

National Parents Council Primary Annual Report 2007



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Overview of the National Parents Council Primary

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

This has been my second year as Chairman of National Parents Council Primary, in a year that has seen a lot of changes in NPC. I would like to welcome into the organisation Áine Lynch our new CEO who began in August 2007.

This year as part of the Strategic Plan, NPC underwent a number of internal structural changes that were aimed at enhancing the representation of parents within the organisation and strengthening the NPC's Governance functions. One of the most significant elements of this was the changes that were made to membership. Up until 2007 the membership of the NPC comprised of the National Executive members. These members represented their county branches and had the voting authority on behalf of their counties on Governance and education policy issues in NPC. This structure and all our National Executive members over the years served us well. However with the aim of strengthening parents' voice within NPC and in an attempt to ensure representation was possible for parents in counties that did not have county branches, the decision was made to appoint all affiliated Parents Associations as the full members of the organisation. Parents Associations that are affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary now are truly the back bone of the organisation. They have full voting powers on all significant structural and policy change and truly have a voice in NPC.

2007 also saw significant changes in the Governance structures in NPC. The National Executive was reviewed and its functions were separated into two areas, governance

and educational policy formation. It was decided that two separate bodies should be developed to serve these functions, a Board of Directors to serve the Governance function and an Assembly to serve the educational policy formation. The Assembly had its first meeting in November 2007. The

Assembly, like the previous National Executive structure has membership from all of the county branches and representatives from the Special Interest groups in Gaelscoileanna, special educational needs and minority religion. This group meets at least four times a year to debate educational policy issues and propose NPC policy.

The Board of Directors are a group of twelve parents elected from the Assembly membership to govern the organisation. The Board members do not act as representatives of their schools' Parent Associations or their county branches, but act to take legal responsibility for the NPC. The Board of Directors, elected annually from the Assembly, is tasked with managing the affairs of the NPC on behalf of the membership. This Board has full legal responsibility and liability for the organisation, both collectively and personally, as per Company Law.



Chairperson's Report

All of these changes in the internal structures have been necessary to ensure that parents have a real say in NPC and have a direct pathway in which they can influence NPC educational policy views. Over the coming years NPC will work hard to strengthen these structures and continue to listen to parents.

Parents are still and always will be the most vital part of NPC, we are recognised as partners in education and it is important that we stay committed. Parents face new challenges every year. The face of education is changing and the school environment holds new challenges today that did not exist before. Some of these changes are due to social changes or economic changes. Lifestyles are becoming more strained because of the demands of travelling and work patterns. Time has become our most precious commodity. All voluntary groups are feeling the effects of the shortage of volunteers with existing volunteers being overstretched as they struggle to meet the needs of the communities. There is great pressure on family and community life resulting in breakdown in relationships and community structures. There are many parents and guardians who must face the prospect of educating their children alone. There are migrant parents in a strange land struggling with a different language and society and there are native Irish parents and guardians who also feel equally excluded from society. This often leads to children requiring additional support and educational requirements in school.

Our organisation needs to keep focusing on the future and coping with these kinds of challenges. We need to identify

the problems but also to come up with solutions which will alleviate these pressures. I feel that we have the ability and determination of our parents to achieve the best for our children. We need to promote inclusion among our parents and children and work hand in hand with the other education partners.

Thanks are due to the Board and the Assembly for their dedication and hard work throughout the year. The CEO and staff play a huge role in the organisation for which we thank them.

Francis Linden

Chairperson

Chief Executive Officer's Report

During 2007 the National Parents Council Primary launched a new strategic plan. The strategy, developed through consultation with the organisation's key stakeholders, outlines the vision, purpose, values and goals of NPC and identifies the key changes and challenges it needs to engage with to ensure it remains relevant and effective for all parents of children in the Primary education system in Ireland today. The key themes within the NPC strategic plan are that the NPC will continue to develop and grow to ensure that the organisation represents **all** parents of children in Primary education and that the NPC will develop its representation structures to ensure that parents can make their voices heard within the organisation on matters that are important to them.

I am happy to report that during 2007 progress has already begun on implementing the NPC strategic plan and its strategic objectives.

Highlights of 2007

2007 was notable for a number of key developments including:

- The adoption by the National Executive of a new NPC Strategic and implementation plan.
- The commencement of the Assembly; the new NPC educational policy structure.
- The development of NPC Governance structures including the implementation of a new Board of Directors structure. This was further enhanced in partnership with

the external support of Boardmatch.

