

National Parents Council (Primary)

Education Policy Position

Policy Document 2015

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Introduction

National Parents Council Primary (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in primary or early education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement of NPC

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

NPC Services

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

Helpline

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The helpline staff listen, and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding primary education issues.

As well as the three service areas above the NPC are active in

1. **Advocating and representing parents.** NPC consult with parents and bring parents' views to bear on education policy.
2. **Facilitating and supporting the development of Parents Associations.** NPC facilitates and supports parents to develop associations in their schools and supports the organisation of county level and local area level support networks for parents.

NPC Policy Development Process

In 2007 under NPC's new strategic plan the NPC Assembly was formed. The function of the Assembly as laid down in the Memorandum and Articles of Association is:

“To review and assist in co-ordinating the response of the Council on educational issues”.

The Assembly is a bridge between NPC members and the organisational structures. The Assembly is the policy developing body within NPC and is comprised of a maximum of two representatives from each NPC County branch and one representative from each of the Special interest groups. NPC's rules also include procedures for Parent Associations where there is no County Branch structure to be represented at the Assembly.

The Assembly meets approximately three times a 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.

NPC Policy position - Children's Rights

The National Parents Council supports the full implementation of all Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and fully support its four general principles:

1. that all the rights guaranteed by the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
2. that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
3. that every child has the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and
4. that the child's views must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12).

In particular NPC advocate for the following to be addressed within the primary school system in Ireland:

Promoting Children's Rights

There should be a student council in each school with representatives from each class in the school.

The Student Council must have reporting procedures to the Parent Association and the Board of Management.

The Student Council must be consulted as part of a the Whole School Evaluation process when conducted in a school by the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate

The Government should allocate a specific budget for the promotion of Children's Rights. This budget should support the development of mechanisms by which schools and the wider community can support children to access information on their rights.

Poverty and Its Impact on the Right to Education

Fees and or charges should not be a barrier to access education at any level.

Generic school uniforms should be in place in all schools.

Full book rental scheme must be available in all schools with a view to the provision of free books to all school children within a five year time frame (by 2019).

An information programme should be in place to ensure that parents and children are aware of all available supports and resources which ensure their right to education.

Universal services should be provided for the prevention hunger in primary school children, these should include the availability of healthy snacks, lunches and breakfast clubs.

Services in relation to health, dental, social and assessment (speech and language, occupational therapy, physiotherapy), should be available to children either within the school campus, where appropriate, or close by to the school.

Equal Treatment and Non Discrimination

Education should be provided to all children on equality, emphasising strength in diversity

With each new school opening or divesting there must be a statutory requirement to consult parents on patronage.

The SPHE programme should be reviewed to ensure its relevance to a changing Ireland

Teachers should receive focused CPD to ensure that they are supported to deliver the SPHE curriculum in a changing Ireland

Equality training should be included in all leadership programmes

All Schools must have a policy on supporting equity in their school

All communication between school and parents must reflect the equality ethos of the school

All school policies should be in line with the schools Equality policy

The DES should develop guidelines for schools in the development of their equality policy which should include guidelines for a clear procedure in schools for raising and addressing equality and discrimination issues.

The DES must invest in training for the whole school community on equality

- Teachers
- Parents
- Staff
- Children
- Community

NPC Policy position - Health and Safety - revised March 2014

Principle

“Children should be protected in their place of work and they should be kept safe without restrictions on normal healthy childhood activities.”

1. Children have a right to be safe in their school lives, activities and in and around the school premises and travelling to and from school.
2. All schools must adhere to all Health and Safety legislation and guidelines.
3. All schools must have a safety statement and risk assessment that is reviewed annually or more often if required and which is readily available to all members of the school community.
4. The school should have a Health and Safety committee with representation from the school staff, Board of Management, parents and children. This committee should be responsible for reviewing the schools safety statement and risk assessment annually, reviewing all incidents and near misses each school term and should report to the schools Board of Management. The report to the Board of Management should identify any identified trends in accidents and near misses and any serious incidents.
5. The school should appoint a key spokesperson in relation to all matters relating to health and safety issues, to ensure clear messages are sent to parents and children.
6. Risk assessment should cover the individual school’s needs but also must cover the areas of:
 - a. Supervision before and after school
 - b. School trips
 - c. First Aid
 - d. Building standards and safety
 - e. Playground safety
 - f. Curriculum safety issues e.g. Science, P.E. Art, I.T. etc.
 - g. School car park
 - h. Accesses and egress from school premises.

