



North Bay National School Project Patronage
Patron Committee Proposal

Background

The **North Bay National School Project (NBNSP)** is the independent patron of North Bay Educate Together National School (ETNS). It was set up in 1987 by a group of parents and teachers to provide children with an education similar to the founding Educate Together schools.

At the time, the Department of Education and Skills required that each 'Project' school have their own independent patron (see [What Is a Patron?](#) on the school website). The NBNSP became the patron of the school, and in September 1990, North Bay ETNS opened its doors as the seventh 'Project' school in Ireland, with just one principal teacher and 26 pupils.

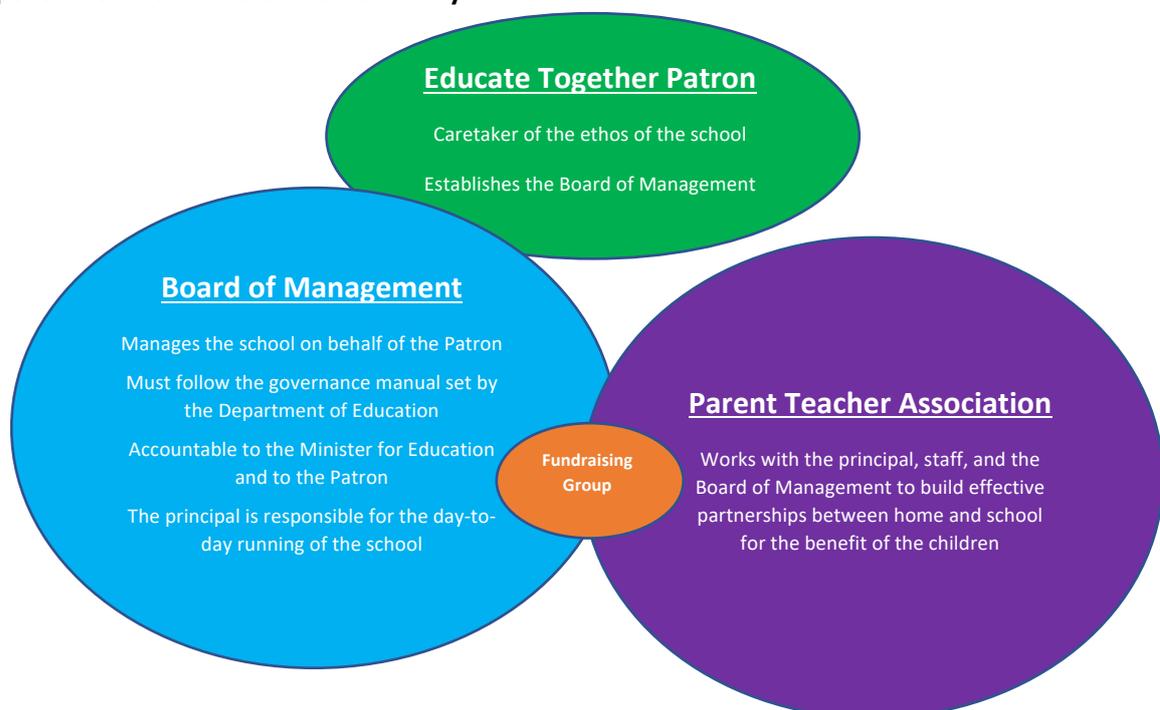
In 1998, a new Education Act was introduced, and schools were no longer required to have an independent patron. At that time, it was complicated for existing schools to transfer patronage to Educate Together, so schools with independent patrons retained their structure while also becoming full members of Educate Together. A more simple process for transferring patronage to Educate Together has now been approved by the Department of Education and Skills, and many schools have used this process to transfer their patronage to Educate Together.

