

# National Parents Council Primary Annual Report 2011

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# Overview of the National Parents

## Our Mission

National Parents Council Primary is established to contribute to the advancement of the early education and primary education of all children, in order to improve and enrich the education of each child and to support the involvement of parents in all stages of education.



## Our Vision

- We believe in the empowerment of parents, so that they can take responsibility and make choices about their role as educator.
- We believe that all parents have the capacity to help their children to learn well. All parents have the right to the support they need in order to do this.
- We believe that all children are capable of learning and have the right to access the best possible education service.
- We believe in the value of partnership with other educators in the way we work.
- We believe in the importance of childhood and children's experiences.
- We see children as being partners in education.
- We believe in the right of parents to lifelong learning opportunities.

## Chairperson's Report

While economic difficulties and uncertainty continue to loom large and impact Irish life in every way, including education, we as parents continue our work to ensure the future of our children and that their educational experience improves. As well as the economic backdrop to our activities, 2011 brought a change in government and a new Minister in the Department of Education and Skills.

The Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn T. D. launched a Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary sector in March. The NPC made a submission to the advisory group appointed by the Minister based on the NPC policy on Patronage which had been developed by the NPC Assembly at the start of the year.

It is important for an organisation such as the NPC that it has a strong and vibrant local structure. For NPC this structure is supported by a huge volunteer effort. I am pleased to be able to report that this volunteer effort in 2011 continued not only to work tirelessly, but is also growing. Members from two additional counties sought recognition from the NPC Board as County Branches during 2011; both counties, Dublin South West and Kildare, were subsequently registered as NPC County Branches on the 6th of May 2011.

This year saw the election of new school Boards in every primary school in Ireland. The work of the NPC helped support parents during this process in a number of important ways. The NPC published a new edition with updated information of its booklet 'The Board of Management in Your Primary School – A guide for Parents'. In addition there was a significantly

increased take up on NPC's information sessions on the role and function of the Board of Management and in calls to our helpline. The Assembly worked on developing NPC policy on School Management in 2011 and will complete this work in 2012.

What I have said above represents some of the highlights of the year for the NPC. But we must not forget the on-going enthusiastic and dedicated work that Áine and her team do on our behalf. Their contribution is valued and appreciated across the education sector and their efforts meant that the NPC maintained all existing services in 2011. I would also like to express my appreciation and thanks to all our volunteers in our local Parent Associations, County Branches and at national level for their work and commitment.

We know that early childhood and primary education puts in the educational foundations for our children and puts them on the path to achieve their individual potential. The work of the NPC in representing, advising and advocating on

behalf of parents is critical to ensuring that parents are not only the hands that rock the cradle but will rock the educational world.



**Breid Greene**  
Chairperson

# Chief Executive Officer's Report

During 2011 the National Parents Council Primary (NPC), continued to take on the tough economic challenges facing both the voluntary sector and the education sector and ensured that parents were assisted in supporting their children's educational lives. The NPC is committed to supporting and empowering parents to be involved in and support their children's learning. NPC continued this commitment by increasing its service provision in 2011. The NPC Helpline increased its call answering in 2011 by 22% and answered 2106 calls and e-mails. The NPC Training and development unit also increased its service provision during 2011, providing training to 29% more participants than during 2010, resulting in 4732 participants across Ireland attending an NPC training event. NPC volunteers continued to support this commitment by co-ordinating and running the network of NPC County Branches, through engaging in the Assembly debates and policy formation and through the strong Governance of NPC by the Board of Directors.

2011 also saw some significant developments in the education sector in which NPC played its part. In July a National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 – 2020 was launched by the Department of Education and Skills. This strategy seeks to address concerns about how well our children are developing their literacy and numeracy skills. NPC made a submission to the Department during the development of the plan. One of the key strands in the plan is the importance of parents in their children's learning and how it can be fostered and supported.

Research has indicated that all types of parental involvement in education have a positive impact on children's educational outcomes. The most effective form is where parents work directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Our second Educational Conference in June continued our work on this issue. The themes explored at this very successful conference were; the contribution rich play experiences, both at home and at school, make to a child's complete development; the role of parents and families in supporting children as learners and on building strong home-school connections around learning. It also highlighted that learning with your child is not an extra thing to do for parents, but should be a natural part of daily life.

The education of teachers both at the initial stages and through their continuous professional development is crucial to the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. NPC is committed to supporting teacher education in the area of parental involvement in children's learning. 2011 saw the beginning of a very important collaboration between NPC and the National Induction Programme for Newly Qualified Teachers.

