NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD
AN BORD NAISIUNTA LEASA OIDEACHAIS

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD

TO: Boards of Management of Primary and Post Primary Schools
Principals of Primary and Post Primary Schools
Vocational Education Committees (VECs)
Parents' Associations

DATE: February 2003

Attached is a letter outlining the roles and immediate plans of the new National Educational Welfare Board, as well as information on how you can contact us.

The National Educational Welfare Board represents a new departure in the promotion of regular school attendance and in tackling comprehensively the problems of absenteeism and early school leaving.

Please provide a copy of this letter to the appropriate representatives of parents and teachers for transmission to individual parents and teachers. A copy should also be provided to a students' council established in accordance with section 27 of the Education Act, 1998.

Eddie Ward
Chief Executive Officer

THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD

A New Departure

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and tackling the problems of absenteeism and early school leaving. All sections of the Act are now commenced.

The Act repeals the previous school attendance legislation and provides for the raising of the school leaving age to 16 years or the completion of three years' post primary education, whichever occurs later.

Responsibility for Attendance

The Act provides for the establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board as the single national body with responsibility for encouraging and supporting regular school attendance. The Board has responsibility for ensuring that each child aged six and upwards attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education, unless a child comes within the specific exceptions set out in the Act. The Act outlines a range of functions and powers to enable the Board discharge its responsibilities.

Fully Accessible

The Board will develop a nationwide service that is accessible to schools; parents/guardians and others concerned with the welfare of young people. For this purpose, Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) will be appointed and deployed throughout the country to provide a welfare-focused service to support regular school attendance and discharge the Board's functions locally.

Support for Schools

The Board is required to assist schools in so far as it is practicable to meet their obligations under the Act.

Responsible for children educated outside of recognised Schools

The Board also has responsibilities in relation to children who are educated outside of schools recognised by the Department of Education & Science and young people aged 16 and 17 who leave school early to go into employment.

Delivering the New Service

The development of the new service involves the establishment of appropriate management and service delivery structures throughout the country.

Phased Development

The service, which will have a regional structure, will be developed on a *phased basis* and in accordance with the resources allocated commencing in the current school year. Children who are not in receipt of an education, areas with high levels of disadvantage and areas that had a school attendance service under the previous legislation will receive priority.

Recruiting Staff

The Board is currently recruiting senior management staff and a number of Education Welfare Officers will be recruited later.

Strategic Plan

The Board will outline its priorities in further detail in a strategic plan to be developed over coming months. The Board will consult with the Education Partners in the course of developing this plan.

Managing School Attendance

Policies and Procedures

The Board is committed to ensuring that schools receive appropriate information and guidance on the implementation of the Act and it will work with the Education Partners in developing appropriate policies and procedures to support regular school attendance at local and national level.

Educational Welfare Officers

Locally based Educational Welfare Officers will, when appointed, work collaboratively with schools in implementing the legislation and in dealing with school attendance issues.

Transfer of School Attendance Officers

In areas that had a school attendance service under the auspices of a local authority, the school attendance officers are now staff of the Board and are authorised, already, to carry out a range of functions in relation to school attendance.

Monitoring and Reporting

Under the Act, schools are required to monitor attendance and submit reports to the local Educational Welfare Officer in certain circumstances. Because of the phasing-in approach being adapted to the development of the new service, it will not be possible to have Educational Welfare Officers available in all areas of the country in the short term. The Board therefore will not be in a position to follow up on reports of student absences in areas where staff are not yet appointed. In these circumstances, schools are requested to continue to record, monitor and support school attendance in the normal way and follow existing good practice in this regard. Where urgent cases are reported, the Board will respond to the needs of the children concerned in as effective a way as possible within the resources available.

Standard System

It is the Board's view that certain procedures and systems are necessary to enable schools to efficiently and effectively discharge their responsibilities and these will build on the existing infrastructure where possible. The Board will be working towards the development of a standard system for the recording of school attendance and the reporting of absences across all schools. The development of a national tracking system for children is a priority. Schools are advised not to enter into any new financial commitment in relation to the purchase and/or development of a new system. Further guidance will issue on this matter.

