



To the Authorities of Post-Primary Schools

**Selection Procedures for the Enrolment of Pupils
in Second-Level Schools**

The Minister for Education wishes to inform the authorities of post-primary schools that her Department has been involved in discussions with the post-primary school managerial associations in relation to the application of fair and objective entrance criteria for entry to second-level schools. A copy of an Agreed Memorandum of the discussions between the Department and the national representatives of the managerial associations is attached.

While school enrolment policy is a matter for the managerial authorities of each individual school, the Minister and the national representatives of school managerial associations are agreed that selection on the basis of academic ability must be discontinued. They also agree that it is important that each school should disclose its enrolment policy and the criteria used in selecting pupils for enrolment. Parents will thus be fully informed on the selection procedures and this will help to allay fears of discrimination against their children.

Copies of this Circular are also being distributed to the national managerial bodies representing post-primary schools, the National Parents' Council - Post-Primary, relevant teacher unions and the national and local media.

Don Thornhill,
Secretary.

2 December, 1993

AGREED MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Selection Procedures for the Enrolment of Pupils in Second-Level Schools.

1. In addressing the Teacher Congresses last Easter, the Minister for Education, Niamh Bhreathnach, T.D., expressed concern that the systems of selection operated by some post-primary schools were a barrier to equality of education. She indicated her total opposition to selection based on pupils' academic ability.
2. Representatives of the Department of Education met the three post-primary managerial associations - the Joint Managerial Body, the Irish Vocational Education Association and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools - on 15 June, 1993 to discuss this issue.
3. All parties agreed that selection of students for enrolment in post-primary schools should not be based on academic ability. In this regard, the support also of the Education Commission of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in their response to the Green Paper on Education is welcomed. The Commission stated:

"We have in the past (CMRS 1989) pointed to the desirability of all schools catering for and welcoming the full range of student backgrounds and of abilities. Therefore we endorse the ideas of the Green Paper in this regard".
4. It is accepted that where schools receive more enrolment applications than they can cater for, a selection procedure is necessary. Schools adopt different selection procedures in such cases.

Examples are :-
 - * priority given to pupils from national schools in the area;
 - * enrolment on a "first-come, first-served" basis;
 - * random selection on the basis of age of applicants;
 - * priority to brothers and sisters of pupils already enrolled in the school;
 - * priority given to pupils of a particular religious denomination.
5. While enrolment procedures such as those listed above are broadly acceptable, all the parties to this Agreed Memorandum wish to emphasise the importance which they attach to the principle of the school working in and for the community it serves. On that basis, emphasis should be placed by post-primary schools on catering, in the first instance, for children from their own communities and catchment areas.
6. It has been suggested that examinations or assessment tests are useful for placement purposes following enrolment and there may be merit in this claim. However, there is no reason why such tests, if considered necessary, cannot be organised after enrolment has been decided. A common enrolment date should obtain for all schools in a particular catchment area.
7. It is important that each school should disclose its enrolment policy and the criteria used in selecting pupils for enrolment. Parents will thus be fully informed on the selection procedures and this will help to allay fears of discrimination against their children.

- 8.** While school enrolment policy is a matter for the managerial authorities of each individual school, the Minister and the national representatives of school managerial authorities agree that selection on the basis of academic ability must be discontinued. A circular to this effect will shortly be issued by the Department of Education to all post-primary schools.
- 9.** Following the issue of this circular, post-primary schools should not use entrance examinations or other mechanisms for the purpose of awarding places to applicants in the order of their academic or intellectual ability.
- 10.** The Department of Education and the managerial authorities wish to ensure that the terms of this Agreed Memorandum are implemented in full and will cooperate in monitoring the situation. Where difficulties arise in the enrolment of a pupil or pupils in any particular type of post-primary school, the Department of Education and the appropriate managerial body will, through the mechanism of a Monitoring Committee for each particular sector, consider each case with a view to resolving the difficulty following consultation, where necessary, with the school authorities and the appropriate trustees.