

Appendix 12

ACCS Policy Objectives – revised and updated January 2018

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 of schools involving local public representation (ETB) together with established religious organisations. To this end the Association has supported the establishment of a National Trustee Forum for Community and Comprehensive Schools to coordinate the views of Trustee interests and to communicate with the DES and other partners in education on their behalf.

The Association continues to promote the development of further Greenfield/Amalgamated Community Schools.

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 Patrúnachta in the Community School model of joint Trusteeship.

There are two new Community Schools under the joint trusteeship of an ETB and Educate Together. ACCS will continue to support the future development of such 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 etc. The Association is fully supportive of the DEIS school concept provided that appropriate resources are available for its implementation and that the recent withdrawal of resource provision for students with Special Educational Needs and for schools within the DEIS Programme are re-instated at an early date.

In particular the Association seeks:

- that the number of Psychological Assessments allocated to schools should depend on the number of Special Needs Pupils enrolled and not on the total number of pupils.
- the automatic transfer of Special Needs staffing concessions for individual students from Primary to Post-Primary schools.
- 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.
- that the DES provide adequate resources for the teaching of English to international students in our schools.

- the restoration of resource teaching hours for Traveller students in second level schools.

ACCS is fully supportive of the current DES initiatives to reform the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle curricula and to promote efforts to address issues arising from reports on the standards of student Literacy and Numeracy in our schools.

ACCS is strongly opposed to the current cutbacks in educational provision and is seeking in every way possible to alleviate their effects and to promote education as the infrastructure on which Ireland's economic future depends.

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 proposed School Admission Bill 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 IT in schools so that it is sustainable, not sporadic. The advent of Junior Cycle reform requires such a provision urgently.

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 recent economy measures i.e.:

- A general teacher allocation of 18:1
- Provision for ex quota posts of Principal, Deputy Principal, Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counsellor.
- Particular provisions for DEIS designated school.
- Provision of Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants.

It remains within ACCS policy to seek:

- a further reduction in the Pupil Teacher Ratio to 16:1.
- the provision of ex quota positions of Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellor in all schools irrespective of size.
- 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 particular subject areas and, in particular "go mbeadh dóthain múinteoirí ar fáil chun múineadh tré mheán na Gaeilge". Further provision is sought for the provision of appropriate facilities to support the establishment of new schools and/or the amalgamation of existing schools.

Conditions of service of teaching staff are governed by agreements entered into between ACCS and Teacher unions which are contained in the Board of Management handbook Tagairt and on the ACCS website. These agreements are subject to regular review between the parties involved.

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 implementation of this agreement is continually monitored by ACCS.

Current Policy objectives/initiatives

1. Iarann an rún seo ar Chumann na scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheach (ACCS) cás ar Leith a dhéanamh leis an Roinn Oideachais agus scoileanna chun go mbeidh archumas scoileanna beaga múinteoirí buan a ligean ar saoire sos gairme.
2. To seek the allocation of Guidance Counselling posts to all schools on an ex quota basis particularly in light of the increasing issues, including mental health issues, which young people are presenting with in schools.
3. 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.
4. That the Teaching Council provide appropriate registration for students in initial teacher education to enable them to undertake paid substitution in their placement school.
5. 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.

School Management and Posts of Responsibility

Responsibility for the day to day Management of the school rests with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Middle Management structure as provided by Posts of Responsibility. The existing moratorium on appointments to Posts of Responsibility has seriously affected the workload and effectiveness of those with this responsibility.

For this reason it is ACCS policy to seek reform of the existing Post of Responsibility Structures to meet the changing circumstances in schools and to protect Senior Management from work overload arising from such change.

Current policy objectives/initiatives

- 1) To ask the Department of Education and Skills to take on board all the elements of the document “A proposal for Management Structures for Post-Primary Schools” as a matter of urgency. Our schools need a vibrant and effective middle management structure and are very concerned about the continuing adverse effects of the moratorium on posts of responsibility in our schools.
- 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) To seek the immediate introduction of meaningful supports for school management and a re-evaluation by the Department of Education and Skills of the implementation of all current school initiatives in the context of essential supports for Principals to enable them to administer and manage our schools, to lead teaching and learning and to sustain their wellbeing.
- 4) ACCS undertakes:
 - i) to audit the ‘Initiatives’, tasks and responsibilities devolved to schools and the level of implementation possible of these initiatives within existing resources.
 - ii) to research the impact on the wellbeing of Principals of continuous initiatives by the Department of Education & Skills without adequate management resources and advise the relevant bodies.
- 5) Promote with the DES full and careful consideration of the Middle Management proposals presented jointly by ACCS and JMB. We believe and that that the proposals are realistic requirements to enable Principals to take on their role as leaders of teaching and learning.
- 6) To seek the publication of a memorandum from the Minister of Education & Skills, the Secretary General of the Department and the Chief Inspector to all sections of the Department and Inspectorate stating to all concerned that, in their dealings with schools, they take cognizance of the lack of appropriate middle management structures.
- 7) To seek from the DES that the directive whereby neither Principals nor Deputy Principals can be replaced if absent for up to three months be rescinded.
- 8) 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.
- 9) To seek the automatic sanction for appointment to vacant posts of Programme Co-ordinator.
- 10) To seek the revision of the terms of the current moratorium on appointments of Posts of Responsibilities, in schools to include the replacement of Assistant Principal Posts, where the loss of such a post occurs as a result of an appointment to a Deputy Principal or Principal Post.
- 11) To seek an urgent review of the agreed Code of Practice for Processing Complaints made by Parents/Guardians or Students (18yrs or older) against a Teacher with the various bodies involved.

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 Manual is published in full on the ACCS website.

ACCS fully recognizes 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.

Agreed grievance and complaint procedures are in place and are published in the Board of Management handbook Tagairt and on the ACCS website. These procedures are subject to regular review by the Association.

Current policy objectives/initiatives

- 1) 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.
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- 3) To seek from the Department of Education & Skills an urgent review of the provision of clerical, cleaning and caretaking allocations to our schools.
- 4) To requests from the Department of Education and Skills the provision of CPD for senior management and administrative staff to support the implementation of the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD).

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. To seek to ensure that the moratorium on public service promotions does not apply to the post of Adult Education Director 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.
3. To seek Assistant Principal posts in Adult Education be removed from the moratorium.