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Chairpersons Foreword

I am very proud to have been Chairperson of National Parents Council Primary in 2004. Since the foundation of NPC in 1985 this has probably been one of the most exciting and challenging years. Let me explain why I say this. People are often wary of change, as the old saying goes 'If it's not broken don't fix it'. Well we all know that NPC while not broken needs to keep up with social and economic changes, including changes in the education system. We want to hold onto the values that we were set up for - to be the Voice of Parents on the ground for our children and for their education.

Over the last year, with a lot of hard work, we feel that we have achieved much in developing proposals for the modernisation of the organisation. Working against the odds and with limited resources we have designed what we hope will be a solid foundation for the future. I would like to express my gratitude to Anne Colgan, the Implementation Group, the CEO and all the Staff, present and past Executive members and especially the parents who have all worked tirelessly to bring us to where we are today.

We welcome the new Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004, the National Council for Special Education and the service of Special Education Needs Officers (SENOs).

We will continue to try to obtain smaller class sizes, full psychological services, special needs assistants for those needing them.

We want to be an equal and recognised partner in education. It is now recognised by Law that parents have a right to form parent associations in their schools and that school management has a responsibility to support this. Parents also have an important role in school planning and management and this partnership with teachers and boards can only enhance the quality of our children's education. We still haven't got a complaints procedure for parents as stated in the Education Act, 1998. We continue to seek a procedure that is equitable, effective and child centred.

We as parents are the primary educators of our children. Education can only be successful when parents are full partners at local, regional and national level. NPC was established to give parents a real voice in their children's education. I am proud that we have been heard and that our work is recognised and respected by the partners in Education.

Anita McCann
Chairperson of NPC

INTRODUCTION

NPC has worked hard over the past year on the development of proposals for modernisation of National Parents Council Primary.

We have again made the case that parental involvement shapes children's life chances, in a way that few other kinds of educational endeavour can. This has been the message of NPC since its inception.

The capacity of parents to influence educational outcomes for the better is not confined to middle-class, well educated parents. All the evidence points to the impact of the motivation and commitment of parents of all backgrounds. We just need flexible and responsive ways to invite all parents to engage. At this time, NPC is actively engaged, through its strategic planning process, in ensuring that ours is an organisation for all.

We continued sustained representation to the Department of Education and Science to make adequate funding available for the work of the organisation so that the staff can be remunerated at an adequate rate.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

Parents and NPC continue to be frustrated and deeply concerned at the continuing lack of certainty about access to resources for some of our most vulnerable children, those with special education needs.

Ombudsman for Children

NPC had sought an ombudsman for many years and had campaigned strongly through our membership of the Children's Rights Alliance since 1995. NPC had successfully sought that the work of schools and hospitals would be within the remit of the ombudsman. Emily Logan was appointed at the end of March 2004 following a selection

process, which included 15 young people between the ages of 11 and 18.

The first Ombudsman for Children was appointed in Norway in 1981. Trond Wagge the Norwegian Ombudsman was keynote speaker at NPC's ADC 2000.

There are now approximately 21 Ombudsmen for Children in Europe. The provisions of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child underpin the work of the Ombudsman. Ireland ratified the Convention in 1992. NPC subsequently endorsed the Convention at an ADC.

The United States of America is the only nation which has taken the decision not to ratify the Convention.

The Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 outlines the functions of the Ombudsman

- To investigate complaints made against public bodies, schools and hospitals
- To promote the rights and welfare of children without prejudice

The Ombudsman's Office is receiving queries about school related issues. Emily Logan has said that international experience suggests many complaints can be resolved without a formal investigation and it is her intention to aim to try to resolve issues in a similar way. Investigations relating to schools are concerned with Functions of Schools: Section 9 of the Education Act.

"The Office is in a set-up phase, which takes time to get right. We are developing the Office around the two main functions of complaints and promotion of rights. Central to the development of the Office is the participation of young people. There will be a youth advisory forum developed to work with the Ombudsman for Children on a long-term basis. It is a very exciting opportunity and I believe the post holds great potential for change." (Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children).

Whole School Evaluation (WSE)

NPC has long campaigned for a system of quality assurance for schools.

Through Whole School Evaluation, the inspectors from the Department of Education and Science carry out an evaluation of the quality of education being provided by a particular school. The work of the whole school, as a unit, is looked at, as well as the work of individual teachers. The team of inspectors evaluates the quality of:

- Teaching and learning
- School planning
- School management

Whole School Evaluation is replacing the old system of school inspection. The aim of the WSE process, which will normally involve a team of inspectors visiting a school, is to identify with school communities the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This information is used to assist the principal, the teachers and the board to develop and improve the quality of the education they provide for the children.

NPC successfully assured that the voice of parents will be heard in WSE.

The inspectorate will meet with elected members of the committee of the parent association in schools where the parent association is affiliated to NPC. If there is no parent association or where the association is not affiliated the inspectorate will consult with the parents' elected representatives on the board of management. The inspectorate is developing a questionnaire for a random sample of parents in larger schools and for parents in general in small schools.