- i. Visitors to the school
 - j. Food safety
- 7. Health and safety in schools must be supported and financed by the Department of Education and Skills.
- 8. All members of the school community should receive Health and Safety training appropriate to their level of involvement and role within the school.
- 9. The Health and Safety Authority needs to actively engage with the issue of children's safety in schools and should carry out regular audits of schools' policies, practices and adherence by schools to relevant legislation.

NPC Policy position - Child Protection- Revised March 2014

1. The child must be at the centre of all child protection work.
2. All schools must have a child protection policy and guidelines in place that are in line with Children First and the Department of Education and Skills child protection policy.
3. Each child protection policy must include a child protection code of behaviour for all members of the school. This code will set out the standard in which children in the school should be treated.
4. Every school's child protection policy and practice must be reviewed yearly with the whole school community (all school staff, parents, children and Board of Management) involvement.
5. The child protection policy should be sent to the local Children First Officer for comment when it has been developed and subsequently if any changes to the document are planned.
6. All members of the school community (including staff, parents, Board of management members and other adults who are connected and work with the school), should receive child protection training appropriate to their level of involvement and role within the school. Individuals should receive updated training every two years.
7. There should be effective interagency communication and co-operation between the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs at a National and Community level. There must be clear transparent standards and procedures of how this collaboration must operate.
8. The Stay Safe Programme must be compulsory in all primary schools in Ireland. Full implementation of the Stay Safe programme should be regularly audited. Training should be provided to parents regarding the Stay Safe programme and how to support their child.
9. All adults who work with children or have contact with children in Primary school community must have background checks completed. This background check should include but not rely solely on Garda vetting.

10. The complete recruitment procedure employed by schools for any position voluntary or paid must be based on good child protection practice.
11. Child protection and prevention policies and practices in schools should be audited by the Department of Education and Skills through the Inspectorate.
12. There must be a 24-hour child protection service available to ensure children receive the most appropriate child protection services regardless of what time or day the risk is identified.
13. Child Protection must be the responsibility of the Child Protection agencies in the community. It is therefore the professionals in these services that need to make key decisions that will keep children safe. This particularly relates to sharing information regarding the identification of people who are on the sex offenders register known to be living in local communities.

NPC Policy position - Effective school systems

Good Outcomes for all Children

- Children must not be left behind. International research shows the benefit of ensuring effective mechanisms are in place to support children who are academically falling behind their peers. (McKinsey report)
- NPC calls for research to be conducted on holistic outcomes for the child and their interplay with the education system. This research must involve parents, teachers, child and other relevant persons.
- All children's needs are equally important and equally relevant to their educational lives.
- Children need to be supported in all areas for their best outcomes to be achieved.
- It is the responsibility of the whole school community to be aware of all services that can support children and families.
- Quality of instruction for children must be of a high standard.

Leadership-Principal

- The post of Principal must have a high professional status.
- Professional standards of recruitment and selection should be implemented for Principal positions.
- There must be compulsory training for Principals before entering the post.
- Continuous professional development must be made available for Principals.
- It is essential that ALL Principals have a local peer support network consisting of other Principals within their locality.

Selection Recruitment and Training

There must be policies in place for the selection, recruitment, training and career-long development of teachers which should include:

- Selection of undergraduate teaching students should not be purely points based but should show rigorous assessment of suitability for teaching and working with children.
- NPC supports the extension of the current teacher training programme to a four year period. Teacher training must address all aspects of the development and education needs of the child and the teacher.
- All personnel involved in the selection and recruitment of teachers must undergo specific relevant training.
- Consideration should be shown to include all demographics of Irish Society into the teaching profession.

Professional On-going training, development and support for teachers

- Professional Development of teachers should be co-ordinated by the Principal and should include personal and interpersonal development.
- The scheduling of teachers' professional development should not impact negatively on children's education.
- It is essential that Professional Development of teachers is pupil-focused, and relevant both to the teachers' development and the needs of the school.
- There should be on-going and on-site continual Professional Development that should include such activities as mentoring and collaborative work.
- Principals must put systems in place that encourage and facilitate reflective practice.
- An independent employee support service should be available to all school personnel.

