

Education and Training Boards Ireland

Our Vision for Community National Schools



1.0 ABOUT EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS IRELAND AND ETBS

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative association for Ireland's 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs); and negotiates on behalf of the ETB sector at various forums within the education sector and at national, European, and overseas levels. Our mission is to lead and advance the continued development of education, training and youthwork in Ireland and our vision is to harness our strength to influence and promote a strong education and training sector through collaboration and collective effort. ETBI is guided by the core values of excellence, care, equality, community, and respect.

Collectively, the 16 Education and Training Boards have responsibility for 30+ Community National Schools and 250+ post-primary schools with over 117,000 students. ETB post-primary schools are the largest provider of education through the medium of Irish with 48 schools. ETBs are also the largest provider of multid denominational education in Ireland. ETBs deliver Further Education and Training (FET) to over 226,000 FET learners each year across 500+ learner locations; and play a central role in the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships in partnership with employers. ETBs also support, monitor, and deliver youth services. The ETB sector employs over 32,000 people and has a combined annual spend in excess of €2bn.

2.0 OUR CORE BELIEFS

- No matter what their background or where they come from, everyone deserves excellence in education and training.
- ETBs offer excellent, equality-based, inclusive educational opportunities to learners of all ages, helping to build an inclusive Ireland.




- ETBs are proud to support Ireland's diverse population of learners and have a proven track record of doing so (e.g. through the REALT programme, which supports Ukrainian refugees; through the provision of ESOL classes in community education centres nationwide; through Youthreach, literacy, second-chance and special needs education programmes; and through working in partnership with minoritised groups in settings such as prisons and Direct Provision centres).

3.0 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).

Community National Schools teach the national curriculum as prescribed by the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). CNSs have access to the same national support services as all other schools.

There are currently 30+ Community National Schools under the patronage of eight Education and Training Boards.



Galway & Roscommon ETB
Cuan na Gallaimhe CNS
Lecarrow CNS

Longford & Westmeath
Cornamaddy CNS

Tipperary ETB
Nenagh CNS

Limerick & Clare ETB
Raheen Wood CNS
Mol an Oige CNS
Glenroe CNS
Croí na Coille CNS

Kerry ETB
Two Mile CNS
Scoil and Ghleanna SNP
Tahilla CNS
Lyreacrompane CNS

Louth & Meath ETB
Ard Rí CNS
Faughart CNS
Ashbourne CNS
Dunshaughlin CNS

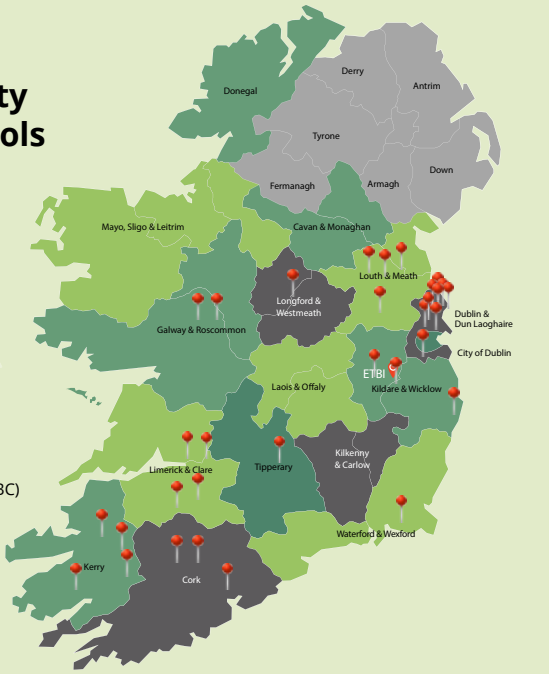
Dublin & Dun Laoghaire
Scoil Choilm
Scoil Ghrainne CNS
Scoil Chormaic CNS
Lucan CNS
Scoil Aoife CNS
River Valley CNS
Broadmeadow CNS
Tallaght CNS

