as provided for in Section 8 (5) of The Education Act 1998. To this end the Association has supported the establishment of the Association of Joint Patrons of Community and Comprehensive Schools, AJP, to coordinate the views of Trustee interests and to communicate with the DES and other partners in education on their behalf. The AJP is a successor organisation to the National Trustee Forum.

The Association continues to promote the development of further Greenfield/Amalgamated Community Schools and looks forward to the opening of a new Community School in Ennistymon, Co. Clare.

Current policy objectives/initiatives:

1. To co-operate fully with the DES revision and updating of the Community School Deed of Trust.
2. To support the involvement of other bodies, such as Educate Together and an Foras Pátrúnachta in the Community School model of joint Trusteeship.

There are two Community Schools under the joint trusteeship of an ETB and Educate Together. ACCS will continue to support the future development of such schools. Further provision is sought for the provision of appropriate facilities to support the establishment of new schools and/or the amalgamation of existing schools.

Education Provision, Special Educational Needs, Examinations

ACCS is committed to the provision in each Community and Comprehensive School of a comprehensive curriculum providing for the needs of all pupils within its designated area. In particular, Association policy seeks the provision of adequate facilities for pupils with Special Educational Needs. The Association promotes the policy that all schools in receipt of state support, both fee paying and non-fee paying should meet their obligations to be inclusive and to accept a fair and proportionate share of special needs students and students from less privileged socio-economic and educational background.

To this end the Association cooperates with the work and the policies enunciated by appropriate state bodies TUSLA, NCSE, NCCA, SEC, TC etc. The Association is fully supportive of the DEIS school concept provided that appropriate resources are available for its implementation. ACCS welcomes the new model of allocation of Special Education Needs posts to schools and the School Inclusion Model announced by Minister McHugh in March 2019.

In particular the Association seeks:

- To seek from the DES the creation of a ‘Coordinator of Special Needs’ Post of Responsibility for schools that have students in receipt of special needs support.

ACCS is fully supportive of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015), which outlines the key educational changes that the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is putting in place for young people in the first three years of their post-primary education and

which incorporates a shared understanding of how teaching, learning and assessment practices should evolve to support the delivery of a quality, inclusive and relevant education that will meet the needs of Junior Cycle.

ACCS welcomes the review of Senior Cycle being undertaken by the NCCA on behalf of the DES. It recognises that this review offers an opportunity to generate a shared vision for Senior Cycle and a strong base from which to shape a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners for years to come.

In promoting education as the infrastructure on which Ireland's economic future depends, ACCS, supports the vision of the DES Action Plan for Education which seeks to provide dedicated professional support to teachers to support the implementation of curricular change and Department policy (Goal 3, Action 46).

Current policy objectives/initiatives:

1. To call on the DES to consult directly with the school management bodies to ensure that the implications of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 are fair to students and operable for schools.
2. While respecting the right of parents to choose a school for their children, ACCS strongly encourages member schools that are geographically adjacent to each other to respect traditional catchment areas. Where such traditional catchment areas exist and where a dispute arises, ACCS will establish a mechanism to facilitate the resolution of such a dispute.
3. To seek from the DES a realistic review of ongoing financial support for the provision of ICT in schools so that the vision of embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment in Junior and Senior Cycle can be realised.

Teacher and SNA Allocations, Conditions of Service

ACCS is committed to working actively with other management bodies to seek a restoration of the level of teacher and SNA allocations which applied in 2009 prior to the introduction of economy measures i.e.:

- A general teacher allocation of 18:1
- Particular provisions for DEIS designated schools.

It remains within ACCS policy to seek:

- a further reduction in the Pupil Teacher Ratio to 16:1
- the provision of an ex-quota Home School Community Liaison Officer in all 2nd Level Schools.

The Association particularly seeks measures to address the shortage of qualified teachers in an increasing number of subject areas and, in particular "go mbeadh dóthain múinteoirí ar fáil chun múineadh tré mheán na Gaeilge".

Conditions of service of teaching staff are governed by agreements entered into between ACCS and Teacher Unions which are contained on the ACCS website. These agreements are subject to regular review between the parties involved. In 2019 an agreed Dignity at Work Policy was launched accompanied by an in-service programme to assist schools with the implementation of the new policy.

The conditions of service and contractual obligations of SNA's arising from the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement have been agreed and set out in DES Circular Letter 71/2011. The appointment procedures for the appointment of SNAs are as set out in DES CL 51/2019. Current salaries payable to Special Needs Assistants as and from 1st September 2019 are set out in DES CL 46/2019.

Current Policy objectives/initiatives:

1. The ACCS acknowledges the current efforts that the Department of Education and Skills are making in relation to teacher supply. These efforts are still not meeting the present demand for qualified teachers. ACCS will continue to engage in a positive manner to promote initiatives addressing teacher supply.
2. To ask the Department of Education and Skills to introduce a common pay scale for all teachers in order to encourage quality graduates into the teaching profession.
3. Iarann an rún seo ar Chumann na scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheach (ACCS) cás ar Leith a dhéanamh leis an Roinn Oideachais agus scileanna chun go mbeidh archumas scoileanna beaga múinteoirí buan a ligean ar saoire sos gairme.
4. To seek from the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education and Skills the maintenance of the existing provision of educational supports and the visiting teacher service for the blind/visually impaired and deaf/hard of hearing students. In this regard ACCS welcomes the School Inclusion Model and associated supports for students and schools.