Strategies are needed to help the parents, who are to meet with the inspectors, to consult widely with other parents in the school.

WSE will not include individual difficulties or complaints (there are other channels and procedures for pursuing these). However, the

parents' representatives could comment on policy issues including, how a policy was developed or how it is being implemented or reviewed (for example, behaviour issues, how complaints are dealt with, supervision).

While, for the time being at least, children will not be formally consulted as part of WSE, there will be a high level of engagement in the classroom between the inspector and the children.

All areas and aspects of primary school activity can be covered, for example

- Quality of school management
- Quality of school planning
- Quality of curriculum
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of support for pupils
- Quality of partnership, including the work of the parent association

Individuals will not be named or identified in the report. However, the report could comment on issues such as aspects of practice that need to be addressed, on inconsistencies in practice or on difficulties in classroom management. NPC believes strongly that the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the single most important influence on a child's school-based learning. Other mechanisms must be put in place, as a matter of urgency to assure the quality of the individual teacher.

Who in a school will get the report on Whole School Evaluation?

The chairperson of the board will receive a copy for the board and the principal will receive a copy for the teaching staff. *Parents should also be informed. The Department of Education supports the sharing of the report with parents. NPC is insisting that parent associations should by right receive a copy of the WSE report

*NOTE - The Education Act 1998 (Part 4 Section 20) provides for the establishment

by the board of procedures for informing parents on matters relating to the operation and performance of the school. The Information Commissioner has ruled that information on WSE can be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. At present a case against this ruling is pending in the Supreme Court.

Assessment in the primary school

There is ongoing discussion on the use of standardised assessment for all children (parents may have heard of the Drumcondra Tests or Micro-T tests). 94% of schools already use these tests, which are in the form of multiple-choice questions. NPC would like all children to have the benefit of assessment. The information gathered from the standardised assessment should help identify any difficulties at an early stage and allow teachers and parents to plan for the child. A teacher and a school will also be able to see if the class and the school are doing a good job for children in general. If properly planned for, a sample of these tests could be used by the Department to give them an overview of the national success of learning and teaching.

The results of standardised assessment provide information on how a child is performing by comparison with other children of their age group. Parents and teachers find this information very useful and the tests also provide a 'safety net' to make sure that learning difficulties are spotted.

In Ireland we need data on how our children are doing in school. We are the only OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) country that does not have such data. In order to have this data available we could build on existing practice whereby the Education Research Centre (ERC) compiles some data on a 3-4 yearly basis.

The Minister has referred the matter to the NCCA. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is the statutory body, which advises the Minister on what, and how children and young people will learn in school and how their learning will be assessed. NPC is represented on the NCCA.

Issues that parents will want to stress include:

- Literacy and numeracy are the building blocks for future learning. NPC is concerned that so many children are experiencing literacy difficulties and see the universal use of assessment as an important tool to make sure that every child has an education 'health check'
- The standardised tests will be PART of an overall assessment strategy, which includes teacher observation, teachers own classroom checks and tests, project work, the child's own view on how they are doing and a parents view
- The test results must be shared in a meaningful way with a child's parents
- The tests will not take an exam type format (i.e. there won't be a national day for the tests)
- Assessment tools should be developed to cover a child's whole learning experience in primary school. Areas such as problem-solving, team working, investigative skills as well as knowledge are all part of a child's learning experience.

Class size

National Parents Council Primary was disappointed that the Government's pledge to cut primary school class sizes to 20 by 2007 was not be met.

In the 2002 Programme for Government, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats said the target would be reached "progressively" over the following five-year period.

NPC asked why when the country has a more than healthy tax intake are we not bringing down the size of the infant classes and tackling the shameful situation of illiteracy. NPC stresses that ALL children, especially in the early years need to be in smaller classes. All children need to have the benefit of prevention, early intervention and support.

NPC stresses the priority of bringing down class size at a recent meeting with the Minister and has consulted with the INTO on ways of working together to make class size a real priority for Government.

Parents and the Primary school curriculum

Much has been written about the importance of the role of the parent in a child's education. It is widely recognised that there are significant educational, social and behavioural gains for children as a result of effective partnership between the home and the school. The curriculum acknowledges the central role of parents in the success of their children's learning, both at home and in school.

The booklet *Your Child's Learning* (1999) was developed by the NCCA in collaboration with NPC. The Department of Education and Science sent a copy for each family for schools to distribute locally. Feedback to NPC indicated that many parents had not received their copy. Feedback received by the NCCA and NPC indicated that parents would benefit from more interactive support which will provide user-friendly manner for parents, teachers and those engaged in supporting children's learning.

New interactive guidelines are now being developed by the NCCA in cooperation with NPC

Negotiations on the school year

NPC was not party to the negotiations, but has made representation over many years, and most recently in relation to the benchmarking arising from the Sustaining Progress agreement, on the rights of children to having 183 full school days of teaching time. Some progress has been made.