Proposal

The Patron Committee is proposing that North Bay ETNS move under the patronage of Educate Together. This proposed change would result in:

- the patronage of North Bay ETNS formally transferring to Educate Together
- the dissolution of the independent patron, called 'North Bay National School Project'
- the Board of Management functioning as it currently does, reporting to Educate Together
- the PTA and the Board of Management being accountable for the fundraising in the school
- the school saving money and running more efficiently, which optimises benefits to children

Proposed New Structure of the North Bay ETNS:



Why Educate Together vs. other patronage models?

The Patron committee recommends Educate Together as the proposed patron because:

- North Bay ETNS was established to be a part of the Educate Together movement
- North Bay ETNS has a long history with Educate Together and provided significant input during its creation. For example, staff members from North Bay ETNS were instrumental in creating the Learn Together programme, now used throughout the Educate Together network
- the school has an excellent existing relationship with Educate Together as a full member
- North Bay ETNS currently implements the core values central to the Educate Together ethos. Becoming part of Educate Together would ensure that this ethos is maintained into the future
- parents/guardians and staff have chosen North Bay ETNS for the Educate Together ethos

What are the opportunities for North Bay ETNS by transferring patronage to Educate Together?

- **We can eliminate an unnecessary committee within the school**

When the North Bay independent patron was set up there was no national option for a patron that was equality-based, co-educational, child-centred, and democratically run. Due to the hard work of pioneering schools like ours, there is now a national organisation that has this ethos at its core: Educate Together. There is no longer a need for an independent patron to safeguard this ethos.

- **We can be more effectively supported by the national organisation of Educate Together, which has experienced staff with appropriate skills, knowledge, and training.**

Educate Together is a professional body with the expertise to help school boards with day-to-day activities, such as reporting requirements, policy updates, and budgets. They can also assist when there is a substantial issue within a school. The influence of Educate Together as an organisation is stronger than the influence of a single independent patron, for instance, when interacting with the Department of Education and Skills.

- **We can save money by transferring patronage to Educate Together**

The independent patron incurs costs such as accountancy and consultancy fees, which annually total between €1500 – €2000 and come out of fundraising profits. Transferring patronage to Educate Together would allow the school to recoup this money and use it for child-centred reasons.

The school community also pays two membership fees: €15 to Educate Together, and €3 to the independent patron if they wish to join it. Transferring patronage would eliminate this second fee.

- **We can have a school structure like most other Educate Together schools**

Most families join the school believing that it is fully under the patronage of the Educate Together, and they are surprised to discover that it has an independent patron. Occasionally families have decided not to join North Bay ETNS, because they aren't sure if it is a 'real' Educate Together school.

- **We can eliminate the risks of maintaining the legal and regulatory requirements of the company and charity.**

The independent patron is a company and a registered charity, and the legal, financial, and regulatory requirements to maintain it are time-consuming. If regulatory deadlines are not met, there are risks to the school, the company, the charity, and to individuals as directors. Many parents/guardians serving on the independent patron do not have these skill sets, are not comfortable taking on these responsibilities, and feel that such work is not child-centred.

- **We will have more parents/guardians and staff available for important school activities.**

North Bay ETNS is a small school with a limited number of families and staff. Because of this, it is difficult to recruit for positions in the three bodies of the school: the independent patron, the Board of Management, and the PTA. Transferring patronage to ET would free up parents/guardians and staff who are currently serving on the independent patron, allowing them to join other committees or volunteer for engaging activities within the school. This would optimise benefits to the children.

Transferring patronage: your questions answered

Will changing from an independent patron to Educate Together patronage have an impact on the ethos and culture of North Bay ETNS?

We don't believe so. Educate Together, as patron, would guard the ethos of the school by conducting all the same activities as the independent patron. The Educate Together ethos is well established and a significant change to this ethos is very unlikely. The day-to-day life in the school would not be affected: the staff and management of North Bay ETNS will continue to provide the students with an engaging learning environment, with the oversight of the Board of Management.

Who will champion the ethos in the school if the independent patron no longer exists?

Educate Together already strongly champion the ethos of all their member schools, and they will perform all functions that an independent patron carries out, and more, to safeguard the ethos.