Development of National Guidelines

The Board will develop national guidelines across a number of areas in consultation with the Partners and other relevant bodies to assist schools in meeting their obligations under the Act. There are a number of matters where guidelines may be required. These include school attendance strategies, the recording of attendances, submission of notifications and reports and their contents, codes of behaviour and the working arrangements between schools and Board staff.

Where the Department of Education & Science has issued guidelines or directives previously in relation to any of these matters or other matters falling within the remit of the Board, these guidelines remain extant until they are replaced and/or updated.

Addressing Your Concerns

The Board will consult the Education Partners concerning the priorities for the new service over the coming months. In particular, the Board is anxious that matters of concern to schools, teachers and parents are identified and addressed in a timely and proactive manner.

The Board looks forward to working with principals, teachers and the Education Partners in relation to the implementation of the Act and the development of the new national educational welfare service.

Further Information

A website **http://www.newb.ie** has been established and this will provide the latest information concerning the activities of the Board and the development of the new service. The Board's Email address is **info@newb.ie** .

Eddie Ward
Chief Executive Officer
February 2003

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AN BORD NAISIUNTA LEASA OIDEACHAIS

Príomhionad Gnó

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BUNÚ AN BHOIRD NÁISIÚNTA LEASA OIDEACHAIS

DO: Boird bhainistíochta bunscoileanna agus meánscoileanna
Príomhoidí bunscoileanna agus meánscoileanna
Coistí Gairmoideachais (CG)
Cumainn Tuismitheoirí

DATA: Feabhra 2003

Faoi iamh tá litir ag insint faoi rólanna agus faoi phleananna láithreacha an Bhoird nua Náisiúnta Leasa Oideachais, agus eolas lena chois sin ar cén chaoi teagmháil a dhéanamh linn.

Is tionscnamh nua é An Bord Náisiúnta Leasa Oideachais a chuireann chun cinn tinreamh rialta scoile agus a théann i ngleic go cuimsitheach le fadhbanna neamhláithreachta agus daltaí a bheith ag fágail na scoile róluath.

Bheinn faoi do chomaoin dá bhféachfá chuige go bhfaigheadh ionadaithe cuí tuismitheoirí agus múinteoirí cóip den litir seo i dtreo is go bhfaigheadh tuismitheoirí agus múinteoirí ar leith í. Ba cheart cóip a sholáthar freisin do chomhairle daltaí a bunaíodh de réir ailt 27 den Acht Oideachais, 1998.

Eamon Mac an Bhaird
Príomhoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin

AN BORD NÁISIÚNTA LEASA OIDEACHAIS

Tionscnamh Nua

Déantar soláthar san Acht (Leasa) Oideachais, 2000 faoi fhráma tagartha nua cuimsitheach a chur ar fáil a chuirfidh chun cinn tinreamh rialta scoile agus a rachaidh i ngleic le fadhbanna neamhláithreachta agus daltaí a bheith ag fágáil na scoile róluath. Tá tosach feidhme le gach alt den Acht leis seo.

Aisghaireann an tAcht an reachtaíocht a bhí ann roimhe seo maidir le tinreamh scoile agus soláthraíonn sé go n-ardaítear aois fhágála na scoile go dtí 16 bliana nó i ndiaidh trí bliana d'iar-bhunoideachas a dhéanamh, pé acu is déanaí.

Freagracht as Tinreamh

Déantar soláthar san Acht faoi bhunú an Bhoird Náisiúnta Leasa Oideachais mar an t-aon chomhlacht náisiúnta a bhfuil freagracht air tacú le tinreamh rialta scoile agus é a chur chun cinn. Tá de fhreagracht ar an mBord a chinntiú go bhfreastalóidh gach páiste, a bhfuil sé bliana slánaithe aige, ar scoil aitheanta nó go bhfaighidh sé / sí ar dóigh eile oideachas bunúsach áirithe, ach amháin sa chás go mbaineann an páiste leis na heisceachtaí sainiúla a leagtar amach san Acht. Déanann an tAcht cur síos ar réimse feidhmeanna agus cumhachtaí an Bhoird a chuireann ar a chumas a chuid dualgas a chomhlíonadh.

