

Functions of the board

The board's main function is to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the children and to provide an appropriate education for each child at the school.

In carrying out its functions, the board must

- Act in accordance with Ministerial policy
- Uphold the ethos of the school and be accountable to the patron for this. The word *ethos* is not used in the Education Act 1998. It is described in the Act as the "characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school".
- Act in accordance with the law and with any deed, charter, or similar instrument relating to the school.
- Consult with and inform the patron of decisions and proposals
- Publish the school's policy on admission to and participation in the school, including its policy on expulsion and suspension of students, admission and participation by students with disabilities or with other special educational needs
- Ensure that the school's admissions policy respects the choices of parents and the principles of equality and that it complies with Ministerial directions, having regard to the school ethos and the constitutional rights of all concerned
- Have regard for the principles and requirements of a democratic society and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in our society
- Have regard to the efficient use of resources (particularly the grants provided by the state), the public interest in the affairs of the school and accountability to students, parents and the community
- Use the resources provided by the state to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with disabilities or special needs, including, if necessary, the adaptation of buildings or provision of special equipment

How boards of management operate

The role and method of operation of boards of management of primary schools was agreed by the Department of Education and Science, the school managers, parents and teachers in 2003. The Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedures (2007) set out the principles on which it is based:

- Governance structures for schools should respond to the diversity of school types, ownership and management structures that is the central feature of the structure of Irish education at primary level.
- Governance structures should reflect the plurality of Irish society, including the rights and needs of minority groups.
- The composition of boards should reflect and promote participation and partnership in the running of schools among patrons/trustees/owners/governors, parents, teachers and the wider community.
- The composition and operation of boards of management should reflect and promote public accountability to the immediate community served by the school and to the state as the predominant source of funding for schools.

- The recognition of the responsibility of patrons/trustees/owners/governors to maintain and promote a distinctive ethos in their schools and to ensure the practical means to discharge this responsibility.
- Board practice should facilitate and promote commitment by parents to the affairs of the school and the functioning of an effective parents' association.

The Rules also frequently refer to the need to communicate with parents and staff and the school community, for example, they state that the board "shall pursue a policy of openness and have a positive approach to sharing information with the school community".

The board must have a procedure for informing parents about its activities.

Who is on the board?

The composition of the board of management for schools is: 3 people nominated by the Patron – the chairperson, the principal and one other person. 2 Parents are elected along with a Teacher

- There are certain criteria set out for choosing the 2 community representatives on the board of management.
- The people appointed must have a commitment to the ethos of the school. In the case of Catholic schools, they must have an understanding of and commitment to Catholic education as outlined in the Deed of Trust for Catholic Schools. For Church of Ireland schools, they must be members of that Church; in Presbyterian schools, they must also be church members and in Muslim schools they should be members of the Muslim community in Ireland (in all cases the patron of the school can decide otherwise). For Educate Together Schools they must have a commitment to the ethos of the school.
- They must have skills that are complementary to the board's requirements
- They must be interested in education but normally should not be parents of students currently attending the school or teachers currently on the staff
- In Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna, they are expected to have a good knowledge of the Irish language.
- The need to maintain a gender balance must be a consideration

In general, members of the board may not hold any interest in the school property or get paid for serving on the board. The Education Act 1998 explicitly clarifies that being on the board does not confer any property interest on a board member. Employees, other than the teacher representatives, may not be on the board.