Class Size

- Government policy decisions regarding the class sizes in Ireland should be research-based and child-centred.
- Class-size ratio should be 15:1 in infant classes and 30:1 in junior classes. These two ratios are interdependent. It will only be acceptable for a child to be in a junior class size of 30:1 if they have experienced their entire infant years in a class ratio of 15:1. This will provide for an average class size of 24:1. (N.B. These class ratios are maximum figures.)
- There must be improved communication to develop an effective partnership with the whole school community.
- Every school should have Broadband Internet access and relevant hardware.
- Schools must be supported to use all methods of communication available to them including technology. The whole school community should receive the training necessary to support this.
- The whole school community's skills should be utilised to develop and support communication mechanisms.
- The Parent Association must be supported to communicate with other parents and the whole school community.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

- Parents of children in ECE should be involved in decision and policymaking on matters that affect their children.
- Parents should be full partners in ECE as this both lays the foundation for positive parental involvement throughout the child's educational life and help parents fulfil their responsibility in supporting their child to reach their full potential.
- Children and their Parents must be able to expect the best possible standard of ECE.
- There must be equality of access for all children to the free pre-school year places.

Community Involvement

Primary schools are cornerstones of communities. Everything possible should be done to ensure that the school benefits from the community at large and the community benefits from the school.

Funding

Primary education should be funded to the degree that school management decisions can be made on an educational and a children's needs basis.

NPC Policy position – Parental Involvement

The Education Act of 1998 must be fully implemented, in all schools, regarding parents involvement in their children’s education.

Parenting

- Parent education should be provided in the areas of
 - Family literacy
 - The Irish education system
 - English and Irish language
 - Supporting transition from primary to post primary education.

Communicating

Principle

Communication should be transparent and open at all levels

Communication - Parent level

- All schools must have a school handbook for parents. This handbook must include all relevant information for the child and the parent. This should include information on:
 - An explicit statement regarding communication with parents and children in the school
 - Copies of all school policies
 - Information on the “typical school day”
 - School calendar for the year

Information on the curriculum

- There must be two parent teacher meetings per school year. Appropriate scheduling for these should be decided in consultation with teachers, parents and the principal.
- There should be a written report for each child twice a year. This should be a report that gives an opportunity for the child, the parent and the teacher to have a viewpoint.
- Parents must be given written information regarding any assessments that their children may undergo, whether these are standard tests or specialised.
- All children with special education needs must have a written individual education plan. This plan should be drawn up in consultation with and the involvement of parents who must also be provided with a written copy of the plan on finalisation.

Communication-Parent body

- There must be a minimum of one open meeting per school year between the parent association and the Board of Management. The agenda should be a joint agenda.
- There should be a minimum of one class meeting per school year, between the teacher and the parents of children in that class. This should happen at the beginning of the first term.
- The whole school plan should be provided to all parents at the beginning of the school year.
- The Board of Management and the Principal must support the Parent Association to develop and progress as a communication mechanism for all parents in the school.
- There should be a parents section on all school websites.

Volunteering - recruit and organise parent help and support

Principle

NPC believes that all schools should involve and include parents and the wider community as a valuable resource to support children's educational lives.

- All schools should have a volunteer policy that must be drawn up and reviewed in consultation with parents in the school. This policy must be developed taking into consideration the individual needs of the school but must address issues relating to:
 - Recruitment and selection of volunteers
 - Training and support for volunteers.
 - Volunteer welfare

The policy must also be clear, that volunteers who offer their services to work with children during school hours must carry out this work under the direct supervision of teaching staff.

- All schools should appoint, where possible, a volunteer co-ordinator from within the parent body. The co-ordinator's responsibility is to liaise with the whole school community and the Principal.
- A regular audit should be carried out to gather information regarding all the available skills that are available within the whole school community.
- Child protection and welfare must be of paramount consideration in all volunteering activities. The school's child protection policy must be reviewed in light of the school's volunteering policy and activities.
- Where possible an appropriate space should be found within the school for parents and volunteers to meet.

