



Oifig an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna
Office of the Minister for Education and Skills

Uas. Caoimhín Ó hEagra
General Secretary
An Foras Pátrúnachta
Block K3
Maynooth Business Park
Maynooth
Co Kildare

July 2016

Re: Patronage process for the establishment of a new primary school to serve the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 school planning area.

Dear Caoimhín,

I refer to your letter of 23 May last in relation to the recent announcement on the patronage of the new primary school to serve the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 school planning area and your request on behalf of An Foras Pátrúnachta that the decision be reviewed. I have noted the points outlined in your letter and I have reviewed the matter as requested.

A new school is required in the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 school planning area in order to meet a demographic need. The process to select the patron of the new school was conducted in a fair and transparent manner. Applicants were requested to submit parental preferences for their particular model of school from parents living within the school planning area.

I appreciate that An Foras Pátrúnachta submitted 361 valid parental preferences from within the school planning area and that this was a strong application. However, the level of parental preference for a school under the patronage of Educate Together was almost double that number at 622 valid parental preferences.

You will be aware that the Department plans school provision across a framework of 314 school planning areas in order to assess and meet changing demographic needs throughout the country. Of the 733 children in respect of whom a preference for an all-Irish school was collected in this instance, some 332 are in fact living outside of Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1, although the purpose of providing the school is to cater for the projected demographic growth within the area.

An Foras is very familiar with the operation of the patronage process and would have been aware that these preferences from outside the school planning area could not be counted. I appreciate that this is disappointing, particularly for parents whose expectations had been raised, but in the interests of fairness and transparency the school planning area boundary has to be adhered to under the published terms of the process for establishing new schools to meet demographic need.

I am aware that An Foras may have reservations about aspects of the operation of the process more generally and this is something I will be happy to discuss in the context of forthcoming meetings with the main patron bodies and other stakeholder groups.

The assessment report on this patronage process was submitted to the independent New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG) for consideration and review. In its report to me, the NSEG confirmed that the criteria for the process were applied in a fair and transparent manner to the applications received and that it was satisfied that the recommendations regarding patronage of the new schools were in accord with these requirements and criteria and gave due regard to the levels of parental demand demonstrated in the applications.

The Group also noted the strong level of demand for Irish medium education in the area and recommended that this should be kept under ongoing review in the context of ongoing demographic exercises. Nevertheless, the NSEG clearly recommended that patronage of the new school for Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 should be awarded to Educate Together. I accepted the NSEG's recommendation and I do not see any basis for overturning this decision.

Given that the demographic information available to the Department at this point indicates the need to establish one school, I am satisfied that in the circumstances the correct decision was made. My Department is focused on ensuring that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils living within that area who are seeking school places.

I have requested my officials to keep the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 area under on-going review to take into account updated child benefit data, enrolment data and the impact of ongoing and planned capacity increases in this and adjacent school planning areas.

With regard to all-Irish provision in this area, I note that there are three primary schools within the area providing education through the medium of Irish, namely Scoil Chaoimhín (RN 19831B) in Marlborough St, Gaelscoil Choláiste Mhuire (RN 19926M) in Parnell Square and Scoil Mobhí (RN 19395H) Glasnevin, Dublin 9.

I do understand that the announcement is a disappointment to your organisation at this point. However, as I indicated above, the demographics of this growing area will be kept under ongoing review with particular regard to the view expressed by the NSEG concerning the strong level of demand for Irish medium education in the area.

My thanks again for your kind congratulations on my appointment. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you well with the establishment and development of the new gaelscoil for Goatstown/Stillorgan, the patronage of which was successfully secured by An Foras under this process.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Bruton, TD
Minister for Education & Skills