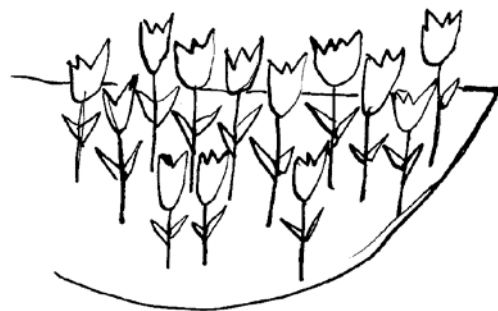
School staff meetings will now take place once a term, half inside and half outside school hours.

In each school year there will be one formal parent teacher meeting. The meeting will normally commence at 3.15 pm and end at 5.45. NPC made the case that this arrangement will often not suit the working parent and it has been acknowledged and accepted that, where necessary, parents will be offered a suitable and convenient time for a meeting.

NPC was party to discussions on school holidays and school breaks. Following agreement all primary schools now have the same holidays and breaks.

According to NPC feedback some schools have not fully implemented the package of modernisation.

Fionnuala Kilfeather
Chief Executive



MODERNISATION OF NPC: THE WORK OF THE IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

The plans for change

In January 2004, Parents endorsed a broad framework of proposals for change and development of NPC as an organisation. The changes adopted were as follows:

- (1) *Setting up two new categories of membership:*
 - (i) *Individual parent members and*
 - (ii) *Associate members*
- (2) *Changes to ways of working at county, local and regional level*
- (3) *Setting up a policy-making Council, which will also elect the board of parent directors*

The Implementation Group

EDC also passed a motion setting up the Implementation Group:

Conference endorses the setting up of an Implementation Group which will examine any changes needed to the Memorandum and Articles and Rules of NPC arising from these proposals. Draft changes will be put before EDC in 2005.

Membership

National Executive appointed the following members of the Implementation Group: Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Joan McLoughlin, Roseanne Rafferty, Ann Harmon, Monica Lunney, Fionnuala Kilfeather, Sean O’Riordan.

The work done

The Implementation Group began its work in May 2004. As a first step in the task of examining the changes needed to the Memorandum, Articles and Rules, the Implementation Group first looked in detail at how the broad proposals adopted by EDC would be made to work in practice. This was seen as essential first stage, on which work

on the Memorandum and Articles would then be based.

On completion of this stage, the Implementation Group provided a report of its advice to National Executive in November 2004. This initial report contained the proposals from the Implementation Group on the following:

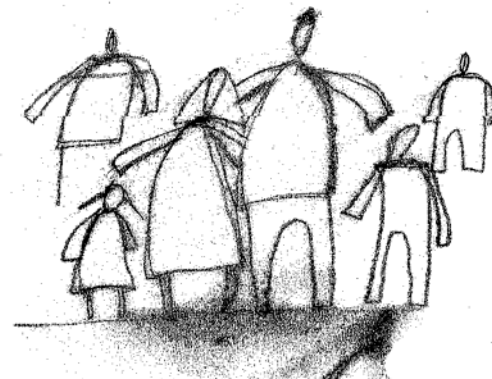
1. The new categories of membership
2. Ways of working at county level
3. The operation, membership, and election of Council
4. The operation, membership, and election of the Board
5. Finance and administration issues

The advice on these matters were finalised following detailed discussions and feedback from National Executive.

The National Executive then considered the final advice. Following intensive discussion the National Executive decided to accept many of the recommendations and to change others. The plan of the National Executive will be presented at ADC.

Next steps

Following the Annual Delegate Conference the next step to be undertaken will be to identify changes needed to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, to reflect the proposed changes in organisational structures.



NPC SERVICE - RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF PARENTS

The NPC service includes a help and information line and an advocacy service. The service provided by NPC is guided by the clear and expressed needs of parents. We assist parents who are experiencing difficulties in having problems resolved at school level. Where problems are not resolved we assist parents who wish to raise these problems with the Department of Education and Science, the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for Information or with other appropriate authorities.

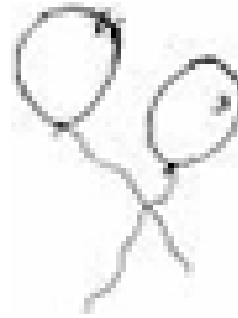
Demands on all aspects of the service have increased enormously over the years. We clearly need to expand our service for parents but this will not be possible without an increase in funding.

The NPC help and information service NPC Helpline

The NPC help and information line has received well over 1000 calls since the beginning of the school year in September. The helpline offers parents information about children's education and learning and helps parents who are experiencing difficulties to find good ways of having problems resolved. This will sometimes mean referring parents to other agencies such as the Ombudsman for Children or the National Educational Welfare Board. The Department of Education and Science refer many callers to NPC. The range of enquiries coming to the helpline is very wide. NPC Helpline Tel: 01-887 4477.