During 2011 NPC continued to petition the Minister for Education and Skills on many issues. In particular NPC made representations to the Minister in the following areas: an agreed complaints process for parents; parental involvement in children's learning; costs associated with school in particular school books and voluntary contributions; implementation of the EPSEN Act; constitution and operation of school Boards of Management and bullying in schools.

# Chief Executive Officer's Report

In closing I would like to thank the Chairperson and the Board for their continued work and support in leading the organisation and I would like to thank the staff and volunteers for their enormous efforts during 2011.



**Áine Lynch**  
Chief Executive

## Special Interest Groups

**The Special Educational Needs Group** represents parents of children with special educational needs. The group met four times during 2011 and discussed policy areas of relevance to special needs, in particular the policy for enrolment of children in special or mainstream schools and the value for money review of Special Needs Assistants.

The Group continues to offer support and information to parents of all children with special needs.

**The Minority Religion Group** represents the interests of parents of children belonging to a religious minority. In 2011 the Minority Religion Group had a busy year. The group concentrated on developing a position on school patronage which was presented to the NPC Assembly and helped formulate the agreed NPC policy on patronage.

**The Irish Medium Schools Group** represents parents of children who are educated through the medium of Irish.

## Helpline

The Information/Helpline Officers answered 2106 calls and e-mails in 2011, dealing with 2530 issues. Almost 43% of all calls were in relation to Parent Associations: from information on the election of the committee to running AGMs, the constitution, fundraising and voluntary contributions. The number of queries about setting up new Parent Associations also rose this year and the queries for training almost tripled. Disputes about fundraising and differences among the members of the Parent Association also arose. As the Board of Management elections took place this year there were many queries about the methods for election and the role and function of the parent representatives on the Board of Management. Concerns regarding the Boards of Managements' handling of complaints also doubled. Bullying is still a significant issue with cyber bullying now a serious issue for children of primary school age. Calls in relation to access to services for some children with special needs showed the major challenges experienced by some parents. Other issues included information on the Complaints Procedure and Health and Safety issues while Supervision is still a concern.

Information compiled from calls to the Helpline continued to inform various submissions made to the Department of Education and Skills during the year.

# Helpline

INFORMATION/HELPLINE - ISSUES	TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS & EMAILS FOR 2011
<b>BULLYING</b>	
Bullying involving a child	153
Bullying involving a teacher	39
Bullying involving a principal	14
Principal/Board of Management not implementing Anti-Bullying policy	9
Cyberbullying	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>ISSUE</b>	
Supervision	48
Complaints Procedure	52
Homework	21
Code of Behaviour	34
Split Classes	24
Uniforms	26
Class size	10
Enrolment	43
Curriculum	40
Time in school	14
Standardised tests	8
WSE	10
Health and Safety	52
Separated parents	4
Retention	11
Book rental schemes	18
First Holy Communion	1
School Transport	34
School closures	22
Voluntary Contribution	23
Child abuse	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>

INFORMATION/HELPLINE - ISSUES	TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS & EMAILS FOR 2011
<b>BOARD OF MANAGEMENT</b>	
General	183
Complaints	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>PARENT ASSOCIATION</b>	
Set up	83
Disputes	99
Financial issues	125
NPC Membership	32
Rules/Roles	148
Information	253
Difficulty with Principal	26
Training	79
Insurance	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>869</b>
<b>SPECIAL NEEDS</b>	
Special Needs General	71
Assessment	10
Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)	17
Access to school	13
Professional resources	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>
Other	66
Journalist	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2106</b>

# Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development Programme continued to deliver training and support to parents throughout 2011. The Training and Development Programme is a national programme which provides support to parents enabling them to have positive parental involvement in their child's education.

## Aims and Objectives

The Training and Development Programme supports parents to work in positive partnership between the home and the school, and it seeks to empower parents in their role as the primary educators of their children and encourages a positive role for parents as part of the school community.

## Training Programmes

NPC had seven training programmes on offer to parents countrywide during 2011. These included:

**Parent Association Effectiveness Training** which gave information and guidance to new and established Parent Associations. The aim of the training was to create an understanding of the role of a Parent Association and to facilitate groups in developing a positive and beneficial partnership in the school as a community. This training was open to all partners in education, parents, principals, teachers and Board members.

In 2011 NPC updated the Parent Association Training module to include a session on Parental Involvement in line with the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy 2011 – 2020. NPC trainers now deliver two sessions of Parent

Association Training which informs the Parent Association and all parents on positive parental involvement in the home and in the school as prescribed in the new strategy.