- The continued involvement of the NPC in campaigning and lobbying on parents issues in Primary education.
- The process of working in collaboration with the educational partners in developing the Joint Board of Management training for the new school Boards of Management ensuring that parents views were represented.

Ensuring that parents are supported and empowered to become active participants in their children's learning and educational lives during their Primary school year's remains a significant challenge. However because of our nationwide structures and our contact and consultation with parents NPC is uniquely placed to respond to this challenge and through the commitment of the many parents who volunteer their time and the commitment of the staff and the Board, it remains dedicated to meeting this challenge.

Áine Lynch

Chief Executive



Review of 2007

Helpline

The National Parents Council Primary Helpline continued to listen to parents offering information and support during 2007.

The most frequent query on the Helpline in 2007 related to Parent Associations, comprising almost 40% of our total calls. Queries regarding the rules and functions of Parent Associations were common; parents were seeking clarity on their place within the school community or had queries regarding the setting up of new Parent Associations. 2007 also saw a rise in calls from school Principals and Board members regarding both the issue of establishing a parents association in their school or looking for support and information to help them work more effectively with their school's existing parents association.

Issues regarding fundraising continue to be present for both individual parents and for Parent Associations. A number of calls have also been related to voluntary contributions and the problems they can bring parents and children.

As in previous years bullying continues to be a significant problem. The call statistics show the further breakdown of the bullying calls and illustrates the diverse difficulties that parents and children are dealing with in the Primary school years. It is also now a feature of our modern society that the method by which a child can be bullied has now changed and in addition to the more traditional forms of bullying, children are now being bullied through various technology mediums.

With the election of the new school Boards of Management in 2007 came an increase in calls to the NPC Helpline from parents looking for support and information regarding the role of the Board of Management parent representative and the procedure for electing their representatives. As well as providing the appropriate information for parents on the website NPC also produced a booklet entitled "The Board of Management in Your Primary School, a guide for parents". This booklet was sent to all schools.

Other topics of note that parents contacted the Helpline in 2007 regarded: supervision at assembly and dismissal of school, the curriculum and in particular access to PE, SPHE, RSE and English in Gaelscoileanna and homework policies.

Helpline

SUBJECT OF CALL/EMAIL	TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS/EMAILS FOR 2007
BULLYING	
Bullying involving a child	160
Bullying involving a teacher	52
Bullying involving a principal	29
Bullying other	7
Abuse by teacher	21
Problems with Principal	34
Total	303
ISSUE	
Supervision	109
Complaints Procedure	30
Homework	50
Code of Behaviour	26
School Transport	21
Split Classes	47
Uniforms	18
Class Size	15
Enrolment	28
Retention	6
Weight of School bag	3
Curriculum	88
Standardization	5
Standardised tests	12
Book rental scheme	3
WSE	7
Health & Safety	29
Voluntary contribution	8
Separated parents	4
Total	509
OTHER	129
Total	129

SUBJECT OF CALL/EMAIL	TOTAL NUMBER OF CALLS/EMAILS FOR 2007
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT	
General	166
Complaints	83
Total	249
PARENT ASSOCIATION	
Set up	136
Disputes	67
Fundraising	117
Affiliation	116
Rules/Roles	115
Information	188
Difficulty with Principal	22
Training	98
Insurance	43
Total	902
SPECIAL NEEDS	
Assessment	7
SNAS	14
Access to school	2
Individual Child	67
Total	90
OTHER AGENCIES	
NEWB	13
NCTE	2
Ombudsman	5
NCSE	1
Department	8
Post primary	30
Anti-Bullying Centre	5
Total	64
TOTAL	2246

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development Programme continued to offer support to parents throughout 2007. The Training and Development Programme is a national programme that promotes positive parental involvement with all the educational partners.

Aims and Objectives of the Training and Development Programme:

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

The programmes that were delivered countrywide in the past year were:

Parent Association Effectiveness training helped parents understand the role of a parents association by facilitating the group to develop skills in working together and to build good partnerships with parents, teachers and the Board of Management in the school community.

Board of Management information training for parent representatives promoted the involvement of parents in their school Boards of Management. The sessions highlighted the end of the term for the present Boards and informed parents about the election process and the role of the parent's representative on the upcoming Board. The training also highlighted recent changes in relevant legislation.