30+ Community National Schools

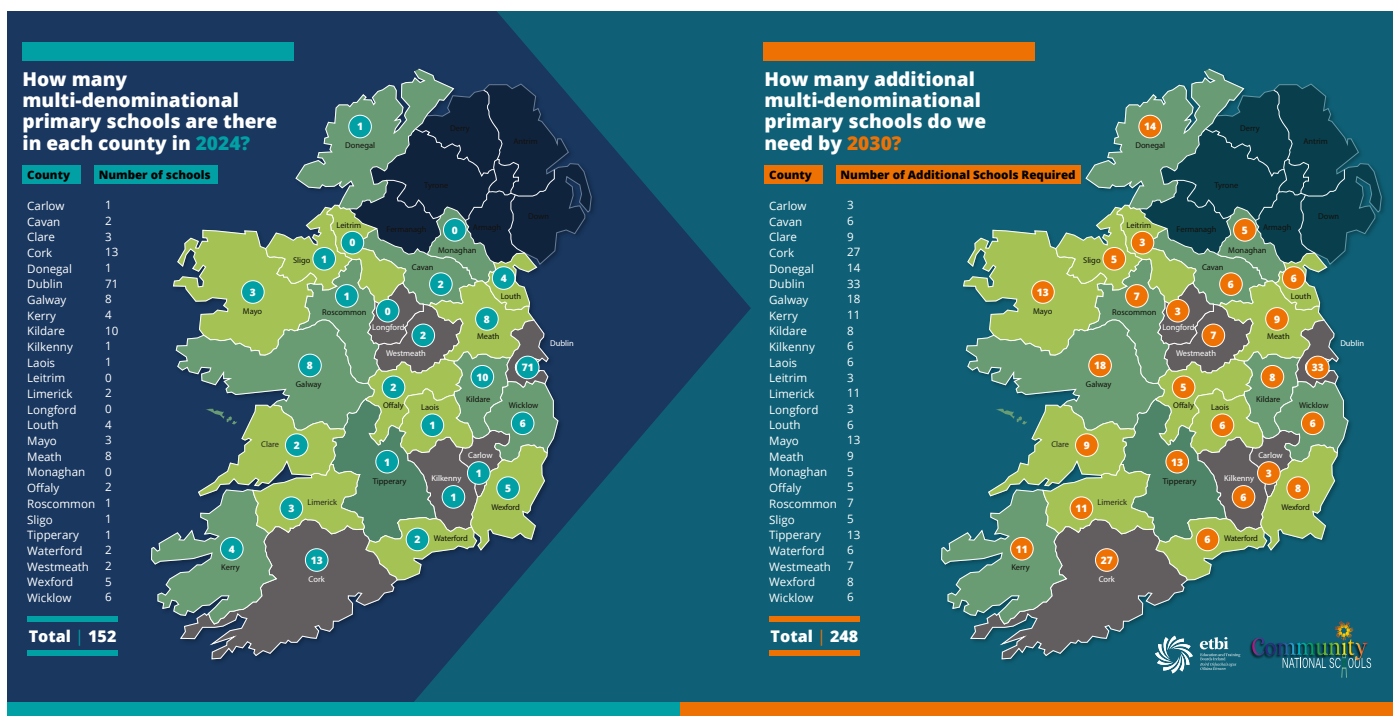
City of Dublin ETB
South City CNS

Kildare & Wicklow ETB
Naas CNS
Brannoxtown CNS
Greystones CNS

Waterford & Wexford ETB
Kilnamanagh CNS
Cork ETB
Mallow CNS
Carrigtwohill CNS
Kyle National School (Name TBC)



MEETING THE GOVERNMENT'S TARGET OF 400 MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY 2030



4.0 OUR KEY ASKS

We are seeking commitment from Government to increase the number and profile of Community National Schools (CNSs) nationwide:

- Since 2016, successive governments have set a target of reaching 400 multi-denominational primary schools by 2030. However, progress on achieving this target has been painstakingly slow.
- Currently, there are only 152 multi-denominational schools out of a total of 3,116 primary schools – and only 4 new multi-denominational schools have come on stream since 2021.
- 248 additional multi-denominational schools are needed to reach the 2030 target.
- To ensure this happens, we are seeking to secure commitments from each political party to include the following in their election manifestoes:
 - i. A significant increase in the number of multi-denominational Community National Schools available to families in all counties in Ireland – with targets based on regional data on existing provision, parental preference, and changing demographics; and
 - ii. Promotion of Community National Schools as the option for school communities engaging in discussion around transferring patronage.

