**Appendix 6:** Trustees/patrons’ Interests at National Level

The Minister for Education is required by the Education Act to consult with various stakeholders, including patrons, in the education system. The Act it is stated that:

# The Minister shall make all reasonable efforts to consult with patrons, national associations of parents, parents’ associations in schools, recognised school management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and such other persons who have a special interest in or knowledge of matters relating to education, including persons or groups of persons who have a special interest in, or experience of, the education of students with special educational needs, as the Minister considers appropriate. [Education Act 1998, Part I, Section 7(4) (b)]

The process of consulting with patrons, among others, is referred to in other sections of the Act, including:

Section 6(g) Special needs

Section 23(1) The procedures for appointment of principals. Section 25 The length of the school year, week, day Section 30 (1) Curriculum

Section 32 (1) Educational disadvantage

Section 33 Regulations for the purpose of giving effect to the Act

Consultation with trustees/patrons is also referred to in the Section of the Act relating to the Inspectorate:

# An Inspector, including the Chief Inspector, shall carry out his or her functions in accordance with such procedures as may be determined by the Minister from time to time, following consultation with patrons, school management organisations, recognised trade unions, and staff associations representing teachers and such other persons as the Minister considers appropriate, and such directions as may be given by the Minister from time to time.

[Education Act 1998, Part III, Section 13(8)]

Part III, Section 13 (3)(a)(i) of the Education Act refers to the function of the Inspector to:

*Visit recognised schools and centres for education on the initiative of the Inspectorate, and, following consultation with the board, patrons, parents of students and teachers, as appropriate*.

The original guidelines written in 2004 proposed that a structure be established whereby trustees/patrons could be consulted on a national level. Since the Education Act

clearly states that the trustees/patrons are to be consulted on a wide range of issues it recommended that a National Trustees/Patrons Forum be established to enable the views of trustees/patrons in Community Schools to be articulated and communicated to the DE and other agencies. Details regarding the functions, composition and representative

make-up of the National trustees/patrons Forum were finalised following consultation with the appropriate nominating trustees/patrons agencies. ACCS had a secretarial role in convening the National Trustee Forum.

The Guidelines of 2004 also recommended that the DE make available to the National Trustees Forum a copy of its register of trustees/patrons database to assist the Forum in executing its responsibilities to its membership.

## The National Trustee Forum:

The Inaugural Meeting of the ACCS National Trustee Forum was held in the ACCS

offices at 10H Centrepoint, Dublin 12 on July 30th, 2007, and Monsignor Jim Cassin, Episcopal Commission was appointed Chairperson of the group. This meeting endorsed the importance of trusteeship as enshrined in the Deed of Trust and highlighted the need to develop this educational partnership more fully.

# The ACCS booklet “Guidelines on the Role of Trustees in Community and Comprehensive Schools” was acknowledged as very important to trustees in the sector and that much of the work of the NTF would be to ensure that all trustees would be made aware of the contents. Dissemination of best practice in relation to trusteeship would be a vital part of the work of the NTF.

(Extract from the minutes of the meeting 2007)

The first national conference of the NTF was held on May 13th, 2008, in the Mullingar

Park Hotel.

## The Association of Joint Patrons (AJP):

In 2019 the NTF was replaced by the Association of Joint Patrons of Community and Comprehensive Schools, (AJPCCS) shortened to the Association of Joint Patrons (AJP). In February 2019 at its first AGM, in the Mullingar Park Hotel, the Constitution of this new Association was adopted.

The main object for which the body is established is to address the concerns of trustees/ patrons and to promote best operational practice in the exercise of patronage/trusteeship in Community and Comprehensive Schools.

## Other objects include:

1. To develop coherence in the exercise of joint patronage, or where relevant single patronage, of Community and Comprehensive Schools in Ireland.
2. To provide a means by which joint patrons can be consulted and supported at national level.
3. To enable the views of joint patrons to be articulated and communicated to the Department of Education and Skills and other relevant agencies.

## The trustees/patrons of Community and Comprehensive Schools are represented on the AJP by the following organisations:

**Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS):**

Catholic patrons of Community Schools are invited to join the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS). APTCS recognises the multi-denominational, joint patronage character of community schools and supports the patrons in exercising it functions in this context.

APTCS has a particular role in assisting religious patrons in working together with the joint patron to determine, support and develop the characteristic spirit of the school taking account of the founding intentions and heritage of the school.

## The Irish Episcopal Conference:

The Irish Episcopal Conference is a body where Catholic Bishops in Ireland exercise together certain pastoral offices for Christ's faithful on the whole island of Ireland. The IEC in itself is not a patron body but all of its members are patrons of schools within their individual dioceses. Each Bishop exercises the role of patron within their individual dioceses.

To help it fulfil its aims more effectively, the IEC has established various Episcopal Commissions, including Catholic Education and Formation. The Council for Education comes under the Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education and Formation and articulates policy and vision for Catholic Education in Ireland, North and South, on behalf of the Episcopal Conference. It has responsibility for the forward planning necessary to ensure the best provision for Catholic Education in the country.

## Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI):

Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative association for its sixteen-member Education &amp; Training Boards (ETBs) and negotiates on behalf of the ETB sector at various forums within the education sector at national and international levels. Its mission is to lead and advance the continued development of education, training and youthwork in Ireland. ETBI is guided by the core values of excellence, care, equality, community, and respect. ETBI is not a patron body. However, Chief Executives of its member ETBs exercise the role of patron/trustee within their ETBs.

ETBs are the largest provider of state, co-educational, multi-denominational education in Ireland. As ETBs are public bodies, the ‘state’ schools under their remit have particular responsibilities in respect of the ‘common good’ in an increasingly diverse society. In line with these obligations, ETBs provide ‘co-educational’ education that includes the full diversity of gender identities in the community. ETBs also provide ‘multi-denominational’ education meaning that students of all religions and beliefs are treated equally. Therefore, the school environment and activities do not privilege any particular group over another whilst at the same time acknowledging and facilitating students of all religions and beliefs.

## General Synod of Education of the Church of Ireland:

The General Synod of Education of the Church of Ireland represents the patron interest

of the Church of Ireland in five Comprehensive Schools, Ashton School, East Glendalough,

Mount Temple, Newpark Comprehensive and the Royal and Prior.

## Educate Together:

Educate Together is a school patron and an educational charity whose activities are regulated by its Constitution and the Companies and Charities Acts. It has its roots in the Dalkey School Project National School, which was founded in 1978. Educate Together

is a membership organisation with more than 100 primary and post-primary schools in its membership nationally. In 2014 Educate Together and Meath Louth ETB opened Ballymakenny College. Celbridge Community School opened in 2015 with the joint patronage of Educate Together and Kildare Wicklow ETB.