Advocacy service

The advocacy service is a service for parents who are taking or intend to take a formal complaint to the board of management of their child's school. A skilled, trained advocate can help a parent to prepare well for a hearing of their complaint and present their case clearly and effectively.



NPC TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2004

2004 has been another very busy year for the Training and Development Programme. We have continued to support parents in their children's education while promoting positive parental involvement with all the educational partners.

Workshops /Training for New Parent Associations

This year we held training for new parents associations in over 30 locations around the country. These sessions were very well attended and where the demand arose extra sessions were organised to accommodate needs. The aim of the training was to raise awareness of the importance of partnership in a school community. The objectives of the training were that participants would:

- Have a clear understanding of the role of the parent association as defined by the Education Act and how that relates to their school
- Explore why partnership benefits all
- Understand the role of the committee members

Workshop / Support Evening for Parent Representatives on Boards of Management

Board of Management training was also held in over 30 locations around the country. As with the Parent Association training these sessions were very well attended. The aim of the training was to review Parent Representatives perception of their role and their contribution to the board of the past year. The objectives were to:

- Examine the role and function of the BOM
- Be aware of the legislation that relates to schools and the implications of that legislation for board members
- Review what their school has done since the election of the new Board in relation to school policy and their involvement in it
- Be aware of key new measures that affect schools

The training was well attended by other board members. The feedback on both the parent association training and the board of management training was very positive.

Early Learning / Starting School Project

This project has to date been run as a pilot in 3 locations in Dublin. It is a new initiative for 2005 and will come on stream before the end of school year. The programme is aimed at parents of children from 0 to 5 years. Its aims are to look at how children learn, particularly how children learn through play and the importance of play in young children's development. The module is designed to be both a practical guide for parents in their children's development and a useful resource in preparing your child for school.

Relationship and Sexuality Education Workshops for Parents

The Training Programme received funding from Crisis Pregnancy to run relationship and sexuality education training for parents. The aim of this training was to help parents

in this area of their children's lives in conjunction with the school RSE Programme. To date the training has taken place in Donegal Town, Letterkenny, Mayo, Kildare, Sligo, Wexford x 2, and Dublin x 2. While feedback from this training was very positive it also highlighted the need parents have for ongoing support and training in this area. This year we have received additional funding from Crisis Pregnancy for 2005 and will be planning our calendar for 2005 to continue the programme.

Special Education Journey series of talks in Cork and Galway

A series of talks for parents of children with special needs took place over a four week period in Cork and Galway. The topics covered in both venues were:

- How to recognize a child with Special Needs
- Dyslexia
- Language Disorder / Development
- Transition from Primary to Post Primary

The talks were a runaway success with an average of 200 people attending each session.

European Home / School Partnership Module.

Since the launch of the Partnership module in Rome in November 2003 NPC Training and Development section has successfully delivered this programme to three Colleges of Education in Dublin. The module focuses on creating a positive Home School Partnership. It is hoped that other colleges will incorporate this module into their teacher-training programme in 2005.

Support and information sessions at local level

Since 1995 funding has been available to NPC county branches for the training of county executive members and for educational talks for parents. The primary focus of this funding is to offer training as well as to support volunteers at local level.

The topics were chosen at local level and were educational issues of interest to parents. The feedback from these sessions has been very positive.

Networking with other partners

We have over the past year continued to network with many other groups and programmes that have common interests in training and development opportunities for parents. These groups include: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Crisis Pregnancy Agency, Pavee Point, Home School Community Liaison, The Wheel, Family Resource Centres, National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), European Parents Association, Teacher Training Colleges, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Clondalkin Rapid Programme, School Development Planning Initiative, Department of Education and Science.

NPC as a Training Centre

National Parents Council Primary is a registered training centre with FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council). The Training and Development Programme engages qualified trainers around the country to work directly with parents and volunteers. Ongoing up-skilling and training remains part of our remit and commitment to parents in the training programme.

The past year has seen a change in personnel working in the programme. Irene Feeney, who has been with us for 5 years, is going home to live in her native Roscommon. We wish Irene the very best of luck for the future. We have welcomed two new staff members to the Training and Development Programme. Sinead Tighe has come on board as part-time Secretary/Administrator and Caroline Clynes is the new part-time secretary.

Deirdre Sullivan

Training and Development Officer



NPC AT COUNTY LEVEL

The NPC county branch is a structure through which parents and parent associations in a county can come together and work for the best possible educational experience for children. While many of the county activities focus on parents from affiliated schools, county branches regularly open educational talks, information sessions and workshops to all parents.