Why does this matter?

- This matters because every family should have access to quality, multi-denominational education in their local area, regardless of their ethnicity, culture or religious beliefs.
- There has been an unprecedented increase in social, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity in Irish society in recent decades.
- The 2022 Census shows that only 69 per cent of people in Ireland now consider themselves to be Roman Catholic. 14% of the population now identify as having no religion. There are also significant increases in those identifying as having other religious beliefs. **Research conducted by ETBI (Opinions, 2022) shows that 61% of people nationally – of all religious backgrounds and none – want multi-denominational schools rather than religious-run schools. However, 90% of primary schools are still under the patronage of the Catholic Church.**
- Over 10 years ago, The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism Report (2012) highlighted that there was a mismatch between the increasingly diverse religious / belief identities of the Irish population and the patronage system where almost 90% of primary schools were Roman Catholic. Ten years

later, the percentage of Catholic schools has not changed. However, data from Census 2022 clearly demonstrates that Irish society is more diverse than ever before. **The need for more multi-denominational schools across the State has never been greater.**

- Ireland's failure to provide primary education options that cater to all families has been criticised by international human rights bodies, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which recommended in 2023 that the State develop "a time-bound strategy, with adequate resources, for meeting its targets for increasing the availability of multi-denominational schools by 2030".



school becomes a CNS. Catholic children are still able to make their Holy Communion and Confirmation. However, responsibility for preparing children for the sacraments transfers to the local parish and the relevant preparation classes take place after the school day in either the parish or school building.

- Other areas that may be influenced by a change in patronage are the school's name, logo / crest and uniform. School policies may also be updated in line with the CNS ethos.

As ETB schools, CNSs benefit greatly from a broad range of supports and services that may not be available to other schools. ETBs provide ethos, governance, educational, administrative, financial, human resources, information technology (IT), capital and building supports to schools. This has a direct impact on the children and families attending these schools, as it allows school leadership to focus on their primary task of caring for the children and leading teaching and learning.

What changes if a school becomes a Community National School?

- Schools that transfer from religious patronage to become a Community National School move from a religious ethos to 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.
- Primary schools under any other patron e.g., the Catholic Church, Educate Together, An Foras Pátrúnachta are State-funded, but privately-run. Therefore, schools moving to become CNSs move from being privately-run to State-run under ETB patronage. Community National Schools are Ireland's only State-funded and State-run primary schools as they are under the patronage of ETBs. **The State should now back its patronage own model with confidence.**
- If a school is a single-sex school, it becomes co-educational if it changes patronage to become a CNS.
- 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.
- Currently in a Catholic school, it is likely that Catholic children are prepared for their sacraments by their classroom teachers during the school day. This is no longer the case if a

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Elected representatives:

- Visit your local ETB to find out more about what they offer.
- Promote the ETB's priorities within your party.
- Raise these issues at local and national levels of Government.
- Ensure these priorities are included in your party's manifesto for the next General Election.
- Support our campaign on social media by using **#SupportYourLocalETB**.

Policy makers:

- Ensure the ETB's priorities are integrated into financial estimates and department strategies/ plans.

ETBs:

- Raise these issues with your elected representatives and policy makers.
- Make the link from local to national – Councillors to local TDs to national Government.
- Get your ETB Board members who are elected representatives involved.
- Support our campaign on social media by using **#SupportYourLocalETB**.

ETB Staff, parents and learners:

- Support our campaign on social media by using **#SupportYourLocalETB**.