Learning at Home-provide information and ideas to families about how to help their child at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning

Principle

Research suggests that when parents work closely with their children's school the children perform better irrespective of social background, size of family or even the level of parental education. Therefore, parents whilst teaching their children so much informally must also be given opportunities to support and be involved in the formal education of their child.

In order to support their child's education parents need:

- Information for families on concepts, attitudes and knowledge required for pupils in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on the value of and how to support homework/learning at home.
- Participation in setting their child's learning goals each year.

Decision Making - Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

It is the right and responsibility of all parents to be included in school decisions and in developing parent leadership and representation within the school.

- In accordance with the Education Act 1998, Principals and Boards of Management must consult and give due consideration to parents on all matters that affect children in the school.
- The role of the National Parents Council in supporting parents must be acknowledged by the members of the school community.
- The parent association must be the decision making structure within schools that co-ordinate the parents' views.
- Parents must be truly supported, trained and empowered to participate in the governance of primary schools through the Board of Management.
- Information must be provided to all parents regarding the decision making structure and personnel involved within the school.
- Parents must be supported to make informed decisions at every level of the education system
- All selection and recruitment of parent representatives within the primary school system must be done in an open and transparent way in consultation with the parent body of the school.
- Parents, through the NPC must be a partner in the decision making process at a local, regional and national level.

Collaborating with the community

The school must be seen as an integral part of each community, contributing to and benefiting from all aspects of that community.

- The resources and facilities of the school must be made available to the community where practicable and vice versa.
- For the benefit of all children and in particular children with special educational needs, strong links must be made between the school and local community services both statutory and non-statutory.
- There must be collaboration at a local level between educational providers with regard to their capacity and resources e.g. transportation, sports facilities.

NPC policy position – Patronage - revised March 2014

The National Parents Council Primary considers that all children's and families' beliefs must be respected and valued within the education system. The Patron Bodies in primary schools have a responsibility to ensure that this is the experience that all children and families encounter on their journey through primary education. The following are key components that must be integral to any patronage model for primary education.

- Every school should have education as its primary ethos.
- Effective and meaningful Parental involvement must be a core feature in all decisions at all levels, especially on issues relating to the choice of patronage for new schools and in the case of an existing school changing its patron.
- Integrity of the curriculum must be protected under any patronage model.
- A patron must have responsibility for ensuring that they have competent trained members of all of the Boards of Management in their care.
- A patron must be open and transparent in all decision making.
- Patron bodies must publish their policy and ethos for primary education to ensure information and transparency for parental choice.

In addition to the above key components, the National Parents Council Primary believes that new structures need to be developed and implemented to ensure proper processes are in place and followed, that an open and transparent system is in place for children and families. NPC believes that a National Body for Patrons should be established. The Body will be comprised of representatives from all the education partners and its functions will include:

- The setting of national standards required for Patrons.
- Maintaining a register of Patrons.
- Accepting of new Patron applicants on to the register
- The removal of Patrons from the Register when required to do so.
- Ensuring process and procedure is adhered to in any case of the transference of Patronage in schools.
- The development and operation of a complaint mechanism for all complaints regarding Patronage issues based on the set standards for Patrons.

The National Body for Patrons needs to be subject to a four yearly independent review, to ensure the National Body operates in a fair, efficient and effective manner.

National standards set by the National Body must ensure Patron bodies act in a standardised transparent manner. NPC believes that the following factors should be considered in the drawing up of National standards for Patron bodies.

- Patron bodies must demonstrate how they provide social, educational and religious inclusion in their policies and practices.
- Patron bodies must provide education for children within the context of the Community, Country and World that they live in.
- Whilst Patrons are entitled to have and promote a particular ethos within the school, the Patron must also demonstrate how they will respect and protect all children's and families' values and beliefs within the school.
- The maxim of all Patrons must be to develop the potential of each and every child through their physical, emotional, social, moral, ethical and intellectual education by encouraging and managing schools well.

NPC policy position - Special Education

The Constitution of Ireland states that all citizens are equal. Children with special educational needs should have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs.