Through their county branch parent association delegates:

- exchange ideas about children's education
- share experiences
- develop partnerships between children, teachers and parents
- discuss educational issues of local and national importance

NPC's county branches offer opportunities to:

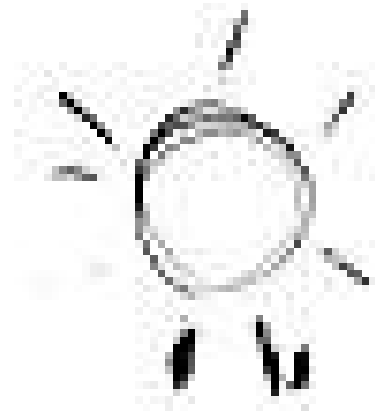
- build a network of parents at county level who can give and receive support
- enable parents to exchange ideas about their children's education, parental involvement and children's learning
- channel the views, ideas and concerns of parents to national level
- make links with teachers and others in the county who are interested in children's education
- offer opportunities for sharing information about the activities of parent associations within the county
- offer training and development projects to improve parents' capacity to help their children and to become involved in their schools
- disseminate up-to-date information on the work of NPC at national level to parents in the county.

County branches have undertaken many projects during the past year. Themes of talks, projects, workshops and seminars reflected the interests of parents at local level.

Counties availed of training for new parent associations, existing parent associations and county executive training for treasurer, chairperson, secretary.

County branches regularly undertake local consultation on important educational issues.

Many counties worked in cooperation with local Education Centres, Libraries, Health Boards, and County Councils and other organisations such as CPSMA.



NPC – INTEREST GROUPS

NPC has four Interest Groups representing: Scoileanna Lán Gaeilge / Gaeltacht schools, Minority Religion schools, Special Education schools & an Integrated Education Group (representing parents of children with special educational needs who are integrated in mainstream school).

REPRESENTING THE VIEWS OF PARENTS

Through NPC, parents are represented on many education and other committees. This representation means that a parent perspective influences policy and practice on education and related areas. Some examples are given below.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

A review of the operation of the primary Curriculum is now taking place and, in

harmony with the views represented by NPC the views of parents and children will be sought in addition to the feedback from teachers.

Guidelines for parents on the primary school curriculum and for schools on how best to include parents in the partnership process are being developed by NCCA in close cooperation with NPC. Interactive guidelines on DVD, CD, video, web and paper format are being developed.

NCCA - Special Education Steering Committee

The Special Education Steering Committee was set up to draw up a curriculum across the full range of subjects for students with general learning disabilities in the Mild, Moderate and Severe/Profound categories. At present it goes as far as the Junior Certificate Examination. The books were launched by the then Minister of Education and Science, Mr Noel Dempsey TD, in October 2003. A number of schools were selected to pilot the programme, Special Schools and mainstream primary and post primary schools and evaluations of the pilot were carried out. The meetings held since then have been to discuss amendments and additions to the various subjects which have been put forward for ratification by three Education Officers on foot of the feedback from schools.

NCCA – Early Childhood Committee

The committee was established in 2004 to develop a framework for early learning and to consult with all interested parties to produce a draft document.

Ireland has no national framework to guide adults in supporting children from birth to six years in their learning. In the absence of such a framework, a variety of curriculum guidance for the early childhood period has been developed and is widely used to good effect in a range of settings.

NPC stressed that parents and health practitioners were not widely represented at the consultative meetings or on the online consultation and steps are being taken to consult further with these parties.

NCCA - ICT Steering Committee

The role of the committee is to oversee and coordinate the role of information and communication technologies in curriculum and assessment. NPC believes that parents have an important role and can contribute significant expertise to the development of the use of ICT in education. At present a framework for ICT in curriculum and assessment is being developed. At primary level ICT is seen as a tool to support the curriculum rather than as a stand alone subject

NCCA – Language Committee Primary

The role of this committee is to advise on the teaching of language – Irish in English medium schools, English in Irish medium schools, language for children whose mother tongue is neither Irish nor English. The committee will also advise on the teaching of a third language such as a European language.

NCCA - Transition between primary and post primary schools

‘Moving up’ a study commissioned by NCCA from the ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute). This is an important piece of research, which should help schools and parents plan for successful transition between primary and post primary school. See www.ncca.ie to download this booklet.

National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB):

Education Welfare Act 2000

NPC has strongly supported the establishment of this service which focuses on the rights and welfare of children.

Education helpline 1890 36 36 66

The helpline aims are to put children first, to empower parents with information and assistance and to provide a bridge between home and school. The helpline will help parents to negotiate the 'maze' of the appeals system (section 29 Education Act).

Reporting school absences

Under Section 21 of the Education Welfare Act 2002, the board of management of a recognised school is required to prepare a report each year on the level of attendances at the school. Parents /parent associations must be given copies of the report. NPC is seeking that school suspensions should be included, as should categories of reasons for absences.

Education welfare service

Within existing resources NEWB has had to prioritise some areas (RAPID are areas designated by Government as being priority areas for interventions aimed at reducing disadvantage). The RAPID Areas are receiving a comprehensive education welfare service and other areas are receiving an emergency service (reports of long term absences from school are followed up).

The NEWB has published a guide for parents on school attendance in English, Irish, French and Romanian languages.

School attendance in Ireland

The first report of the NEWB on school attendance in Ireland found a 'strong relationship between levels of disadvantage and levels of school non-attendance'.

