

# BECOMING A COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL (CNS)

INFORMATION FOR BOARDS OF  
MANAGEMENT (BoM) AND STAFF



  
**Community**  
NATIONAL SCHOOLS



**etbi**

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland  
*Boird Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann*

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET?

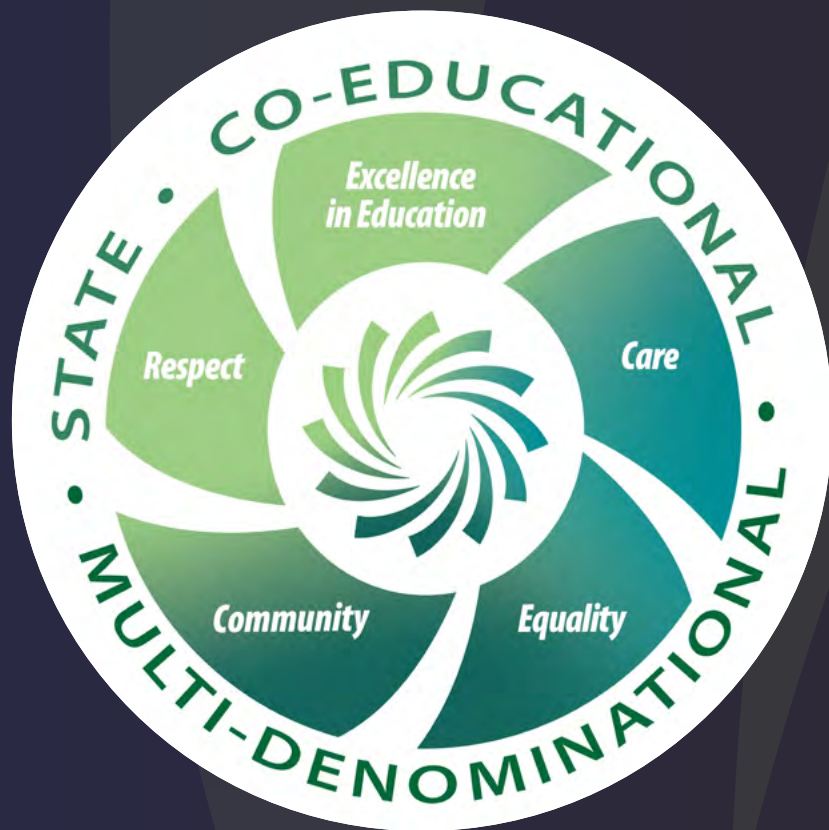


The purpose of this booklet is to inform members of Boards of Managements (BoM) and staff in religious-run schools about the Community National School (CNS) model. It does this by outlining key information about CNSs and describing the similarities and differences between them and other school types.

## What are Community National Schools?

Community National Schools (CNS) are state, co-educational, multi-denominational primary schools underpinned by the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect.

They give equal opportunities to all children, and strive to provide high-quality, multi-denominational, equality-based education to the communities they serve. They were established in 2008 and are under the patronage and management of local Education and Training Boards (ETBs).



## What are Education and Training Boards (ETBs)?

ETBs are state bodies with responsibility for education and training in CNSs, Community Colleges, Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, youth work and a range of adult and further education centres. There are 16 ETBs across the Republic of Ireland serving their local communities.

A list of CNSs under the patronage of ETBs is available at <https://www.etbi.ie/schools-support-directorate/about-cnss/our-schools/>

## What is Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)?

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative body established to collectively represent the sixteen ETBs and promote their interests. ETBI also plays an active role in supporting schools which reconfigure (change patronage) to an ETB. For more information on ETBs and ETBI, visit [www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)



# WHAT ARE THE *SIMILARITIES* BETWEEN YOUR SCHOOL AS IT IS TODAY AND A CNS?

Many aspects of school life remain the same when a school becomes a CNS. The below outlines the main similarities between your school today and a CNS:



## Curriculum

Like all primary schools in Ireland, CNSs teach the national curriculum as prescribed by the Department of Education (DE) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). CNSs have access to the same national support services as all other schools.



## Staffing

All staff remain the same if your school becomes a CNS. However, teachers (including the principal) who wish to continue working in a school with the same religious ethos as their existing school can do so via the main panel of the outgoing patron of the school. The DE has developed guidelines on how this can be facilitated. These are available on the department's website.