Ar Fáil do Chách

Cuirfidh an Bord seirbhís náisiúnta ar fáil do scoileanna, thuismitheoirí/chaomhnóirí agus dhreamanna eile a bhfuil baint acu le cúram agus leas daoine óga. Ar mhaithe leis seo a chur i gcrích, ceapfar Oifigigh Leasa Oideachais (OLO) a fheidhmeoidh ar fud na tíre chun seirbhís, atá dírithe ar leas páistí, a chur ar fáil is a thacóidh le tinreamh rialta scoile agus a chomhlíonfaidh feidhmeanna an Bhoird go háitiúil.

Tacaíocht do Scoileanna

Ní foláir don Bhord cúnamh a thabhairt do scoileanna chomh fada is atá sin indéanta lena gcuid dualgas faoin Acht a chomhlíonadh.

Freagrach as páistí a oiltear taobh amuigh de Scoileanna aitheanta

Tá dualgais ar an mBord freisin i leith páistí a oiltear taobh amuigh de scoileanna a aithníonn an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta agus daoine óga 16 agus 17 mbliana d'aois a fhágann an scoil ina ndiaidh d'fhonn glacadh le fostaíocht.

An tSeirbhís Nua a Chur ar Fáil

Beidh sé i gceist le forbairt na seirbhíse nua go mbunófar struchtúir chuí bhainistíochta agus struchtúir chuí ar mhaithe leis an tseirbhís a chur ar fáil ar fud na tíre.

Forbairt Chéimnithe

Forbrófar an tseirbhís, a mbeidh struchtúr réigiúnach aici, ar bhonn céimnithe agus de réir na hacmhainne a chuirfear ar fáil ag tús na bliana reatha scoile. Tabharfar tosaíocht do pháistí nach bhfuil oideachas á fháil acu, do cheantair a bhfuil leibhéil arda míbhuntáistí ag baint leo agus do cheantair a mbíodh seirbhís tinrimh scoile acu faoin reachtaíocht a bhí ann roimhe seo.

Foireann a Earcú

I láthair na huaire tá an Bord ag earcú foireann shinsearach bhainistíochta agus earcófar méid áirithe Oifigeach Leasa Oideachais níos faide anonn.

Plean Straitéiseach

Cuirfidh an Bord síos go mion ar a chuid aidhmeanna tosaíochta i bplean straitéiseach a fhorbrófar le linn na míonna atá romhainn. Rachaidh an Bord i gcomhairle leis na Pairtnéirí Oideachais agus an plean i mbun a fhorbartha.

Bainistíocht a dhéanamh ar thinreamh scoile

Polasaithe agus Modhanna Oibre

Tá ceangal ar an mBord a chinntiú go bhfaighidh scoileanna eolas agus treoir chuí faoi chur i gcrích an Achta agus oibreoidh sé leis na Pairtnéirí Oideachais chun polasaithe agus modhanna oibre cuí a fhorbairt a thacóidh le tinreamh rialta scoile ag leibhéal áitiúil agus náisiúnta.

Oifigigh Leasa Oideachais

Nuair a cheapfar Oifigigh Leasa Oideachais atá bunaithe go háitiúil, rachaidh na hOifigigh sin i gcomhar leis na scoileanna chun an reachtaíocht a chur i gcrích agus chun déileáil le ceisteanna tinrimh scoile.

Aistriú Oifigigh Tinrimh Scoile

I gceantair a mbíodh seirbhís tinrimh scoile faoi choimirce údaráis áitiúil, is cuid d'fhoireann an Bhoird anois iad na hoifigigh tinrimh scoile agus tá údarás acu cheana féin réimse feidhmeanna a chur i ngníomh maidir le tinreamh scoile.