Early Learning Starting School training was provided for parents whose children were starting primary education or had just started school. The programme looked at how children learn; it introduced parents to the primary school system, parent teacher meetings, and gave parents useful hints and tips for starting school.

Transition from Primary to Post Primary training was provided for parents whose children were about to or had made the transition from primary to secondary education. It supported parents in this change and gave parents useful information on subject choices and the post primary education system.

Relationships and Sexuality training workshops helped parents talk to their children about sex. It informed parents about the Social Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE) that their children were learning in school.

Internet Safety Training Seminars informed parents about safety issues and the Internet. The seminars highlighted for parents the websites young people use and gave practical demonstrations on how the Internet works.

Joint Board of Management Training for the Whole Board

During 2007 NPC were members of a national steering committee which was established by the Department of Education and Science to formulate training content and materials for Joint Whole Board of Management Training. The aim of the training was to ensure that the new Boards of Management in Primary Schools would receive extensive training as a cohesive unit; this would enable every

Training and Development

member on the Board to play an equal role and the Board to function efficiently and effectively as a team. The training module was agreed by all patron bodies, NPC Primary and the INTO.

Networking with other partners

NPC has over the past year continued to network with other partners in education. In 2007 this included:

- The delivery of an in-service training programme for student teachers in Marino College of Education on Positive Home School Partnership.
- Membership of a national steering committee with the partners in education and the HSE to develop a booklet for parents on relationships and sexuality, entitled the “Busy Bodies” booklet.
- Working in collaboration with the support services of the Department of Education and Science to review and develop information on the Walk Tall Programme which is part of the SPHE curriculum.

Programme statistics for 2007:

- A total of 4167 parents participated in NPC training
- There were 257 training sessions delivered nationwide

Type of Training	Sessions Delivered	Number of Participants
New Parent Association Training	140	1337
BOM Information	16	207
Transition from Primary to Post Primary	30	340
Early Learning Starting School	16	123
Relationships and Sexuality	17	1210
Internet Safety	38	950
Total	257	4167

Membership

Membership of National Parents Council Primary comprises of all the affiliated Parents Associations.

NPC affiliation year follows the Primary school year starting in September.

Breakdown and geographical representation of Membership and County Branches

Affiliations to NPC for year 2006 - 2007		
County	Affiliations	NPC County Branch 2006 - 2007
Carlow	11	No
Cavan	46	Yes
Clare	30	Yes
Cork East	47	No
Cork West	111	Yes
Donegal	24	No
Dublin North	47	Yes
Dublin NW	28	Yes
Dublin South	58	Yes
Dublin SW	23	Yes
Galway	50	No
Kerry	35	No
Kildare	29	No
Kilkenny	21	No
Laois	27	Yes

County	Affiliations	NPC County Branch 2006 - 2007
Leitrim	8	Yes
Limerick	51	Yes
Longford	19	Yes
Louth	36	Yes
Mayo	33	Yes
Meath	51	Yes
Monaghan	26	Yes
Offaly	11	No
Roscommon	12	No
Sligo	18	Yes
Tipperary	68	Yes
Waterford	11	No
Westmeath	13	No
Wexford	46	No
Wicklow	20	No
Total	1010	

