



Educational and Training Boards Schools

National Parents' Association

Serving the needs of parents for over 35 years.

Parent's Association's Handbook.



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Etb Schools Npa



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The Etb-Schools-Npa

The Etb-Schools-Npa is an organisation made up of all the Parents Associations in ETB schools. From these associations two parents in each area are elected to be the parents representatives on their ETB board. These parent representatives make up the executive of the association and meet approximately once every six weeks in school time.

In 2013 the 16 ETB's were established replacing the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VEC's). The ETB's manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centre's delivering education and training programmes.

The Etb-Schools-Npa provide support and guidance to parents associations by offering training and updates on educational matters. Along with providing regular talks on a variety of relevant topics.

The organisation holds an Annual General Meeting in March/April where officers are elected. Details of the constitution and policies of Etb-Schools-Npa can be found on our website.

The aim of the elected executive is to promote the objectives of the association at all times and to keep the membership as fully aware as possible of the work of the association.

What is the ETB ?

ETB's are statutory authorities which have responsibility for education and training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETB's manage and operate second-level schools, further education colleges, multi-faith community national schools and a range of adult and further education centres delivering education and training programmes.

The general functions of an Education and Training Board as stated under the Education and Training Board's Act 2013 are to:

- 1 Establish and maintain recognised schools, centres for education and education or training facilities in its functional area,
- 2 When directed to do so by the Minister:
 - establish and maintain recognised schools in its functional area,
 - establish and maintain centres for education in its functional area,
 - maintain centres for education or recognised schools in its functional area, and
 - establish, maintain or resource education or training facilities in its functional area,

Plan, provide, coordinate and review the provision of education and training, including education and training for the purpose of employment, and services ancillary thereto in its functional area in:

- recognised schools or centres for education maintained by it,
 - education or training facilities maintained or resourced by it,
 - children detention schools,
 - prisons,
 - facilities maintained by other public service bodies,
- 3 Enter into arrangements with, and provide support services to, education or training providers,
 - 4 Establish scholarships,
 - 5 Adopt a strategy statement,
 - 6 Adopt an annual service plan,
 - 7 Cooperate with anybody nominated to carry out internal audit functions,
 - 8 Provide education and training at the request of, and on behalf of, anybody which funds.
 - 9 Training out of money provided to that body by the Oireachtas,
 - 10 Support the provision, coordination, administration and assessment of youth work services in its functional area and provide such information as may be requested by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to such support, and
 - 11 Assess whether the manner in which it performs its functions is economical, efficient and effective.

ETB's are active in local communities through the direct provision of training and education programmes delivered in training centres, colleges and other training and educational settings. In this way, ETB's seek to make a real difference to the lives of the people they serve. The main functions of the ETB's are as follows:

- Plan provision of education services
- Ensure provision is economical, efficient & effective

- Adopt and submit education plan
- Adopt and submit service plan
- Consult with BoM, Students, Parents, ETB Staff and other ETB's where appropriate.

Why a Parents Association?

It gives parents at local and national level an opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas on the very important subject of education for their children. To make this voice effective we must be organised, therefore it is in the interest of parents to have a strong Parents Association in every school.

Parents who are active in Parents Associations show their children that they, the Parents, are interested not only in their academic progress at school but in their development as well. Parents will know more about the school, the teachers and any extracurricular activities that are taking place.

If there are any problems such as bullying, drugs, peer pressure etc. these can be discussed in a friendly atmosphere with other Parents and the Principal or Deputy Principal who are expected to be present for some of the time at these meetings and make a report. Meetings normally take place once a month during the school year.

Through a Parents Association parents in co-operation with the Board of Management and Principal have a voice and say in the education of their children.

Why does your School need a Parents Association?

All parents/guardians should be involved in providing input into all the policy making at their school in areas such as:

Admissions Policy

Codes' of behaviour.

Careers Information.

RSE Policy.

SEN Policy.

DEIS Plan.

School Development Plans.

Critical Incident Response Plan.

Guidelines for Parents Associations.

- Parents need help, support and information. This is a vital area where Parent Associations can help.
- Parents are stakeholders in the school and have to be consulted in all school policy reviews.
- It is important in setting up a Parents Association that the partnership is seen as mutually beneficial to Parents, School and Pupils and that it is also seen as non-threatening.

