

To inform the NPC submission on this topic, we conducted a series of consultation sessions. A total of 79 parents attended. 19 at our in-person session and 60 over 2 online sessions. We asked parents all the 5 suggested questions and the responses are recorded below.

Question 1

What do you believe is the purpose of education?

Parents believe that education should empower children to become independent and self-sufficient individuals. It should balance academic achievement with practical life skills, preparing them to be good citizens who understand the world around them. Education should provide opportunities to explore diverse interests, cultures, and perspectives, support inclusive education, and broaden social awareness. Education should foster a love of learning from the early years and support children holistically.

Parents believe education should prioritise well-being and mental health, supporting children's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development while fostering resilience, confidence, and fulfilment. Education should encourage critical thinking and curiosity, helping children question, cross-check information, and think independently rather than passively absorb facts.

Parents believe education should help children develop empathy, respect, and strong social skills within a safe, inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and individual strengths. They see its purpose as equipping children with adaptable skills for the future, fostering self-advocacy and informed decision-making, and giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential. Ultimately, parents view education as enabling children to participate meaningfully in society, encouraging responsible global citizenship, and helping them find their place and purpose in the world.

Question 2

What is working well in our schools?

Parents shared that many aspects of our schools are working well.

Highlights include our current smaller class sizes and well-qualified, motivated teachers, which enhance outcomes for children. Many schools provide valuable opportunities for children to develop new skills across a wide range of experiences.

Parents particularly value strong communication and positive relationships with teachers, supported by tools such as the Aladdin app and open invitations to monthly classroom visits. Some schools were described as happy, welcoming environments with successful anti-bullying policies and an emphasis on kindness. The different patronage and type of school options available to parents can contribute to a sense of community and real-life learning experiences. Parents also commented that mixed-gender schools can offer balanced opportunities for both boys and girls.

Question 3

What could be improved to better support learners and staff?

Parents believe that:

Increased financial support for schools would improve the learning of students in all schools. They believe that a clear application programme for targeted support such as building or technology grants would mean more time for school leaders to concentrate on learning. They also believe that this would eliminate the need for voluntary contributions to schools and so Parent Associations could be more involved in true partnership with schools.

Smaller class sizes would help learners and staff build stronger connections, helping to identify problems earlier and lead to better outcomes for learners. They also believe a reduced pupil teacher ratio would support implementation of the new primary curriculum where more child-led learning is encouraged.

Staff and learners would be better supported if parents were involved as partners in their children's learning. Learners would be more comfortable, confident, and therefore learn better in an environment in which their parents were also comfortable and confident.

Therapists such as Occupational Therapists or Speech and Language Therapists in schools would support learners and staff as children would not have to be taken out of school for therapy, and staff could engage with therapists in the school setting.

Question 4

What do you want our schools of the future to look and feel like?

Parents want schools to be safe, happy places where children can thrive. They want their children to be taught in schools which are universally designed and which all children in the local community can attend. They want the option of mixed gender school settings which are closely linked to their local communities.

All schools would have a library and there would be lots of opportunities for outdoor learning and play. A range of languages would be experienced, and there would be an option of no uniform in schools.

Parents would be welcomed as partners in the schools, and there would be regular, open two-way communication. Parents' views on school policies would be sought and valued.

Parents and students would have a choice regarding religious education and religion would not dominate either the school day or the overall ethos of the school.

Students would use a variety of tools for learning including books, digital devices and other technologies, but there would be dedicated time for child led learning, learning through play and unstructured play across both primary and post primary. There would also be time for eating healthy meals in a sociable setting.

Question 5

What kind of education system will best meet the needs of future generations?

Parents want an education system that is flexible, inclusive, and supports student development. They emphasise curricula that adapt to technology, AI, and critical thinking, alongside strong

teaching support, continuous assessment, and holistic life skills. Schools should support students with disabilities, mental health needs, and diverse learning styles, providing specialised staff, adequate resources, and inclusive teaching methods.

A system that is transparent, has accountable policies, and a sustainable approach is what is needed for the future.

The system will highlight the importance of cultural diversity, Irish language preservation, and mixed gender schools including students with and without disabilities learning together.

A system which embraces partnership between schools, students, parents and their local community which strives to achieve the best outcomes for all children, parents believe, will best meet the needs of future generations.

Parents advocate for varied teaching styles, online and offline learning resources, differentiated instruction, and exposure to international best practices. They see schools as spaces to foster curiosity, independent thinking, inclusion, and responsible citizenship, supported by adequate funding, trained staff, and safe, well-equipped learning environments.