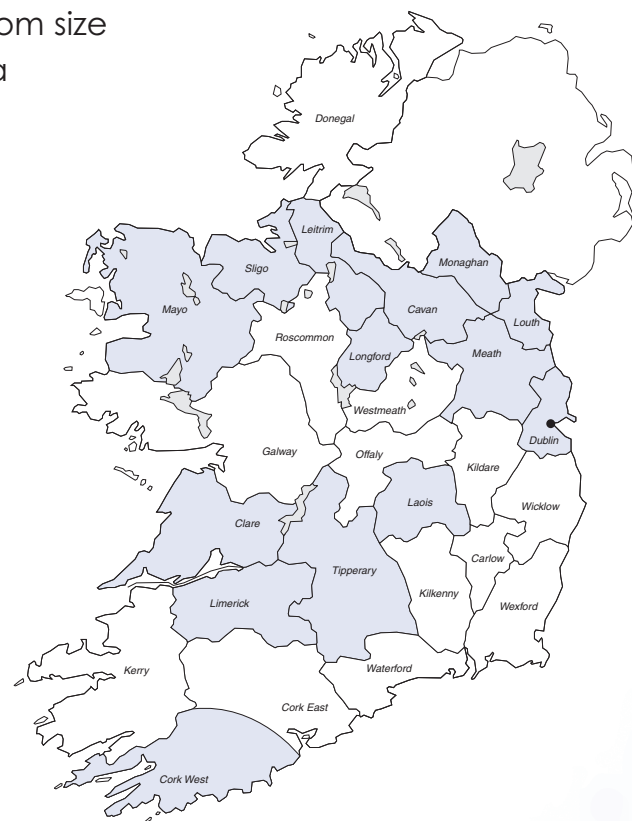
County Branch

The NPC county branch is the structure through which parents and Parent Associations work together for the best possible educational experience for their children. In 2007 NPC had county branches in Cavan, Clare, Cork West, Dublin North, Dublin NW, Dublin South, Dublin SW, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo and Tipperary. Within these county branches dedicated volunteers have been busy working on behalf of parents during the past year, visiting Parent Associations and organising meetings and seminars.

Issues of significance to parents highlighted and discussed at these county meetings/seminars include:

- Operational problems being experienced by Parent Associations
- How to become more aware of and relevant to other cultures
- Fundraising
- Education in the 21st Century
- Class size
- Substance misuse
- Transition from primary to post primary school
- Bullying
- Internet Safety
- Lack of dental services
- Lack of speech and language services
- Board of Management – elections and relationship between the Board and the Parent Association
- Procedures on reporting child abuse

- Classroom size
- Dyslexia



A number of counties organised quizzes for primary school children and some hosted provincial finals.

Collaboration took place between counties and various organisations/bodies including the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, Childcare Committees, Drug Awareness groups, the Gardaí, TDs & Councillors and the INTO. Also, a number of counties have representatives who sit on various childcare committees, health and social care forums, GAA clubs, Autism groups and post primary associations.

Assembly

Under the new structures of NPC, as outlined in the Strategic plan 2007, the NPC Assembly was formed comprising of a maximum of two representatives from each Regional Branch and one representative from each of the NPC Special Interest Groups representing, Special educational needs (two representatives, one from mainstream schools and one from special education schools), Scoileanna Lán Gaeilge and Minority religion.

The function of the Assembly as laid down in NPC's Memorandum and Articles is:

"..To review and assist in co-ordinating the response of the Council on Educational Issues".

On Friday the 23rd and Saturday the 24th of November, the National Parents Council Primary held its first Assembly meeting. The Assembly discussed the topic of children's rights in the Constitution and developed NPC policy position regarding this issue.



NPC Assembly Members at the first Assembly meeting

Special Interest Groups

NPC has Special Interest Groups representing parents of children in: Scoileanna Lán Gaeilge / Gaeltacht schools, Minority Religion schools and Special Education schools (representing parents of children who attend Special Schools) & an Integrated Education Group (representing parents of children with special educational needs who attend mainstream school).

Each of these groups has an elected representative on the NPC Assembly; therefore their views can be represented at National level through this forum.

Financial Report

Report of the Chairperson of the Finance Committee 2007

I was delighted to take on the role as Chairperson of the Finance Committee in 2007. The Finance Committee was developed as a result of the NPC Governance review during 2007 and was elected from the Board membership. It serves to ensure good governance procedures are applied and adhered to in relation to all NPC financial matters.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the other members of the Committee, Mary King and Geraldine Graydon, for their work in 2007, and look forward to our continued work together.

I am happy to report that NPC finances remain healthy in 2007 and I present on behalf of the Board of Directors herewith the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st October 2007.

Anita McCann

Chairperson of Finance Committee

NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL - PRIMARY

(Company Limited by Guarantee - Without a Share Capital)

Financial Statements

Year ended 31st October 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

The Directors submit their report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st October 2007.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW

The principal activities of the Council continue to be the Nationwide Organisation representing parents of children attending early and primary education.

Our aim is to improve and enrich the education of children, represent your views as parents, negotiate with the Minister and Department of Education and Science for improvements in the system and better resources for primary education.

SURPLUS AND RESERVES

The deficit for the year has been transferred to reserves.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

It is the National Parents Council – Primary's policy to maintain a safe and healthy working environment and the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 are kept under review and in this regard the company has proposed a Health and Safety Statement.

DIRECTORS

The Directors who held office during the year under review were: Anita McCann, Francis Linden, Maria Murphy, Gile Mac Lochlainn, Paul Stevenson, Geraldine Graydon, Martin Kiernan, Mary Haughney, Philip Mudge, Joan McLoughlin, Martin McLernon, Maureen Brennan, Bertha Amanda Forbes-Keatley, Liza Toye, Maeve O'Hair, Sheelagh McArthur, Amanda Allen, Sheila Barrett, Carol Ollry, Sharon McGinty and Siobhan Daly. The following resigned during the year 2006/2007 Mary Haughney and Sheelagh McArthur.