## Staff Allocation

Staff allocations are the same as every other primary school and are set out in the annual Staffing Schedule Circular and other relevant circulars.



## Payment of Teachers/Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

All teachers and SNAs, including substitutes, working in CNSs are paid through the primary teachers' and SNA payrolls which are operated by the DE on behalf of school employers.



## Staff Terms and Conditions

The terms and conditions of teachers and SNAs working in CNSs are the same as every other primary school as they are determined by the Minister, in accordance with section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended) including their appointment, promotion and pension arrangements. There are some exceptions which will be listed in the next section.



## Panels

Teachers and SNAs will continue to have panel rights. Teachers will be allowed to access the diocesan panel (in the case of Catholic schools) for a period of 2 years after the school reconfigures. In addition, each ETB has its own teacher and SNA panels.



## Boards of Management (BoM)

Like all primary schools in Ireland, CNSs have a BoM and follow the most recent *Governance Manual for Primary Schools* as developed by the DE. There are some differences in the role of the BoM in CNSs which will be outlined in the next section. ETBI has developed a *Handbook on the Governance Manual for Community National Schools* which provides clarity to members of BoMs on their governance roles and responsibilities.



## Funding

The DE grants remain the same as the current arrangements. In the case of a CNS, funding is lodged directly into the ETB bank account and the Finance Section of the ETB advises the school regarding income, expenditure and balances remaining through regular Finance Reports.

# WHAT ARE THE KEY *DIFFERENCES* BETWEEN YOUR SCHOOL AS IT IS TODAY AND A CNS?

Becoming a CNS will bring changes to how your school currently operates. The below outlines the main differences between your school today and a CNS:



## **Ethos**

Your school, like the vast majority of schools in Ireland, currently has a religious ethos. CNSs have a multi-denominational ethos underpinned by the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect. The *ETBI Patrons' Framework on Ethos* has been developed to support schools in living out the CNS ethos. Your school community will become familiar with this document through ongoing training from your local ETB and ETBI which will support BoMs and staff in bringing the CNS ethos to life.



## **State-funded and state-run**

Community National Schools are Ireland's only state-funded and state-run primary schools as they are under the patronage of ETBs. Primary schools under any other patron e.g., a Bishop, Educate Together, An Foras Pátrúnachta are state-funded, but privately-run. CNSs being state-run is significant as there is a growing appetite amongst the public for the state to take responsibility for key public services e.g., health.



## **Co-educational**

If your school is currently a single-sex school, it will become co-educational if it changes patronage to a CNS.



## ***Goodness Me, Goodness You!***

Denominational schools provide a 'faith formation' programme in one particular religion e.g., the Catholic faith. Children in CNSs follow a 'multi-belief and values education' curriculum called *Goodness Me, Goodness You! (GMGY)*. *GMGY* engages children in identity education, values education, philosophy with/for children and multi-denominational religious education. Teachers and school leaders will be provided with ongoing training to support them in teaching *GMGY*. For more information on *GMGY*, visit [www.cns.ie](http://www.cns.ie)



<sup>1</sup> Any change in these arrangements will be subject to consultation with all stakeholders.

<sup>2</sup> To read the full ethos statement for CNSs, please [click here](#).



## Sacramental Preparation

If your school is currently a Catholic school, it is likely that Catholic children are prepared for their sacraments by their classroom teachers during the school day. This will no longer be the case if your school becomes a CNS. Catholic children will still be able to make their Holy Communion and Confirmation. However, responsibility for preparing children for the sacraments will transfer to the parish. These classes take place after the school day and can be facilitated in either the parish or school building.

Teachers working in the school who are interested and who hold the relevant qualifications may be employed by the parish to undertake this work on their behalf. Such arrangements are between the parish, parents and the relevant teachers and not the responsibility of school management. However, no teacher is obliged to facilitate these lessons. The parish will find an alternative teacher if there are no expressions of interest from staff within the school.



## School Name, Logo/Crest

The name and logo of your school may currently reflect its religious ethos. If your school becomes a CNS, its name and logo will need to change to reflect its multi-denominational ethos. While the name of the reconfigured school should be decided before it re-opens as a CNS, the new crest can be developed over time in consultation with the school community.