- We have to establish a high degree of trust. If there is trust and integrity between parents, and the school, all parties benefit.
- Parents must be able to raise points of disagreement with the school in an organised manner or the partnership ceases to be effective.
- It is important to remember that the Educational/Technical and Professional aspects of education belong to the school, not to the parents.
- The parent body is, potentially the most powerful group in the education system and the power of an organised parent body can be effective in influencing the relevant bodies i.e. Government Departments.

Purposes of Parent Associations.

- To represent parents interests.
- To review school policies.
- To provide support for school management.
- To provide a forum for educational discussion and a means of communication.
- To foster educational partnership between home and school for the benefit of children.

Find practical ways to co-operate and support the work done by the school.

- Be a core part of the literacy and numeracy plans of your school.
- Assist with transition year.

- Introduce/support homework clubs.
- Introduce/support book rental scheme.
- Concerts, drama nights, exhibitions.
- Sporting events.
- Career nights.

Promoting the Work of the Parents Association.

It is very important to Create a dedicated Parents' Association email address, for example: stmaryspa@gmail.com. This makes handing over roles much easier and also keeps everything in the one place.

- Work with your school to create a Parents' Association Page within the school's own website.
- At the First-Year Parents' Introduction Night, AGM and other events, request email addresses from the Parents.
- Create online newsletters, highlight the work you have done to date and promote future events. Showcase the achievements of the school and students.
- Consider providing agreed minutes that can be emailed out to the parents after the Parents' Association meetings.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

It is important to hold an Annual General Meeting once a year and to ensure that all parents and guardians are given adequate notice (minimum of 14 days before the AGM) and are invited to attend. (notice can be by email, text, or social media).

An invitation should be extended to the Principal to attend and make a short presentation.

An AGM is generally held during the school year in September or October.

Priorities of the AGM.

- Hold elections for the Parents' Association committee.
- Acknowledge and express thanks to the outgoing committee.
- Encourage all parents and guardians to attend.
- Encourage parents to become members of the Parents' Association.
- Welcome new parents.
- An opportunity for parents to meet each other.

Reports:

- Chairpersons – update on the Parents' Association activities of the previous year.
- Secretaries – update on the work of the Parents' Association for the previous year.
- Treasurers – income and expenditure of the Parents' Association for the year.
- Report from sub-committees/working group, i.e. fundraising committee, policy review committee, Etb-Schools-Npa etc.

Other events which may take place at the AGM include:

- Principal/Board of Management address/presentation.

- Arrange for a speaker/presenter on a particular topic which parents will find interesting.
- Ask parents what activities and events would they like see in place for the new school year.
- Provide a question and answer session on becoming a committee member and the work of the Parents' Association.
- Provide refreshments at the end of the evening which will also give people an opportunity to get to know one another in an informal way.

Sample agenda for an AGM

Start the meeting on time, and allocate a time for each item to ensure that the meeting does not run on too long and to keep the evening interesting.

Venue:

Time:

Agenda:

1. Welcome.
2. Minutes of the last AGM.
3. Chairperson's report.
4. Secretary's report.
5. Financial report.
6. Report from the sub-committees/working groups.
7. Election of new Parents' Association committee.
8. Etb-Schools-Npa news and update.
9. Principal/Board of Management address/Guest speaker.
10. Close of meeting.

Role of Officers

- The Chairperson is responsible for the conduct of meetings; endeavours to let all viewpoints be heard and comes to clearly stated resolutions. Where a matter is put to a vote the chairperson has a second and casting vote in the event of a tie.
- The contact person with Chairperson Board of Management, Secretary Board of Management and Principal.
- Consults with the Secretary on the agenda and Supports the Secretary in their role.
- The Vice-Chairperson / Secretary takes over the chairpersons duties if the chairperson is not available.

Role of Secretary

- The Secretary records the minutes; informs the membership of forthcoming meetings and agenda for same; writes and receives correspondence on behalf of the association and brings all correspondence to the notice of the members
- Only decisions need to be noted in the minutes as well as a record of who is to acts upon these decisions.
- Chairperson and Secretary need to act and support each other and act on behalf of the Association between meetings.
Liaises with school management, parent body as need arises.