**Board of Management Training** sessions for parent representatives and the whole Board were delivered in individual schools. These sessions primarily concentrated on the role and function of the Board of Management as a corporate entity. 2011 was busy for Board of Management training as all new Boards had to be in place to begin their new term of office from 1st December.

**Internet Safety Training** gave parents the skills to engage with their children's online lives. The workshops focussed on strategies for both improving communication between parents and children and negotiating boundaries to their children's internet use. Through the training, parents were informed on how young people use the internet, what attracts them to the internet and gained an insight into children's main worries and concerns when online, such as cyber bullying.

**Parenting – Supporting your child to build healthy friendships and relationships.** This programme offered parents the opportunity to attend an information session which informed parents about the Social Personal Health Education curriculum (SPHE). The Parenting training module concentrated on enabling parents to build healthy relationships with their children. The training explored barriers to effective communication and also ways parents can communicate more openly with their children.

# Training and Development

**Transition from Primary to Post Primary Training** was provided for parents whose children were about to make, or had made, the transition from primary to secondary education. It supported parents in their child's transition and gave them useful information on subject choices and an insight into the post primary education system.

**Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Training** was developed in partnership with the Inspectorate. The programme provides information and support on the WSE process. Whole School Evaluation is a process of external evaluation of the work of a school, carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. The NPC WSE training programme enables parents and partners to understand what a Whole School Evaluation is, their role in their schools WSE, how the WSE is carried out and how it is managed. This programme is available to parents, teachers, principals and Board members in individual schools countrywide.

**Code of Behaviour Training** was developed in partnership with the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The programme supports the development of the schools code of behaviour. Every school is required by law to have a code of behaviour. Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available a code of behaviour for its students. The code of behaviour outlines the behaviour expected from all members of the school community. The training programme looks at: What is a code of behaviour? Why a school should have a code of behaviour? Who should be involved in drawing up the code? Also, how to write, review and audit the code of behaviour policy?

## Training Programme Statistics for 2011

Type of Training	Sessions Delivered	Number of Participants
New Parent Association Training	118	1031
BOM Information	48	474
Internet Safety	122	2050
Parenting – Supporting your child to build healthy friendships and relationships	15	286
Transition from Primary to Post Primary	60	792
Whole School Evaluation	13	87
Code of Behaviour	4	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>4745</b>

The Training Programmes delivered by National Parents Council Primary are funded by the Department of Education and Skills, the National Council for Technology in Education and the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

# Membership

Membership of National Parents Council Primary consists of all the affiliated Parent Associations and individual Associate Members.

The graph below indicates the growing trend in membership from 2003 to 2011.



The 2009-2010 membership 'year' ran for 16 months to allow NPC to change its membership year in 2011 to run in conjunction with the calendar year. This was to allow Parent Associations time to have their AGMs and elect their new committees before having to renew their membership.

NPC Membership 2011			
County	Number of Members	County	Number of Members
Carlow	19	Limerick	66
Cavan	45	Longford	23
Clare	33	Louth	48
Cork East	80	Mayo	44
Cork West	128	Meath	71
Donegal	43	Monaghan	33
Dublin North	57	Offaly	21
Dublin NW	42	Roscommon	26
Dublin South	65	Sligo	29
Dublin SW	36	Tipperary	90
Galway	79	Waterford	35
Kerry	59	Westmeath	27
Kildare	55	Wexford	69
Kilkenny	45	Wicklow	43
Laois	34	Associate Members	4
Leitrim	17	<b>Total</b>	<b>1466</b>

## County Branch

**NPC** has a network of County Branches throughout the country, where NPC members come together at a local level to meet and discuss issues which are relevant to their children in primary school.

In 2011 NPC had County Branches in Cavan, Clare, Cork East, Cork West, Dublin North, Dublin North West, Dublin South, Laois, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo, Tipperary and Wexford. Members from two additional counties sought recognition from the NPC Board as County Branches during 2011; both counties, Dublin South West and Kildare, were subsequently registered as NPC County Branches on the 6th of May 2011.

The CEO continued to visit County Branches during 2011 to meet with members at local level and to discuss the role of NPC and issues of relevance to parents of primary school children.