## Uniform

Some schools may decide to use a transfer of patronage as an opportunity to change the school's uniform or uniform policy. This can be done over time in consultation with the school community. It is important that parents incur no additional costs in terms of uniform as a result of any changes made. This may mean that some children continue to wear their existing uniform for a period of time.



## Supports from ETBs

As CNSs are under the patronage of ETBs, they receive a broad range of supports and services which may not be available to other schools. ETBs provide ethos, governance, educational, administrative, financial, human resources (HR) and information technology (IT), capital and building supports to schools. These are significant supports and training for principals and BoMs in particular.

Each ETB has a 'Director of Schools' who plays a significant role in supporting the principal of CNSs. Directors of Schools are all experienced school leaders with significant expertise in the leadership of teaching and learning, governance and management of schools. They provide principals, deputy principals and BoMs in CNSs with ongoing support, training and advice.



The Director of Schools is an invaluable support to me as a principal as it is great to have someone with vast experience in educational leadership at the other end of the phone to tease through issues which arise in the school. The Director ensures that I have opportunities to engage with other school leaders across the ETB. It is great to have this support network both locally and nationally within the ETB sector. The more significant issues discussed with the Director can in turn be raised with ETBI who bring them to the attention of the Department of Education and other relevant national stakeholders. This means that we can have a significant influence on national policies regarding issues which directly affect us

Teresa Coughlan, Principal,  
Carrigtwohill CNS, Cork ETB





## Supports from ETBI

As well as supports from ETBs, CNSs also benefit from ongoing support and professional development from ETBI. ETBI provides a range of supports to Directors of Schools (who in turn provide direct supports to CNSs) in terms of school leadership, management, governance and ethos.

ETBI also facilitates a national CNS Principals' Network which facilitate CNS principals to collaborate with one another on various issues, share best practices and discuss how the CNS ethos informs leadership practices.

ETBI also directly supports CNSs (in conjunction with ETBs) in areas relating to the CNS ethos and the *GMGY* curriculum.



## School Policies

Your school's existing policies would have been developed in line with its religious ethos. As a school's ethos permeates all school policies and practices, these will have to be revised to reflect the CNS ethos over time. The local ETB/ETBI have developed numerous template policies in areas such as Admissions, GDPR, Parental Complaints Procedures etc. that will assist the school in this process.



## The Role of the Board of Management:

While the BoM in CNSs plays a central role in the management of the school, there are some key differences in the role of BoMs in CNSs and other school types. The two biggest differences are in relation to finance and employment.

### Finance

While the BoM in a CNS has oversight responsibilities in terms of finance, there is no Treasurer on the school's BoM. The Chief Executive (CE) of the ETB has ultimate responsibility for the financial affairs of the school. The Finance Department in the ETB supports the principal to ensure that the school's finances are in order.

### Employment

If the school becomes a CNS, the ETB becomes the employer (not the paymaster) of all staff rather than the school's BoM. Therefore, all HR/IR issues are no longer the responsibility of the BoM. They are the responsibility of the ETB in conjunction with the school's principal. Each ETB has a dedicated HR Department that supports the principal in this regard.



There are many benefits accruing to the Chairperson and to the Board of Management under the patronage of the Education and Training Board. As a local, democratic and statutory agency, the Education and Training Board is experienced in educational issues and responsive to identified needs. Providing highly supportive and methodical backup for the full range of board and school business, the Education and Training Board offers expert advice and training for all involved in the Community National School. In the increasingly complex administration of education, the Education and Training Board provides invaluable and dynamic supports which underpin teaching and learning in a professional and proactive manner.

Dr. Pádraig Ó'Donnabháin, Chairperson of the BoM;  
Two Mile CNS, Tahilla CNS and Scoil an Ghleanna SNP; Kerry ETB



# EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS<sup>3</sup>:



## **Teachers and SNAs** : What does a change in employer mean for teachers and SNAs?

The following outlines the key areas which remain the same and also includes any changes that occur because of a change in employer.



## **Terms & Conditions**

The terms and conditions of teachers and SNAs remain the same as they are currently, in accordance with Section 24 of the Education Act 1998 (as amended) including their appointment, promotion and pension arrangements, which will remain the same subject to the following exceptions:

- The ETB will become the employer of all teachers and SNAs with effect from the date of transfer of patronage.
- The following nationally agreed policies and procedures will be applicable to Teachers and SNAs employed by an ETB (which are different to the policies of your current school):
  - » Bullying Prevention Policy
  - » Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy
  - » Grievance Procedures for staff employed by ETBs
  - » ETB Complaint Procedure

All the above policies are available on the ETBI website and will also be available from the relevant ETB.

