



accs

Association of Community  
and Comprehensive Schools

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail  
agus Cuimsitheacha

## 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’ Deed 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 and recognized educational organisations. To this end the Association has supported the establishment in ACCS of the Association of Joint Patrons (AJP) in Community and Comprehensive Schools to address concerns associated with the Patronage of Schools.

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

### ***Current policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. ACCS proposes to engage with the Department of Education and the relevant patrons to progress the inclusion of the Community School joint patronage model as a stated option when a new school or amalgamation is

being proposed in any area. They will seek the amendment of the patronage process to allow the designation of a Community School under joint patronage based on the expressed parental preferences and reflecting diversity of provision.

2. ACCS supports the involvement of other bodies, such as Educate Together and An Foras Patrúnachta in the Community School model of joint Trusteeship. In particular the ACCS Executive seeks to identify the reason(s) why Community or Comprehensive Schools have not been established under the two most recent patronage processes.
3. To prioritise the establishment of new Community and Comprehensive Schools through engagement with Patrons, the Department of Education and other relevant stakeholders and identify means of promoting the Community and Comprehensive School as a vibrant model for Irish Education.

There are currently two Community Schools under the joint trusteeship of an ETB and Educate Together. ACCS will continue to support the future development of such schools.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic**

ACCS is fully conscious of the effect of the recent Coronavirus Pandemic on the administration of schools and its effect on the health and safety of pupils and staff. The Association is pleased to note the re-opening of all schools which it considers essential for the future development of students.

ACCS is fully conscious of the need to prepare for a possible reoccurrence of the Pandemic and is consequently fully committed to the provision of necessary support for school management in the interpretation and administration of necessary measures to secure the health and safety of students and staff.

In particular:

- ACCS will take all necessary steps to ensure that adequate resources are provided by the DE to ensure the health and safety of students and staff in the course of their work.

- ACCS will work with educational partners to ensure the provision of adequate teacher substitution provision where required. The provision of substitution for Secretarial and Maintenance staff is equally essential.
- Into the future the ACCS CPD programme will be delivered through a blended programme of direct presentation and virtual webinar events.

### **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.

In particular the Association seeks:

- the creation of a 'Special Education Needs/Inclusion Coordinator Post for each school commensurate with the number of students in receipt of special needs support in the school.
- 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 in the school.
- the automatic transfer of Special Needs staffing concessions for individual students from Primary to Post-Primary schools.
- that the DE 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 recent reform of the Junior Cycle curriculum and continues to support the continuation of this reform programme to the Senior Cycle. The Association will continue 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. That the current vocational subject groupings for link modules at Leaving Certificate be reviewed to give a much wider application to enhance greater flexibility in terms of learning pathways.
2. To seek from the DE a realistic review of ongoing financial support for the provision of IT in schools so that it is sustainable, not sporadic. The implementation 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 economic 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 schools.
- 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 second 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.

ACCS, as a stakeholder representing Boards of Management of Community and Comprehensive Schools, has established agreed procedures in relevant areas with the appropriate unions representing staff interests. These agreements are subject to regular review between the parties involved.

As a post-primary stakeholder, ACCS is represented in the SNA forum facilitated by the Department of Education. This forum addresses employment issues and the interpretation of national agreements regarding SNAs where required.

***Current Policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. In light of the significant challenges being faced by schools recruiting teachers, the ACCS requests that the Department of Education continue to take urgent remedial action in relation to teacher supply.
2. To ask the Department of Education 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 the full alleviation of allocation of Guidance Counselling posts to all schools on an ex quota basis particularly in light of the increasing issues, including mental health issues, with which young people are presenting in schools.
5. To seek from the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education 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.
6. That the Teaching Council continue to provide appropriate registration for students in initial teacher education to enable them to undertake paid substitution in their placement school.
7. On the implementation of the School Community Charter to seek an urgent review of the agreed codes of practice for addressing parental and student grievances.

## **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. DES CL 0003/2018 sets out the role of, and appointments to, Leadership and Management Posts in Post-Primary Schools.