Role of Treasurer

- The Treasurer opens and operates a bank account on behalf of the Association; is responsible for all money received; prepares

a statement of accounts for each meeting and prepares and presents an annual account at AGM.

- Bank account should have a minimum two signatories.
- No payment should be made without invoice/ receipts.

The Parents' Association does not get involved in:

- Curriculum.
- Appointment of teachers.

Effective Meetings

- Effective meetings have the following characteristics:
- All parties are well-prepared.
- All documentation for discussion is sent out 7 days in advance and read by all participants.
- Everyone is aware of the need, purpose and objectives of the meeting.
- Meetings start on time and keep to an agenda.
- The meeting is efficiently managed by the Chairperson.

What happens at a meeting?

- Policies are reviewed.
- Ideas are discussed.
- Information is shared.
- Activities are planned.

- Decisions are made.
- Work is reviewed.
- Differences are resolved.

Meetings give members the chance to take part in running the association and they are where most of the work is carried out. However every meeting should have a clear agenda.

- There should be a quorum for every meeting. (Minimum 4)
- Minutes should always be taken to provide a formal record of decisions made at the meeting.
- Every meeting should have an agenda.
- All meetings should begin at a stated time and finish within an agreed reasonable time.

How often should we meet?

Association meetings are usually held once a month during the school calendar.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) – once a year. (September/October)

Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) – only in an unusual situation with just one item on the Agenda.

Why have meetings?

- Work for the good of students and the school community.
- Confirms collaboration and partnership within the school community.
- Obtain information.
- Share information.
- Discuss school policies and plans.
- Make plans and monitor activities.
- Reach and communicate decisions.

Parents' Association Meeting: Draft Agenda – items for consideration

- Apologies.
- Minutes of last meeting.
- Matters arising out of the minutes.
- Financial report.
- Correspondence.
- Principal's report.
- School policy reviews.
- Board of Management agreed report to Parents' Association.
- Ask schools to remind parents of meetings via social media.
- Any other business.

Other items:

- Etb-Schools-Npa business.
- Upcoming talks/training.
- School success.
- Newsletter.
- Date of next meeting.

Fundraising

Many schools engage in various forms of fundraising and other activities organised by parents, students and teachers. Fundraising for the school by the Parents' Association will be done with the prior agreement of the Principal and/or the Board of Management. The Parents' Association and school authority will agree as to the specific purposes for which funds are to be raised by the Parents' Association.

The Parents Association should maintain its own bank account.

As each Parents' Association is unique, so too will their constitution. When drawing up your constitution the following may be considered:

- Ethos of the school.
- The structure of the committee.
- How many are on the committee.
- How the committee elections will be held.

- Revising and amending the constitution (recommend every 5 years).
- Setting a quorum (minimum 4).

Sample of a Parent Association Constitution.

1. Name

The Association shall be named ‘ _____ Parents Association’.

2. Membership

All parents of children attending _____ are automatically members of the Association. In this document the term Parent is as defined in The Education Act 1998. (See Appendix 1)

3. Objectives

Parents are the prime educators of their children. It is they who have the responsibility of ensuring the moral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and emotional development of their children.

In view of this belief the Parents’ Association advocates the following objectives:

3.1 To promote and foster home-school cooperation.

- 3.2 To act in an advisory and consultative capacity in relation to the school and its policies.
- 3.3 To keep parents advised as to their rights in relation to representation on the Board of Management
- 3.4 To advise the Parents' Representatives on the Board of Management of the views and opinions of the parents and to offer such other advice as the Association sees fit.
- 3.6 To encourage parents to participate in the promotion, development and financing of extra-curricular activities in the school.

4. Parents Council

- 4.1 The affairs of the association shall be conducted by a Council.
- 4.2 The conduct of the election of a new Council shall be the responsibility of the outgoing Council or, in its, absence, the Principal.
- 4.3 Parents representatives on the Board of Management are entitled to full membership of the Council.
- 4.4 Representation shall be on an area as of _____ and its environs.
- 4.5 The Principal, Deputy Principal and a staff representative shall be ex-officio members of the Council. Only two of the above need to attend at any one time.