Teaching Council

NPC has always strongly supported the establishment of a Teaching Council. To promote high professional standards and high morale amongst the teaching profession Under the Teaching Council Act 2001 a Teaching Council has recently been established to:

- Regulate the teaching profession, the professional conduct of teachers and the improvement of standards of teacher education and training
- Promote the continuing education, training and professional development of teachers

NEWB School Implementation Group – A NEWB Subcommittee

The Group was set up to identify issues of concern to schools and the NEWB, to assist in the development of guidelines for schools on relevant matters, to advise on the systems and procedures for recording, monitoring and reporting of pupil attendance at schools level and to make recommendations on action to be taken by the NEWB as appropriate.

Over the past year the group worked on guidance for schools on reporting of pupil absences; local information meetings for parents and teachers; getting support for schools on using the new website; clarification on school register and attendance records at primary level.

NPC has a problem with child 'changing' schools (usually after committing some misdeed) having to wait ages before getting a 'yea' or 'nay' from new school, also with a child being bullied and the complaint not being taken seriously by school.

Under the Education Welfare Act parents will participate fully in drawing up codes of behaviour at school level in accordance with national guidelines. Understanding that some children experience particular difficulties, we will be seeking guidelines that are child and parent friendly. This is very important as parents will have to sign the code of behaviour of the school their child is attending.

Commission on School Accommodation Steering Group

The Minister for Education and Science in 1996 established the Commission on School Accommodation. One of the tasks of the committee was to establish criteria and procedures for the recognition of new primary and new post primary schools. Area Development Plan for Mountmellick and Mountrath 2004-2010. Draft Area Development Plan for the N4/M4 route running from Leixlip to Kilbeggan including Maynooth, Celbridge, Kilcock, Edenderry, Enfield – Tyrellspass 2004-2010. NPC stressed the need for a transparent consultation process, that Capital funding is allocated in a structured and identifiable manner for all school building projects. Parental freedom of choice of school for their children is maintained. NPC is concerned that a catchment area is being proposed.

The then Minister Noel Dempsey said, ‘My main objective is to ensure that all relevant parties have a say and that the process is open and public. The Commission on School Accommodation will conduct the public engagement and all submissions made to the Commission by interested parties will be published. The process will culminate in a development plan for each area. This plan will be a public document and will be the touchstone against which all capital funding decisions for the area will be made.’

Eastern Regional Health Authority – Working Group on Obesity

Established in 2004, to prepare an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the National Obesity Task Force in the eastern region of Ireland.

Terms of reference for the group have been established. The committee will examine best practice and look at current responses to prevention and treatment and will also examine prescribing diabetes medication and identify the activities of private support

groups and look at playgrounds and leisure facilities and initiatives of the Department of Education and Science.

NPC has stressed the need to involve the Department of Education and Science more actively in the implementation of the strategy. Set up links between NPC, the Department and the committee.

Department of Education and Science - Steering Committee for a Gender Equality Initiative

Committee established in 2004 to prepare guidelines to be sent to all schools to enable them to write a Gender Equality Policy involving the whole school community.

Intensive work was carried out developing a ‘project pack’ to go to all schools. Developing an ‘audit’ to enable good policy to be developed in the area of gender equality the pack is being piloted at present and is due to be introduced to schools in September 2005.

NPC stressed the importance of communication with and involvement of parents for example in all boys or all girls schools.

European Year of Education through Sport 2004 (EYES)

The committee was set promote EYES by organising a competition for schools and raising awareness in schools of sport as a medium for learning. Support materials were sent to schools, devised and designed by the committee.

The committee developed a mini curriculum for teaching through sport/physical education. A competition was held and sponsored by AIB, it will become ‘AIB Our Active School Awards’ from now on and will continue for at least 2 more years. Because of the influence of NPC the plan included communication with parents.

Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education Consultative Committee

The CECDE is developing a set of Principles underpinning the National Framework for Quality in ECCE.

A consultation day for parents was held in Dublin- a full report on the day is currently being written. NPC participated in the day.

The CECDE is hosting an on-line consultation, Principals and parents are invited to take part in this and to comment www.cecde.ie

The main objectives of the Centre are:

- To develop a quality framework for early childhood education
- To develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs
- To prepare the groundwork for the establishment of an Early Childhood Education Agency as envisaged by the White Paper

New Schools Advisory Committee NSCA

The Minister for Education and Science established the NSAC to give him independent advice on applications for the establishment of new primary schools. The NASC considers applications under the following criteria: whether the proposed school will meet a need that cannot reasonably be met within existing provision; the desirability of diversity of provision; the degree of local community support for the proposed school. NSAC publishes a notice in the local media so that parents and the community can make their views known and informs other schools in the area. NPC had sought consultation, through the Commission on School Accommodation, with parents to see what kind of school they would like before new schools were set up.

School Development Planning Consultative Committee

The School Development Planning Consultative Committee is made up of representatives from the Department of Education and Science, National Parents Council, INTO, Catholic Primary School Managers Association, and the National Co-ordinator of SDP, Eileen Flynn www.sdps.ie.