NPC County Branch committee members continued to reach out to Parent Associations within their counties. Information evenings were arranged by the county committees for parents and Parent Associations on topics such as: Bullying; Internet Safety; Assessment in the Primary years; Parents and Principals – Working Together, Parental Involvement; School Boards of Management; Helping your child to build healthy relationships; Transition from Primary to Post Primary School; Family Learning; Parenting; Understanding how children learn; The Primary School Curriculum & Aistear; Dyslexia; Common Mental Health

Issues in Primary School Children; Special Educational Needs; Learning disorders; Healthy eating; Funding for schools. County committee members liaised with various organisations such as the INTO, the HSE and members of An Garda Síochána on issues relevant to parents of primary school children.

The nationwide network of Education Centres was utilised to contact school principals to increase their awareness of NPC and to promote the importance of parental involvement.

A number of NPC County Branch committee members visited local schools to provide information on NPC and Parent Associations.

In addition to consulting with and providing information evenings for parents and Parent Associations a number of counties organised quizzes for primary school children and a provincial final was held in Munster between the Clare, Cork West and Tipperary County Branches.

County Branch committee members were asked to represent NPC on various committees/groups such as Education Centre Management Committees and County Development Boards.

# Assembly

The NPC Assembly is a vibrant and exciting part of NPC and represents a bridge between members and the organisational structures. The NPC Assembly is the policy developing body within NPC and is comprised of a maximum of two representatives from each County Branch and one representative from each of the NPC Special Interest Groups. There is also a representative of Parent Associations where there are no County Branches; a group entitled the Combined County Parents' Association Group.

The Assembly meets throughout the year and allows parents to fully engage in educational issues that are important to them and their children. This means that when NPC speaks on behalf of parents it can do so, knowing that the issues have been considered and debated by its members.

During 2011 the Assembly met **four** times, on the 5th of February, the 16th of April, the 7th of May and the 24th of September 2011.

The first meeting saw the Assembly complete its work on the development of the NPC **Patronage** policy, which then received Board approval.

The three subsequent meetings within 2011 examined the issue of **School Management**. During the year the Assembly heard presentations on the existing school management system by Mr Seán Cottrell, Director of the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and Mr Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, Department of Education and Skills.

## Report of the Chairperson of the Audit Committee 2011

I was delighted to be elected as Chairperson of NPC's Audit Committee for 2011. I would like to thank the other members of the committee, Robert Bennett, Miriam Meredith, Breid Greene and Eileen Burke Smyth for their work during the year.

I am happy to report that NPC finances remain healthy in 2011 and the following pages set out a summary of the figures. Full detailed accounts for the year ended December 31st 2011 have been issued to all NPC members and are also available on request.

### Philip Mudge

Chairperson of the Audit Committee

## NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL - PRIMARY

(Company Limited by Guarantee - Without a Share Capital)

### DIRECTORS' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2011

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS'

The Directors submit their report together with the audited financial statements of the Company (or the "Council") for the year ended 31st December 2011.

#### RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

The directors confirm that there is an ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the significant risks faced by the company.

#### PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW

The principal activities of the Council are to act as a Nationwide Organisation representing parents of children attending early and primary education.

National Parents Council Primary was established to contribute to the advancement of the early education and primary education of all children, in order to improve and enrich the education of each child and to support the involvement of parents in all stages of education.

#### SURPLUS AND RESERVES

The deficit for the year has been transferred to reserves. The Company reported an operating surplus of €21,378 in the year (2010: deficit of €27,358).

# Financial Report

## DIRECTORS

On 16 April 2011, Sean O’Riordan ceased being a director of the Company. On 24 September 2011, Donal Cooper, Gráinne McDonnell and Zoe Ewing Evans resigned as directors of the Company.

On 29 January 2012, Áine Uí Ghiollagáin resigned as a director of the Company. On 24 September 2011 Eileen Burke Smyth, Mary O’Mahony, Miriam Meredith and Mary Lillis were appointed as directors of the Company.

**COMPANY SECRETARY:** Áine Lynch

## BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that proper books and accounting records are kept by the Company as required under Section 202 of the Companies Act, 1990.

The Directors believe that they have complied with this requirement by providing adequate resources to maintain proper accounting records including the appointment of personnel with appropriate experience and expertise. The books and records of the company are maintained at 12 Marlborough Court, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

## POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

No events have occurred subsequent to the balance sheet date which requires disclosure in the financial statements.

## AUDITORS

During the year, KPMG were appointed as auditors of the Company. In accordance with Section 160(2) of

the Companies Act 1963, the auditor, KPMG, Chartered Accountants, will continue in office.

## STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2011

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, comprising applicable law and the accounting standards issued by the Accounting Standards Board and promulgated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. The Company’s financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of its surplus or deficit for that period.