5. That the Teaching Council provide appropriate registration for students in initial teacher education to enable them to undertake paid substitution in their placement school.
6. That ACCS asks the Department of Education and Skills to consider the consequences of a two-year Postgraduate qualification programme that is creating problems for schools and teacher supply.
7. To seek engagement on the Student and Parent Charter with a particular focus on developing a fair and operable grievance procedure to replace existing codes of practice for processing parental/guardian or students (18 years or older) against teachers.

School Management and Posts of Responsibility

CL 0003/2018 on Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools, in the context of commencement of the restoration of posts, sets out a leadership and management framework for posts in recognised post-primary schools. The revised processes introduce a new Leadership Framework in line with best practice as set out in 'LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOLS 2016 – A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools'.

Current policy objectives/initiatives:

1. While acknowledging and welcoming the allocation of additional Deputy Principals to post-primary schools based on student enrolment numbers, ACCS now pursues and negotiates the allocation of an additional Deputy Principal to all DEIS schools regardless of student enrolment numbers.
2. Within the context of establishing strong and effective leadership teams in schools, the continuation of extensive curricular reform and the focus on wellbeing in school communities, ACCS asks the DES to review the scheduling and pacing of the introduction of initiatives into the system.
3. That the ACCS would ask the DES to abolish the requirements to spend 84 days in an acting up role before the acting up allowance is paid.

Administration, Finance, Buildings and Equipment

A Governance Manual for Community and Comprehensive Schools has been developed by the Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with ACCS and the State Claims Agency. It provides guidance for Boards of Management and Principals as well as the staff of the Department in the management of our Community and Comprehensive Schools. The Manual, which is applicable to all areas of the Schools' activities, became effective from 1st September 2016. The Governance Manual now requires immediate review and update in light of recent changes in Child Protection, Financial Governance and Data Protection requirements.

The Manual is published in full on the ACCS website but key areas of this Department of Education and Skills publication are now out of date.

ACCS fully recognises the special role of ancillary staff - Secretarial, Caretaking, Cleaning and other supports – in the efficient operation of our schools. To this end the Association is engaged with DES and with appropriate Trade Unions to seek the immediate lifting of the moratorium on ancillary staff appointments and to ensure that conditions of service and remuneration commensurate with their role are maintained and improved where required. ACCS acknowledges the alleviation measures announced by Minister McHugh at the ACCS Convention 2019 and the further alleviations announced in the recent Budget to be implemented in September 2020. It is essential this programme of alleviation continues to ensure the supports required to deliver services to learners are adequate.

Agreed grievance and complaint procedures are in place and are published in the ACCS Publications section under ACCS Agreement on the ACCS website, www.accs.ie. These procedures are subject to regular review by the Association.

Current policy objectives/initiatives:

- 1) Due to an improvement in the Economy, the Government has lifted the moratorium on some appointments and promotions within the DES. ACCS welcomes the recent alleviations on appointments of Administration Staff and Caretakers and will continue to seek a full restoration of these services. The absence of adequate clerical and maintenance staff is putting an undue burden on schools which makes it more and more difficult for the school to fulfil its administrative functions and maintenance obligations and meet the needs of staff, students and parents.
- 2) ACCS works on behalf of schools seeking funding from the Sports Capital Programme and engages with relevant state agencies to ensure equality of access to Lottery funding for Community and Comprehensive schools.
- 3) To seek from the DES an urgent review of the embargo in replacing the second Caretaker in the case of retirement. Since many Community Schools are open for long hours with afterschool activities, it is unsustainable to have just one caretaker attempting to meet the needs

of the school. This review should involve consultation with the Health & Safety Authority and the State Claims Agency. ACCS welcomes the partial alleviation for the employment of a second caretaker in schools within excess of 700 students.

Adult Education

ACCS continues to promote Community and Comprehensive Schools as centres of Adult and Community Education. To this end the Association supports the work of NACED – The National Association of Community Education Directors.

Current policy objectives/initiatives:

1. ACCS welcomes the commencement of the restoration of posts of responsibility in schools including the post of Adult Education Director and API and APII in Community and Comprehensive Schools.
2. To seek the provision of funding for Adult and Community Education programmes in Community and Comprehensive Schools which relate to Adult Literacy and the alleviation of social disadvantage.

ACCS Further Supports

ACCS is committed to providing the broadest range of supports to member schools. In recent years ACCS has added to these services with the addition of:

1. School Buildings Advisor, Jim Twohig
2. Data Protection Advisor, Hilary Treacy
3. Further Education Advisor, Catherine O'Sullivan.

All are available to schools for individual visitations as well as developing policies and materials for all schools. ACCS wish to acknowledge the funding of the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS in supporting these additional services.

ACCS will continue to work closely with other support services engaged in advising Community and Comprehensive Schools:

- The State Claims Agency, SCA
- The School Procurement Unit, SPU
- The Financial Support Services Unit, FSSU