SDP is now happening in all schools. A leaflet for parents on school development planning has been prepared by SDP, in consultation with NPC and has been sent to all school for parents.

2004 National Assessment of Mathematical Achievement Advisory Committee

This group was established to conduct a survey of mathematical attainment of pupils in fourth class in primary schools and will be used to compare the results with a survey, which was conducted in 1999. The survey was completed May 2004. Information has been obtained on forms completed by teachers, parents and children.

Education Centre Management

The remit of the Education Centres was broadened in the Education Act 1998 to include the wider community. A major review of the operation of Education Centres took place in 2003. The recommendations of this review together with budgetary restrictions are presenting Education Centres with new challenges. Very many Education Centres have cooperated with us in delivering NPC training for parents' representatives on the board of management and for parent associations. For more information programmes.

Children's Rights Alliance

The Alliance is an umbrella group of non-governmental organisations and individuals concerned with promoting the Rights and

welfare of children in Ireland. The Alliance promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has worked to have an ombudsman for children in Ireland. NPC is a founder member of CRA.

During 2004, the Children's Rights Alliance continued to promote the full implementation in Ireland of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Notable activities and developments included:

CRA urges Minister to impose ban on broadcast advertising of alcohol products. March 04

CRA expresses severe disappointment at the Draft Children's Advertising Code. April 04

Submission to the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland regarding the Children's Advertising Code Phase III. May 2004

Concerns from CRA that denial of Child Benefit to Asylum Seeker Children will force vulnerable children into poverty. May 2004

CRA call for a 'NO' vote on Citizenship Referendum. May 2004

Submission on the Charities Consultation Paper. May 2004

Submission to the National Task Force on Obesity. May 2004

Child Poverty in Ireland: An Overview. Oct 04

Published by CRA. Oct 2004

Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Oct 04

Letter from CRA & Coalition against the Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC) to Minister for Justice Mr Michael McDowell on the application for permission to remain

in the State on the basis of parentage or an Irish child. Jan 04

National Children's Advisory Council

The National Children's Advisory Council was established in May 2001 as part of the National Children's Strategy. The Council has an independent advisory role in relation to the implementation of the Strategy, reporting to the Minister for Children.

A new Council was appointed recently.

NPC submissions /presentation

Submissions made by NPC during the past year include: Family Rights in the Constitution, the Official languages Act, Catholic Church Guidelines on Child Abuse, Children and Advertising, Taskforce on Obesity, Two submissions to DES on funding for NPC, Joint Oireachtas Committee on primary school grants. Minister of Education and Science, Ms Mary Hanafin TD Topics discussed included: parental participation education, code of behaviour, reduction in class size, new schools in developing areas, special needs, funding for NPC

NPC Prebudget submission for 2005

National Parents Council Primary, since its establishment, has represented strongly that a quality early and primary education is a basic right for all children. A well-resourced primary system is essential if we are to promote equality of opportunity and outcome for each young person for his or her life now as a child and for the future. NPC supports the targeting of resources, based on rigorous evaluation of outcomes for children and young people. We believe, despite the current financial situation, that because quality primary education is the basis of justice for all citizens, it must take precedence over other sectors in the education system in terms of allocation of scarce resources.

Parents have identified some key priorities for the education system

- Smaller class size with priority to infant classes
- Immediate funding for schools, which breach health and safety regulations and schools which lack the basic facilities to deliver the curriculum
- Funding for new schools, which have received approval from the New Schools Advisory Committee
- Access for all children who need the service to the educational psychological service
- The appointment of sufficient educational psychologists to do preventative systemic work as well as assessments
- Access to speech therapy and other ancillary services for all children who need these services
- A safe school transport system
- Training and support systems for school management
- Proper funding for the work of NPC.



NPC - THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

European Parents Association (EPA)

NPC is a member of EPA, which represents over 100 million parents in the European Union and beyond.

Representing the views of parents to the wider public

NPC members and staff contribute to education debate through public meetings and workshops and through national and local media. Topics covered this year include children's entitlement to a full school year, benchmarking, the timing of parent teacher meetings, school holidays, starting school, transition to post primary, educational services for children, the cost of education, going back to school, childcare, education legislation, bullying, right of choice of school, commercial pressures on parents, safety on the internet and mobile phones, special education needs, learning support, curriculum and legislation.

National Parents Council Primary is a company limited by guarantee and has charitable status. The directors of the company are the members of the National Executive. The directors formally resign at Annual Delegate Conference. Following ADC the members of the incoming executive take their place as directors.