Assessment of Need

All parts of the EPSEN act should be enacted

More specifically;

- A child should be referred for assessment by a relevant professional (teacher, principal, doctor, health nurse, preschool teacher etc) at the time a concern is first identified. When a parent expresses concerns these should be taken into account by the relevant professionals.
- The assessment should be led by the appropriate professional (psychiatrist/ psychologist etc) but should also include inputs from a multi disciplinary team where necessary.
- The assessment should be commenced as soon as practicable, but not later than 1 month after referral and should be completed not later than 3 months from the initial referral date. The need for further assessment and the nature of that assessment should be reviewed within a minimum of a 2 year period by relevant professionals and the parents of the child.
- Professional assessments should be appropriate and reflect the individual needs of the child.
- Parents and the child, where appropriate, should be involved in the assessment from the outset and throughout the decision making process.
- Once the assessment is completed an IEP (individual education plan) should be prepared and commenced within 1 month.

Individual Education Plan

All parts of the EPSEN act should be enacted

More specifically:

- All children with an identified special need should have an IEP
- The principal teacher must have overall responsibility for the children in their school with special educational needs and is responsible for the development of their IEP's.

The process of developing an IEP is important; the following steps should be adhered to;

1. Information Gathering; as a general principle all those who regularly work with, or live with the child, should contribute (in writing or in person at a meeting) to the IEP. The people in this group and the child should form the IEP team.
2. Meeting: Within 1 month of an assessment identifying a special education need a meeting of all relevant personnel (including those identified in point 1) should be convened. The outcome of this meeting should be to identify obtainable goals for the child and to identify the personnel and environment needed to support the child to achieve these goals.
3. An IEP should then be prepared which is particular to the needs of the child and is agreed by all members of the IEP team.
4. Ideally the IEP should be agreed in September and reviewed in January and June.
5. A copy of the IEP should be discussed with the parents and everyone who works with the child in the school and in other environments.
6. When the IEP is reviewed it should be agreed and updated accordingly.

Resource Provision

When an IEP is in place the identified needs of the child should be met.

These needs may include care needs, therapies, resource teaching, behaviour therapy etc.

Where these needs require the input of a professional the professional person identified should be under the jurisdiction of the DES and should carry out their work with the child within the school context. This would require the DES to employ a broader range of therapeutic services for the education sector.

Transition Points for Children

Transition can be from Pre School to primary school, primary school to secondary school and to and from special schools to both primary and secondary schools. It may also involve movement to and from special classes.

All parts of the EPSEN act should be enacted

More specifically the following steps should be adhered to:

- **Step 1:** 2 years in advance of the transition the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) identifies all options available for the child.
- **Step 2:** 1 year in advance of the transition all the relevant documentation pertaining to the child is collated (IEP, psychological assessment, speech/language reports etc). The appropriate school is identified.
- **Step 3:** there should be a mutual sharing of information between child and school in preparation for enrolment.
- **Step 4:** The school should apply for the resources needed to support the child's enrolment in the school in good time for the child's first day.
- **Step 5:** The Parents and the child should meet with all relevant personnel within the school.
- **Step 6:** A plan should be developed by all interested parties for the initial integration of the child into the school.

Location of Education Provision

Special schools or special units should be located on the same site as the main stream school and should be known by the same name.

NPC policy position – School Management

School Level

- Board to be known as “Board of Governance” (BOG).
- Reports should be read from the Principal, Teacher Rep, and Parents Association or in the case where none exist a parents’ representative. A report written by the children of the school should also be considered at some point in the meeting.
- All members to receive timely and adequate training which should address at a minimum their roles and responsibilities.
- The Board should report back to Parent body following a meeting.
- Boards should elect the Chairperson who should sit for one Board term only.
- All reports should be available from the school website for transparency purposes and available on request.
- Increase the numbers of Parent nominees on the BOG to 4 members or 2 in the case of smaller schools.
- All roles of the members should be clearly defined.
- BOG must recognise Parent Associations – This must be enforced!
- There should be National supervision of how Boards of Governance operate.
- Election of Board members must be transparent.
- Chairpersons should not hold positions in more than one school.
- Parents need to understand the role of the BOG and how they can interface with them. This can be done through the PA.
- Parents also need to understand the role of the PA.
- The Principal of the school should not be a member of the Board but should attend Board meetings as an ex-officio member. The principal should not be entitled to a vote at Board meetings.
- All school policies should be developed with a whole school approach ensuring the voice of school staff, Board of Governance, parents and students are included.
- All school policies should be published on the school website, where one exists, or made available to the PA and individual parents in the case where no website exists.