Our wonderful staff are also instrumental in championing and protecting the ethos in the school day-to-day. The members of our other committees, the Board of Management and the PTA, also have opportunities to uphold the ethos in their decision-making.

If we remove the independent patron, what opportunities will parents/guardians have to make a meaningful impact in the school?

Lots! The Board of Management of the school will always have two members that are parents/guardians in the school. This gives parents/guardians a strong voice in the administration of North Bay ETNS. There will also be many opportunities to make a difference in the PTA, by volunteering time in fundraisers, school events and activities.

By transferring patronage to Educate Together, are we forgetting or disrespecting the hard work and dedication of the founding members of the school?

We don't believe so. We are very proud of our history and transferring patronage does not disrespect that. If there had been a national Educate Together organisation to join when North Bay ETNS was founded, we would have joined it. Founding members of the independent patron have recently joined our Annual General Meetings (AGMs), and they have voiced their support for the transfer of patronage to Educate Together.

Who will co-ordinate fund raising activities for the benefit of the school if the independent patron no longer exists?

A new fundraising group was formed in 2021, made up of a cross-section of the whole school community. This group will function under the oversight of the PTA and Board of Management, in a manner that can be agreed by all parties in the school community. We envision that this fundraising group will be as successful in North Bay ETNS as the independent patron has been over the years.

Why should we change now? How long will it take to transfer patronage?

Much of the exploratory work has already been done – by existing patron committee members, school management, and the Board of Management. It makes sense to work toward this now, while the knowledge remains in the school.

Over the next few months, we will prepare the school community for a vote on this proposal by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. If the vote confirms transfer of patronage to Educate Together, we will formally apply to Educate Together and begin filing required paperwork.

There may be challenges in the process after formally applying. We don't yet know what these challenges may be, and this means we cannot guarantee a timeframe.

I've never been to an independent patron meeting. How do I vote on the proposal?

The proposal will be put forward as a motion in an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). We will communicate the date of this EGM clearly to the school community. To vote on a motion, you must be a paid up member of the independent patron. Fees are low so that everyone can afford to join: individual membership is €3, and family membership is €5. If you're already a member, thank you!

We'll make it easy for you to join by holding a membership drive prior to the EGM. We want everyone's voices to be heard in this important decision for North Bay ETNS.

What does the journey look like?

- 2017:** Motion to explore patronage passed at AGM
- 2017 – 2019:** Patron committee explores the process of transferring patronage
- 2019:** Findings given at AGM; founding members of North Bay ETNS endorse transfer
- Sept 2021:** Patron committee agrees to begin proposal for transfer
- Dec 2021:** Working group set up with members of all school bodies
- Feb 2022:** Patron committee issue proposal and communication to school community
- March 2022:** Informational Webinar to discuss the proposal and answer your questions
- March 2022:** Information evening with Educate Together representative
- April 2022:** Membership drive for the independent patron
- Date TBC:** Working group will determine if further information sessions are required based on engagement and feedback from the school community
- Date TBC:** EGM for members to vote on the motion to transfer patronage

If the result of the vote is not to transfer patronage, the independent patron called North Bay National School Project will continue to operate within North Bay ETNS as it currently does.

If the result of the vote is to transfer patronage, the journey would continue, with the independent patron continuing to fulfil its duties while the following events take place:

- Date TBC:** Formal application to Educate Together to transfer patronage
- Date TBC:** Paperwork supplied to Educate Together to certify transfer requirements
- Date TBC:** Educate Together certify North Bay ETNS compliance with transfer requirements
- Date TBC:** Motion proposed at an Educate Together AGM to become patron of North Bay ETNS

If the result of the Educate Together AGM vote is to transfer North Bay ETNS under its patronage:

- Date TBC:** Educate Together officially becomes the patron of North Bay ETNS
- Date TBC:** The independent patron called North Bay National School Project is no longer the patron of North Bay ETNS. The company and charity called North Bay National School Project are wound up and closed.