Faireachán agus Tuairisciú

Faoin Acht tá de dhualgas ar scoileanna faireachán a dhéanamh ar thinreamh, agus tuairiscí a chur faoi bhráid an Oifigigh Leasa Oideachais áitiúil faoi chúinsí áirithe. Toisc an bonn céimnithe atá á chur le forbairt na seirbhíse nua níl sé indéanta go mbeidh Oifigeach Leasa Oideachais ar fáil i ngach ceantar den tír sa ghearrthéarma. Dá bhrí sin ní bheidh sé ar chumas an Bhoird déileáil le tuairiscí ar neamhláithreacht daltaí scoile i gceantair nach bhfuil foireann ceaptha go fóill. Agus an scéal amhlaidh, iarrtar ar scoileanna coinneáil orthu ag taifeadadh tinreamh scoile, faireachán a dhéanamh air agus an tinreamh a spreagadh ar an ngnáthbhealach agus leanúint leis an deá-

chleachtas atá ann cheana maidir leis seo. Nuair a thuairiscítear cásanna práinneacha, freagróidh an Bord do riachtanais na bpáistí atá i gceist chomh héifeachtach is atá sé in ann leis an acmhainn atá ar fáil aige.

Córas Caighdeánach

Is é tuairim an Bhoird go bhfuil gá le modhanna oibre agus le córais áirithe chun a chinntiú go gcomhlíonfaidh scoileanna a gcuid dualgas go hinniúil agus go héifeachtach agus tógfar iad seo ar na struchtúir atá ann cheana féin chomh fada agus is féidir. Beidh an Bord ag obair i dtreo córas caighdeánach sna scoileanna go léir ar mhaithe le tinreamh scoile a thaifeadadh agus neamhláithreacht a thuairisciú. Is tosaíocht é córas rianaithe náisiúnta a fhorbairt. Moltar do scoileanna gan airgead a gheallúint nó a chaitheamh ar son córas nua a cheannach nó a fhorbairt. Tabharfar tuilleadh treorach ar an gceist seo amach anseo.

Forbairt Treoirlínte Náisiúnta

Forbróidh an Bord treoirlínte náisiúnta a chlúdóidh réimsí áirithe i gcomhairle leis na Pairtnéirí agus le comhlachtaí iomchuí chun cúnamh a thabhairt do scoileanna a gcuid dualgas faoin Acht a chomhlíonadh. Tá roinnt ceisteanna ann ar dócha go mbeidh gá le treoirlínte. San áireamh tá straitéiseanna do thinreamh scoile, tinreamh a thaifeadadh, fógraí agus tuairiscí a thabhairt isteach (agus a n-ábhar siúd), códanna iompair agus socruithe oibre idir na scoileanna agus foireann an Bhoird.

Sa chás gur eisigh An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta treoirlínte nó treoracha roimhe seo maidir le haon cheann de na ceisteanna seo nó aon cheist eile a bhaineann le gnó an Bhoird, caithfidh na treoirlínte seo a chur i bhfeidhm go fóill go dtí go gcuirfear treoirlínte eile ina n-áit nó go leasófar iad.

Ag Déileáil le Ceisteanna Atá ag Déanamh Buartha do Dhaoine

Rachaidh an Bord i gcomhairle leis na Pairtnéirí Oideachais maidir leis na haidhmeanna tosaíochta atá ann don seirbhís nua le linn na míonna atá romhainn. Go sonrach, tá fonn ar an mBord go n-aithneofar is go ndéileálfar ar bhealach tráthúil gníomhach leis na ceisteanna atá ag déanamh buartha do scoileanna, mhúinteoirí agus thuismitheoirí.

Tá an Bord ag súil le bheith ag obair le príomhoidí, le múinteoirí agus le Pairtnéirí Oideachais maidir le cur i gcrích an Achta agus forbairt sheirbhís nua an leasa oideachais náisiúnta.

Tuilleadh eolais

Bunaíodh suíomh idirlín **http://www.newb.ie** agus is tríd seo a thiocfar ar an eolas is déanaí maidir le hobair an Bhoird agus forbairt na seirbhíse nua. Is é seoladh ríomhphoist an **Bhoird info@newb.ie** .

Eamon Mac an Bhaird
Príomhoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin
Feabhra 2003