A National Structure to Support Structure should be developed

This support structure should:

- constitute an intermediate body between the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and school management
- be funded and monitored by DES, which would be responsible for the standard of service provided
- amalgamate existing management bodies, Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), etc. into one national body providing a single high standard of support for all schools
- be independent of patrons
- include appointees from patrons, DES & independent experts who will constitute a reservoir of skills and experience for Boards of Management to draw upon
- be staffed by skilled specialists in the following areas:
 - Human Resources
 - Training
 - Assessment
 - Delivery and co-ordination of resources
 - Financing of schools
 - Legal issues
- be responsible for the training and support of boards of management
- be responsible for monitoring the quality and compliance of school governance
- be equally accessible to all board of management members, not just the principal & chair, with accessibility a priority, e.g. publications, helpline, online support & training, etc.
- have a clear and easily accessible complaints procedure for use by parents, teachers, school employees and board members
- be responsible for trying to resolve complaints/issues in schools on behalf of the DES
- in cases where it cannot resolve the issue, refer the matter to the DES & make recommendations

Dept of Education & Skills Role on Governance and schools

Policy

- There must be list of policies that schools must have in place.
- The DES should ensure that these policies are comprehensible, published, include appropriate supporting procedures and accessible to all members of the school community.
- The DES should provide a template for each policy and a checklist to ensure each school has all the required policies in place. These templates should be published on the DES website.
- Depending on the significance and type of policy area the DES will be appropriately prescriptive in guiding the policy through its template provision.
- The DES should develop policy in consultation with the education partners and other relevant interest groups/experts and always with best practice and child centeredness at the core.
- Policies should consistent and coherent with all other school policies.
- All policies should be reviewed at least once every three years both at a DES level and school level. All policy reviews should be clearly documented and communicated to all stakeholders.
- The voice of the child must be heard in the development of policy process.
- Each policy must state that the policy should be reviewed, assessed and updated as necessary and this process should be reported by the school to:
 - ✓ School BOG ongoing
 - ✓ Parents Association annually
 - ✓ Students
 - ✓ DES annually
 - ✓ Inspectorate during any evaluation

Finance

- Schools should be fully resourced by the DES to support the principle of universal free education.
- DES should ensure resources allow that all children are resourced equally based on their needs.
- There should be a prohibition on schools fundraising or looking for funds from voluntary contributions to fund any area directly related to the provision of required educational standards as laid down by the DES.
- Where fundraising is appropriate and when the financial position of the school is communicated to the parent body, fundraising must only be engaged in within clear fundraising guidelines laid down by the DES.
- The relationship between the parent and the school should be an educational relationship and not a financial relationship.
- There should be full transparency and openness across the whole school community regarding the school financial report. The Board of Management in each school should issue a summarised financial report for the school year to all parents. Schools should be offered guidance and support regarding this issue if needed by the DES.
- The DES should provide guidance to schools on how to access the local community as a valuable resource and support for the school.

Welfare

Healthy and supported children are in a better position to learn.

- The DES should work with the HSE to provide a universal screening programme for children from their free school year placement through primary education. Screening should include hearing, eyesight and dental. In addition, social, behavioural, psychological and speech development should be observed and reported on as appropriate, by staff in early childhood settings and teachers at primary level. Assessments should be sought where indicated. Initial and on-going training for child care workers and infant teachers should be provided to support this work

- Universal vaccination and dental hygiene service should be provided during the child's primary school years in consultation and agreement with parents.
- The DES should ensure that a minimum dietary requirement is met for all children in school. This should involve supporting parents through education and information and in appropriate situations providing resources to schools to meet this requirement within the school.
- The DES must ensure that children's physical well being is supported through the education system. A physical education and recreation policy should be mandatory in all schools. The DES should provide a template for this policy and implementation should be monitored as described under the previous policy section.
- There should be a more co-ordinated approach between the DES and the DCYA and this should cascade down to result in a better co-ordinated approach between schools and the local HSE services.