NPC REPRESENTATIVES

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

Council

Fionnuala Kilfeather

NCCA - Early Childhood Committee

Therese Murphy

NCCA - Early Childhood & Primary Committee

Fionnuala Kilfeather

NCCA - Language Committee Primary

Anita McCann

NCCA - ICT Steering Committee

Maria Murphy

NCCA - Special Education Steering Committee

Nuala Ui Dhuill

National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)

Fionnuala Kilfeather

NEWB - School Implementation Group

Joan McLoughlin

Teaching Council

Anita McCann

National Children's Advisory Council

Geraldine Graydon

European Year of Education through Sport 2004

Therese Murphy

Conjoint Committee on Children with Hearing Disabilities

Carolyn Gleeson

Dental Health Foundation Steering Committee

Ann Harmon

Consultative Committee-Centre for Early Childhood Development & Education

Irene Cassidy

By appointment of the Minister for Health and Children - *Strategic Task Force on Alcohol*

Fionnuala Kilfeather

Children's Rights Alliance

Geraldine Graydon

Department of Education and Science (DES)

DES - Curriculum Implementation Group

Fionnuala Kilfeather

DES - School Development Planning Advisory Committee

Anne Colgan

DES - Commission on School Accommodation Needs

Micheal Ó Cinnéide

Marion Lyon

DES - Advisory Committee on the Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Janet Rose

Carolyn Gleeson

DES - Advisory Committee on Traveller Education

Francis Linden

DES - Steering Committee for a Gender Equality Initiative

Therese Murphy

DES - National Reading Survey & Reading Survey in Disadvantaged Schools

Mary Killeen

DES - 2004 National Assessment of Mathematical Achievement Advisory Committee

Maria Murphy

*DES - Leadership Development for Schools
Advisory Committee*
Fionnuala Kilfeather

*DES - Performance Verification Group - for
the education sector*
Fionnuala Kilfeather

DES - New Schools Advisory Committee
Fionnuala Kilfeather

Eastern Regional Health Authority
Working Group on Obesity
Therese Murphy

European Parents Association
*Irish Representative on the Administration
Council*
Anita McCann

**NATIONAL
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MEMBERS**
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Caroline Cashman
Cork East

Mary Haughney
Cork West

Olwen Norton
Dublin NW

Lisa O'Neill
Dublin South

Therese Murphy
Dublin SW

Nora Moore
Laois

Gile Mac Lochlainn
Leitrim

Philip Mudge
(Diane Hickey)
Limerick

Joan McLoughlin
Longford

Ann Harmon
Louth

Gwen Mitchell
Mayo

Maria Murphy
Meath

Francis Linden
Monaghan

Paul Stevenson
Sligo

Tessa Conneely
Tipperary

Winifred Cox
Minority Religion

Anita McCann
Scoileanna Lán Gaeilge

Geraldine Graydon
Malachy Donohoe
Special Education

Gregory Sewell
Integrated Education



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Beatha Keatley
Dublin NW

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Dublin South

Bernie Bushe
Dublin SW

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Galway

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Kilkenny

Mary Thompson
Laois

Melanie Moran
Leitrim

Donal Cooper
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Limerick

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Frank McArdle
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Roseanne Clarke
Meath

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Heather Halton
Clare

Caroline Cashman
Cork East

Danny Brosnan
(Sean O'Riordan)
Cork West

Sheelagh Finn
Dublin North

Muriel Collins
Dublin NW

Geraldine Graydon
Dublin South

Carol Ollry
Dublin SW

Mervyn Kerr
Galway

Siobhan McGovern
Kilkenny

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Pat Curran
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(Antoinette Collins)
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Mairéad Kennedy
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Clare

Caitriona Peeló
Dublin NW

Geraldine Graydon
Dublin South

Mary El Wafaie
Dublin SW

Finousa Hanlon
Kilkenny

John Reddin
Laois

Anne Guckian
Leitrim

Anita McCann
Louth

Sharon Caraher
Monaghan

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COMMITTEE
(ADC 2004)**

Anita Donohé
Andrew Manson
Mary Mulvey
Gregory Sewell

**IMPLEMENTATION
GROUP (MODERNISATION
OF NPC)**

Micheál Ó Cinnéide
Joan McLoughlin
Roseanne Rafferty
Ann Harmon
Monica Lunney
Fionnuala Kilfeather
Sean O'Riordan

Facilitator: Anne Colgan

TRAINERS 2004

Mary Crosbie
Phyllis Gordon
Jean Healy
Kathleen Collins
Geraldine Butler
Nicola Rowntree Carroll
Aileen Barry
Benne Simpson
Ann O'Sullivan
Irene Cassidy
Margaret O'Sullivan
Olive McGuinness
Margaret Tuohy
Patricia Dunne
Mary O'Shea
Kathi Dillon
Noreen McMahon



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Staff March 2005

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Fionnuala Kilfeather

HELPLINE & INFORMATION OFFICER

Mary Killeen

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Deirdre Sullivan

RESEARCH & PLANNING

Anne Colgan

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Carmel Grahame: Finance/Administration/Company Secretary

Sinéad Tighe: Part-time Administrator Training & Development Programme

Caroline Clynes: Part-time Secretary

Nora Bowes: Receptionist

Michelle Davern: PA to CEO/Website/Administration