- 4.6 The Council may co-opt members where vacancies arise during the term of office of the Council.
- 4.7 A member must resign on ceasing to be a parent in the school.
- 4.8 The term of office is for a one-year term. Members can be re-elected each year but cannot hold the same executive post for longer than 2 consecutive years. All members must have a child attending the school.
- 4.9 Elections shall be held at the AGM, at the end of the Councils term of office.
- 4.10 The procedure for the election is outlined in Appendix 2.

5. Parents Council Meetings

- 5.1 The Council shall meet at least once each term with two meetings taking place in the first term.
- 5.2 At the first meeting of the Council in each new school year a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected from those in attendance.
- 5.3 Council resolutions shall be passed by simple majority of those members present and voting. The Chairperson will have the casting vote.
- 5.4 The quorum for all meetings shall be 60% and must include one officer.
- 5.5 Ordinarily members shall be given seven days' notice of meetings.

- 5.6 The Secretary shall keep up to date and accurate minutes of the meetings.
- 5.7 The Council may invite to attend to its meetings such persons as it wishes.
- 5.8 Should a member of the Council be declared, by three quarters of the majority of the Council, to be guilty of conduct, which is prejudicial to the interests of the Association or the school or to be incapable of discharging his/her duty as a member of the Council he/she may be discharged from the council.
- 5.9 The first meeting of the new Council will take place as soon as possible after the AGM. This meeting should be attended, by the newly elected Council members and the outgoing Secretary. The outgoing Council may observe proceedings. It is the duty of the outgoing Secretary to oversee correct procedure is adhered to, in relation to the election of a chairperson. Thereafter the newly elected Chairperson takes over.

6. Council Sub-Committees

- 6.1 Sub-committees may be formed by the Council. Such sub-committees may at the discretion of the Council, include persons other than a parent or a guardian. All decisions taken by a sub-committee must be submitted to and ratified by the Council.

7. General Meetings of Parents Association

- 7.1 The Annual General Meeting of Parents Association shall be held in September/October, where possible, each year. Notice will be given to all parents of the children enrolled in the school.
- 7.2 Extraordinary General Meetings will be called at the discretion of the Council or when they receive a written request from 10% or more of members.
- 7.3 General meetings will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Parents Council, if the Chairperson is unavailable the vice chair, secretary or treasurer shall chair the meeting. Should no officers be available the members can nominate one of the group to chair the meeting.

8. Annual Reports

- 8.1 The Chairperson and the Treasurer will submit written annual reports for consideration by members attending the AGM.

9. Finance

- 9.1 All Bank/Credit Accounts shall be in the name of _____ Parents Council. Cheques or withdrawals drawn on behalf of the Association shall be signed by any two of the following Chairperson, Treasurer and Nominated Signatory.

- 9.2 The use of funds in excess of € _____ may only be decided at a properly convened meeting of the Council at which any two of the three Officers are present.
- 9.3 In the event of the Council disbanding or ceasing to function, all funds shall automatically revert to a fund to be managed by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Chairpersons of the Board of Management.

10. Parameters of Association and Council

The Association and Council shall not concern itself with the investigation or resolution of problems relating to individual pupils, parents or staff. These problems will be for determination between the individual concerned, the school authorities and Board of Management.

11. Changes to Constitution

- 11.1 Articles of the Association may be changed at Annual General Meeting and such rules shall not be changed subsequently except at a General Meeting.
- 11.2 Changes to Articles of the Association shall require a two third majority of those present at the meeting. The amended version needs to be ratified by the Council.

Appendix 1

The term 'parent' includes a foster parent, a guardian appointed under the Guardianship of children Acts, 1964 to 1997, or other person acting in loco parentis who has a child who has been adopted under the Adoption Acts, 1952 to 1998, or, where the child has been adopted outside of the State, means the adopter or adopters or the surviving adopter.

Appendix 2

Procedure for Election

The procedure for election of new members will be as follows:

- Election will be held at the AGM
- Notice of an Election shall be given to all parents 14 Days in advance of the date of Election.
- The outgoing Council Executives should attend the meeting.
- Nominations for the Council will be accepted at the AGM in the case where a nominee is not present his/her nomination must be submitted to the secretary in writing on or before the AGM and must contain the nominee's consent and signature of a proposer.
- Executive members must be elected, these are Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.
- Each executive member must be nominated and seconded by different members, then duly elected.