- There are some differences in the procedures for suspension/dismissal of teachers and SNAs as their employer is the ETB and not the BoM. These are set out in the relevant Departmental Circulars which can be found on DE section of [gov.ie](http://gov.ie)
- Teachers and SNAs will continue to have access to the various schemes of leave, incremental credit, sick leave scheme etc. as are currently applicable to their grade.



## **Garda Vetting**

As the employer of all school staff will change from the BoM to the ETB, SNAs will need to be Garda Vetted prior to working in the school when it reopens as a CNS. Garda Vetting will be organised through the local ETB. Teachers will not need to be Garda Vetted; however, they will need to provide the ETB with a copy of their Teaching Council vetting disclosure via the on-line solution 'Digitary' in order to fulfil the requirements of Section 12 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 and 2016.



# EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS :



## Panels

Teachers have rights to access both the Main Redeployment Panel and Supplementary Panel within their ETB as set out in the most recent Staffing Arrangements Circular.

Where there are surplus staff in the teaching allocation of the school that is transferring patronage, the arrangements as outlined in *Redeployment Arrangements at Primary Level for Surplus Permanent and CID Holding Teachers* will operate in the normal way, save for the following:

- » For a period of two years from the date of patronage transfer, surplus teachers will have the opportunity to opt to be placed on either the main panel of the outgoing patron or the main panel of the new patron.

Teachers serving in the school on the date of the transfer of patronage will be given the opportunity to opt to voluntarily request redeployment to another school via the main panel of the existing (outgoing) patron of the school. The DE has published guidelines regarding this which can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/811e2-schools-reconfiguration-for-diversity>

SNAs will become part of the ETB's SNA panel and their service will transfer with them as per the relevant Department Circular.



**Secretaries, Caretaker, Cleaners** :What does a change in employer mean for secretaries, caretakers and cleaners?

If the school becomes a CNS, staff other than teachers and SNAs have the choice of either retaining their existing terms and conditions or they can become public-sector employees and benefit from the terms and conditions associated with same. They can decide on the option that suits them best after discussing it further with the HR section in the local ETB. In either case, secretaries, caretakers and cleaners will be paid directly by the ETB. If ancillary staff decide to transfer onto the ETB pay-scale, they will transfer to the appropriate point on the scale relative to what they were being paid pre-reconfiguration. However, new ancillary staff employed after the transfer of patronage will be put on the ETB pay-scale at Point 1.

Frequency of pay may change in line with the pay frequencies of the local ETB, but staff will be informed of same in advance.

There may be potential to be eligible for entry to the appropriate public sector superannuation, sick leave, annual leave and incremental salary schemes as applicable to your grade. The ETB will have to review existing terms and conditions of employment and provide staff with details of the relevant scheme if appropriate. The HR Department in the local ETB will meet with ancillary staff to discuss their options prior to the transfer of patronage.

The following nationally agreed policies and procedures will be applicable to you:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy
- Grievance Procedures for staff employed by ETBs
- ETB Complaint Procedure

All the above policies are available on the ETBI website ([www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)) and should be available from the relevant ETB also.

As the employer of ancillary staff will change from the BoM to the ETB, they will need to be Garda Vetted prior to working in the school when it reopens as a CNS. Garda Vetting will be organised through the local ETB.



# HOW WILL YOUR SCHOOL BE SUPPORTED IN BECOMING A COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL?

School leaders will be provided with induction and ongoing training to support their school's transition to using ETB finance, procurement systems etc.

Relevant professional learning opportunities will be provided by the local ETB and ETBI to help schools adjust to the change in ethos and to facilitate the teaching and learning of *GMGY*.



We are incredibly fortunate to have the support of ETBI at both policy and grass roots level. We have received support with all walks of school life from admissions to issues at national level. We can always count on the ETBI to be a voice for school leaders at national level. On a practical level, in the past few years, ETBI has been central to support in the continued development, implementation of the patron's curriculum, Goodness Me, Goodness You! ETBI facilitates the network of support for principals, teachers and staff in this area and in many other aspects of school life.