### ***Current policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. That ACCS request the Department of Education to explore the possibility of facilitating teachers being able to step back for a defined period from their post of responsibility. This may be a particularly attractive option to Job Sharing teachers but would be available to all post holders.
2. In the case where an Acting-Up AP1 or AP2 post holder is promoted to a permanent post, an order of merit can be used to determine the Acting Up position. (This motion was referred to the ACCS Executive for consideration)
3. To ask the Department of Education to place a moratorium on all business associated with Section 29 Appeals for the month of July in order to facilitate an appropriate uninterrupted holiday period for Principals.
4. 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.
5. That the ACCS would ask the DE to abolish the requirements to spend 84 days in an acting-up role before the acting-up allowance is paid.
6. That ACCS calls on the Department of Education to revise the current leadership and management arrangements to allow schools, when interviewing, to create an order of merit for AP1 or AP2 posts which would allow for the appointment of staff to such vacancies as they arise on a temporary basis during a given school year.

## **Administration, Finance, Buildings and Equipment**

A Governance Manual for Community and Comprehensive Schools was developed by the Department of Education in conjunction with ACCS and the State Claims Agency and became effective on the 1st September 2016.

The Manual is published in full on the ACCS website but is now in need of urgent revision.

ACCS fully recognises the special role of non-teaching staff - Secretarial, Caretaking, Cleaning and other supports – in the efficient operation of our schools. To this end the Association is engaged with the DE and with appropriate Trade Unions to seek the continued alleviation of the moratorium on Clerical Officer and Caretaking posts in Community and Comprehensive Schools.

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

***Current policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. ACCS is seeking a review of CL 0034/02 relating to incremental credit for Clerical Officers and Caretakers in Department approved posts. CL 0034/02 states that incremental credit is given for: Previous service in a similar grade in the civil service, local authority service, health service or other public bodies or agencies in Ireland or abroad. Schools are finding this too restrictive and would like to see this reviewed to take account of previous relevant experience for incremental credit purposes.
2. On behalf of Gaeltacht and Bi-Lingual Schools, ACCS engage with the relevant section(s) in the Department of Education to seek payment of an Irish and Bi-Lingual Grant. This grant is currently paid in Voluntary Secondary Schools as follows: Irish and Bi-Lingual Grants: €110.50 per pupil where all subjects are taught through Irish and €22 per pupil per subject where a maximum of four subjects are taught through Irish.
3. That ACCS seeks as a matter of urgency a significant increase in the level of remuneration for members of Selection Committees in Community and Comprehensive Schools and that travel and subsistence rates be paid to members of Selection Committees.
4. Given the huge change in role and responsibilities of Clerical Officers in the Community and Comprehensive sector, the lack of promotional opportunities and qualification allowance, that ACCS will seek immediate restructuring of the Grade level as a priority. ACCS will continue to negotiate with the DES to have a promotion pathway for our school Secretaries and a major review of their salaries.

5. ACCS seeks the continued alleviation to lift the moratorium on appointments of Administration Staff, Caretakers and Cleaners. The absence of adequate Clerical and Maintenance Staff is placing an undue burden on schools which makes it more and more challenging for the school to fulfil its administrative functions and maintenance obligations and meet the needs of staff, students and parents.
6. 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.
7. To seek from the Department of Education an urgent review of the provision of clerical, cleaning and caretaking allocations to our schools.

### **Further Education (FE)**

ACCS is fully committed to the provision of Further Education courses in Community and Comprehensive Schools. The Association has supported the establishment in ACCS of the Further Education Support Unit to represent Community and Comprehensive Schools involved in Further Education at a Macro Level with SOLAS, QQI, ETBI and DFHERIS and to support schools at local level.

#### ***Current policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. To develop templates, documentation, material and resources to support Community and Comprehensive Schools in the development and implementation of quality assured programmes, in particular with regard to QQI quality assurance and programme validation of shared curricula.
2. To request funding from SOLAS to ensure that adequate resources are available to all FE learners in Community and Comprehensive Schools and that operation cost concerning Re-engagement and Programme Validation can be met.
3. To engage with ETBI to ensure that all Post Leaving Certificate courses in Community and Comprehensive Schools are included in the FET to CAO project.

### **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.



Schools offering Self-Financing Part-Time Adult Education programmes may appoint teachers to posts of responsibility in accordance with Circulars 0046/00 and 0016/05.

***Current policy objectives/initiatives:***

1. The Further Education Support Unit on behalf of ACCS seeks to promote and support the hub and satellite centre model of QQI programme delivery and certification across Community and Comprehensive Schools involved in delivering Part-Time Adult Education Programmes.