

The legal background



The parents of students of a recognised school may establish and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school. *Education Act, 1998, 26 (1)*

The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of students in that school and the community and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to parents who wish to establish a parents' association; and to a parents' association when it is established. *Education Act, 1998, 26 (3)*

- The parent association is the structure through which the parents/guardians in a school can work together for the best possible education for their children. All parents/guardians of children in the school are members of the association with a number of parents being elected to a committee.
- The parent association works with the principal, staff and the board of management to build effective partnership between home and school.
- Educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve better outcomes when parents and teachers work together.

WHAT DOES A PARENT ASSOCIATION DO?

As per the Education Act 1998 "A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of a school and for that purpose may advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the Principal or board, as the case may be, shall have regard to any such advice".

- The parent association should work in partnership with the Principal and teachers in the development and review of school policies such as the anti-bullying policy, code of behaviour etc.

- Parent associations can suggest and/or organise extra-curricular activities with the agreement of the Board of Management, such as dancing classes, sports activities, social events etc.
- The parent association is a support for parents in the school.
- The parent association can invite speakers to address the parents on issues which are topical or relevant.

WHAT THE PARENT ASSOCIATION DOES NOT DO?

- The parent association is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or parent. The Complaints Procedure is the mechanism for this.

SETTING UP A PARENT ASSOCIATION

How to Start

There are 3 main ways to establish a parent association in your child's school:

- As a first step a group of parents can come together and do some initial planning with the support of the Principal/Board of Management.
- The Principal might ask for volunteers to establish a working group to organise a meeting of all parents with a view to setting up a parent association.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management or the Parents Representatives on the Board might invite all parents to a meeting.



WHAT NEXT?

- Call a meeting to which all parents and guardians of children in the school are invited.
- Choose a Chairperson for this meeting; this could be the Chairperson of the Board of Management, one of the Parents Representatives on the Board, the Principal teacher or any parent.
- A committee is elected, by asking for nominations from the parent body, which should be as representative as possible of all parents in the school.
- The committee at its first meeting will elect its officers, Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and any other officer deemed necessary.
- One of the functions of the new committee will be to draw up a set of rules (Constitution) under which the parent association will operate. See “Working Effectively as a Parent Association” booklet available from NPC.
- This Constitution must be passed by a majority of parents at the following AGM.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

NPC offers training for new parent associations on the role and functions of a parent association and if you decide to go ahead with this, we will be delighted to facilitate you. Please contact our Training & Development Section on 01-8874475. Email training@npc.ie.

For further information on parent associations please see “Working Effectively as a Parent Association”, guidelines which are available online at www.npc.ie and can be purchased online by credit card or from National Parents Council Primary, at a cost of €10 per copy (including P&P), please send in your name and address with a cheque or postal order. The guidelines are free to parent associations becoming members of NPC for the first time.



Supporting Parents
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What is a Parent
Association?