In preparing those financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation.

The Directors are responsible for keeping proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Company and to enable them to ensure the financial statements comply with the Companies Acts, 1963 to 2009. They are also responsible

# Financial Report

for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

## STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2011

	2011	2010
	€	€
INCOME – CONTINUING ACTIVITIES	610,004	551,300
EXPENDITURE	<u>(588,626)</u>	<u>(578,658)</u>
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	21,378	(27,358)
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2010	<u>150,661</u>	<u>178,019</u>
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2011	<u><u>172,039</u></u>	<u><u>150,661</u></u>

There are no other gains or losses other than those included in the income and expenditure account and thus a separate statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2011

	2011	2010
	€	€
FIXED ASSETS		
Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment	1,508	1,859
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at Bank and in hand	314,604	381,596
Debtors & Prepayments	<u>4,795</u>	<u>1,663</u>
	<u>319,399</u>	<u>383,259</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors: amounts falling due with one year	<u>(148,868)</u>	<u>(234,457)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<u>170,531</u>	<u>148,802</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>172,039</u>	<u>150,661</u>
FUNDED BY;		
Accumulated Surplus	<u><u>172,039</u></u>	<u><u>150,661</u></u>

### ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

DIRECTOR: BREID GREENE

DIRECTOR: MIRIAM MEREDITH

## Board Members 2011

<b>Breid Greene</b>	Chairperson
<b>Maureen Brennan</b>	Vice Chairperson
<b>Philip Mudge</b>	Chairperson to 24.09.2011
<b>Paul Stevenson</b>	Vice Chairperson to 24.09.2011
<b>Sean O'Riordan</b>	to 16.04.2011
<b>Zoe Ewing-Evans</b>	to 24.09.2011
<b>Donal Cooper</b>	to 24.09.2011
<b>Gráinne McDonnell</b>	to 24.09.2011
<b>Áine Uí Ghiollagáin</b>	
<b>Robert Bennett</b>	
<b>Kevin O'Byrne</b>	
<b>Bryan Leonard</b>	
<b>Eileen Burke Smyth</b>	elected 24.09.2011
<b>Mary Lillis</b>	elected 24.09.2011
<b>Miriam Meredith</b>	elected 24.09.2011
<b>Mary O'Mahony</b>	elected 24.09.2011

## Assembly Members during 2011

<b>Eileen Burke Smyth</b>	Cavan	<b>Regina Smyth</b>	Meath
<b>Michelle Dyland</b>	Cavan	<b>Paul Stevenson</b>	Sligo
<b>(Ray O'Grady</b>	Clare)	<b>(Breid Greene</b>	Tipperary)
<b>(Carol-Anne O'Sullivan</b>	Clare)	<b>Maura Tynan</b>	Tipperary
<b>Robert Bennett</b>	Clare	<b>Wendy Costello</b>	Tipperary
<b>Tommy Casey</b>	Clare	<b>Tamsin O'Neill</b>	Wexford
<b>Trevor Tuohy</b>	Cork East	<b>Ann-Marie Keegan</b>	Wexford
<b>Mary O'Mahony</b>	Cork East	<b>Derval O'Connor</b>	Minority Religion
<b>Sean O'Riordan</b>	Cork West	<b>Tracy Lynch</b>	Special Education
<b>Goretti Walls</b>	Cork West	<b>Sarah Parlane</b>	Integrated Education
<b>Mary King</b>	Dublin North	<b>Áine Uí Ghiollagáin</b>	Irish medium Schools Group
<b>Paula McKenzie</b>	Dublin North	<b>Kevin O'Byrne</b>	Combined County Parent Association Group
<b>Olive O'Brien</b>	Dublin NW		
<b>Maureen Brennan</b>	Laois		
<b>Miriam Meredith</b>	Laois		
<b>Philip Mudge</b>	Limerick		
<b>Mary Lillis</b>	Longford		
<b>James Connors</b>	Longford		
<b>Bryan Leonard</b>	Meath		

## Staff 2011

<b>Áine Lynch</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Deirdre Sullivan</b>	Training & Development Officer
<b>Carmel Grahame</b>	Financial Administrator
<b>Mary Killeen</b>	Information/Helpline Officer
<b>Carmel O'Shea</b>	Information/Helpline Officer
<b>Sharon Hopkins</b>	Administrator
<b>Nora Harris</b>	Administrator
<b>Michelle Davern</b>	PA to CEO, Office and Website Administrator
<b>Jelena Pisareva</b>	Office cleaner









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