Michael Byrne, Principal,  
Citywest and Saggart CNS, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB



## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ?

### Where can I find out more about the CNS model and ETBs?

To find out more about the CNS model, visit [www.cns.ie](http://www.cns.ie)

To find out more about ETBs and ETBI, visit [www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie) or your local ETB's website

### Where can I find out more about the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity Process?

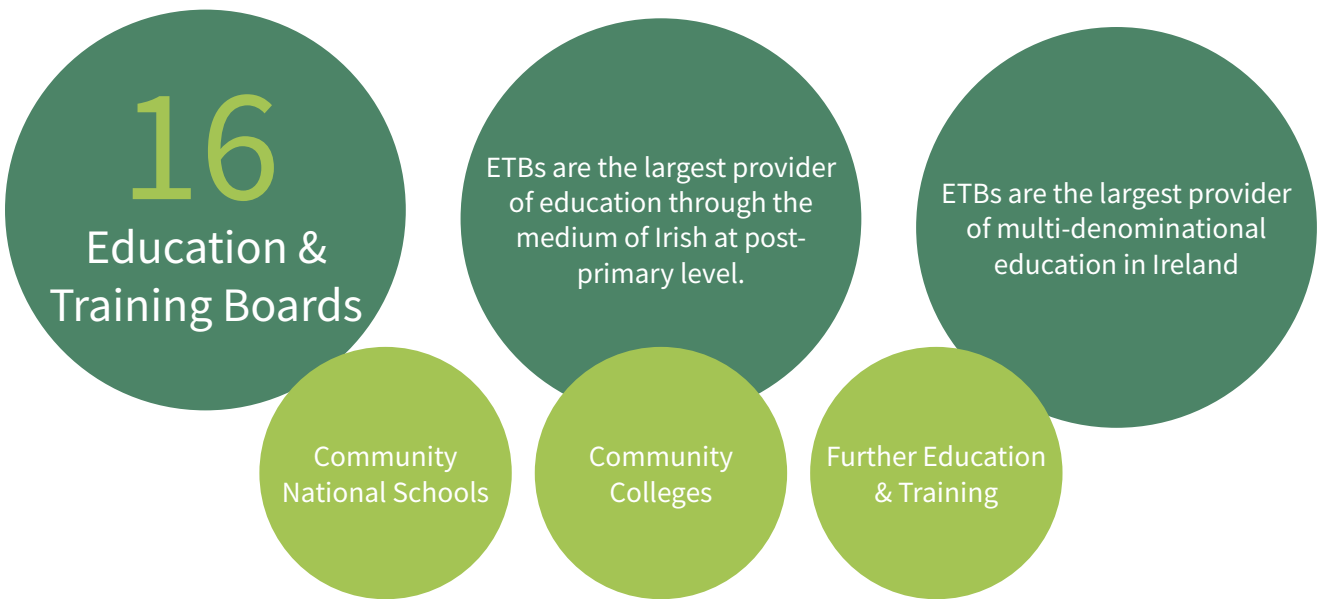
The DE has published guidance for school communities on this process. This is available on [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) [here](#).





As a newly appointed principal, the support from the ETB has been invaluable. The multifaceted team, led by the Director of Schools, expertly guided me in my new role, providing all the necessary supports in setting up the new school. As our school has grown, the building team coordinated the applications for a new classroom and resources. The HR department have assisted greatly in the administration aspect of the recruitment of all teachers and SNAs, freeing up my time for leading teaching and learning in the school. The IT supports provided by the ICT team guarantees that our IT systems and devices are productive, ensuring that all pupils benefit from 21st century teaching and learning. The finance team and procurement officers within the Corporate and Education Service department work tirelessly to ensure that our finances are in order. The support from the ETB Health and Safety department has also been notable, keeping me up to date with regulations and policy to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all staff, students and visitors.

Jacqui McCusker, Principal, Faughart CNS, Louth Meath ETB



Since our transition to a Community National School, one of the biggest benefits we have seen is in the support provided to us by our ETB. We have been successful in applying for and being granted Emergency Works Grants in relation to all the windows and wiring in the school. These sizeable grants which will dramatically improve our school building were only possible because of the expertise within the ETBs' Building Department.

Conor McCarthy, Principal,  
Tallaght CNS, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB





[www.etbi.ie](http://www.etbi.ie)



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