Company Secretary Carmel Grahame

ACCOUNTING RECORDS

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

AUDITORS

The Auditors, Martin Judge & Co., have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with Section 160(2) Companies Act 1963.

STATEMENT OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES YEAR ENDED 31ST OCTOBER 2007

Company legislation requires the Council Members to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the Council Members and of the excess of income over expenditure of the Council Members for that year.

In preparing those financial statements, the Council Members are required to

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Council will continue in business.

Council Members are responsible for keeping proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Council and to enable them to ensure the financial statements comply with the Companies Acts 1963 to 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Council and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Financial Report

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST OCTOBER 2007

	€	2006 €
INCOME	606,419	580,751
EXPENDITURE	<u>684,630</u>	<u>614,415</u>
NET DEFICIT/ SURPLUS FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	(78,211)	(33,664)
RETAINED SURPLUS AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2006	<u>215,283</u>	<u>248,947</u>
RETAINED SURPLUS AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2007	137,072	215,283

There are no gains or losses other than those shown above.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST OCTOBER 2007

	NOTE	€	2006 €
FIXED ASSETS			
Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment	(5)	-	-
CURRENT ASSETS			
Bank Current Accounts		229,271	287,595
Bank Deposit Accounts		375	373
Cash on Hands		11,822	2,212
Debtors & Prepayments	(6)	<u>9,787</u>	<u>12,180</u>
		251,255	302,360
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditors and Accrued Expenses	(7)	41,188	15,182
Deferred Income	(8)	<u>72,995</u>	<u>71,895</u>
		114,183	87,077
NET ASSETS		137,072	215,283
REPRESENTED BY:			
Excess of Income over Expenditure to Date		<u>137,072</u>	<u>215,283</u>
		137,072	215,283

ON BEHALF OF THE DIRECTORS:

DIRECTOR: FRANCIS LINDEN

DIRECTOR: GERALDINE GRAYDON

Board Members 2007

Francis Linden	Chairperson
Paul Stevenson	Vice Chairperson
Martin McLernon	Clare
Mary King	Dublin North
Zoe Ewing-Evans	Dublin NW
Geraldine Graydon	Dublin South
Maureen Brennan	Laois
Philip Mudge	Limerick
John Farrell	Longford
Anita McCann	Louth
Sharon McGinty	Mayo
Maria Murphy	Meath

Assembly Members 2007

Bridget Brassy	Cavan	Michael Bryson	Longford
Susan Fitzpatrick	Cavan	John Farrell	Longford
Martin McLernon	Clare	Ann Harmon	Louth
Barbara Fitzpatrick	Clare	Anita McCann	Louth
Sean O'Riordan	Cork West	Sharon McGinty	Mayo
Goretti Walls	Cork West	Gráinne McDonnell	Meath
Siobhan Daly	Dublin North	Maria Murphy	Meath
Mary King	Dublin North	Francis Linden	Monaghan
Zoe Ewing-Evans	Dublin NW	Paul Stevenson	Sligo
Beatha Keatley	Dublin NW	Maeve O'Hair	Tipperary
Geraldine Graydon	Dublin South	Aisling Costello	Minority Religion
Liza Toye	Dublin South	Denise Bridgeman	Special Education
Maureen Brennan	Laois	Lisa Myers	Integrated Education
Sheila Barrett	Laois (resigned during year)	Rachel Aherne	Scoileanna Lán Gaeilge
Philip Mudge	Limerick		

Staff 2007

Áine Lynch	Chief Executive (commenced August 2007)
Fionnuala Kilfeather	CEO (retired April 2007)
Deirdre Sullivan	Training & Development Officer
Carmel Grahame	Financial Administrator
Mary Killeen	Information/Helpline Officer
Carmel O'Shea	Information/Helpline Officer
Sinéad Tighe	Secretary Training & Development Programme
Caroline Clynes	Administrator Training & Development Programme
Sharon Hopkins	Administrator Training & Development Programme
June O'Neill	Secretary Training & Development Programme (cover for maternity leave)
Nora Harris	Receptionist
Michelle Davern	PA to CEO, Administration, Website



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