

New Community National Schools Opening in Cork, Kerry & Limerick (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/108457>)

TBI conference hears how three former Catholic schools will provide multidenominational education from this autumn



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Three primary schools that were formerly under the patronage of the Catholic Church will reopen this September as multi-denominational Community National Schools. The three schools – in Cork, Kerry and Limerick – will all now fall under the patronage of their local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Community National Schools are the primary school model offered by ETBs. They are State-run, co-educational and multi-denominational.

Details of the three new Community National Schools (CNSs) were shared (23.05.24) at a conference for CNS Principals in Portlaoise, organised by Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the representative body for the 16 ETBs nationwide. The three new CNSs will be:

- Croí na Coille Community National School in Co. Limerick. Currently operating as Fedamore National School under Catholic patronage, this will reopen in September under the patronage of Limerick and Clare ETB.
- Lyreacrompane Community National School in Co. Kerry. Currently Lyreacrompane Primary School, and also under Catholic patronage, this will reopen in September under the patronage of Kerry ETB.
- Kyle National School in Co. Cork, also currently under Catholic patronage, which will reopen as a CNS in September under the patronage of Cork ETB.

These three new schools will bring the total number of CNSs nationwide to 32.

Delegates at the ETBI conference heard, however, that a much higher number of CNSs are needed to serve Ireland's increasingly diverse population. The latest Census shows less than 70% of the population now identify as Catholic – but almost 90% of primary schools fall under the patronage of the Catholic Church.

To adapt to changing demographics, the Government has a commitment of having 400 multi-denominational primary schools operating across Ireland by 2030. Currently, out of 3,116 primary schools in total, only 152 are multidenominational, including the Community National Schools run by ETBs.

Commenting, Paddy Lavelle, General Secretary of ETBI, said: "ETBs are committed to increasing the number and profile of CNSs nationwide over the coming years. I am delighted to welcome three additional primary schools to the Community National School family this year. Our current CNSs are thriving in the areas they serve, and I have no doubt these schools in Cork, Kerry and Limerick will also flourish as Community National Schools."

Speaking about school communities deciding to change from religious to multi-denominational patronage, Dr Séamus Conboy, Director of Schools at ETBI with responsibility for the development of Community National Schools nationwide, said: "Many people are naturally cautious about change. But one important point to note is that, when a school changes to become a Community National School, lots of the great things that are already in place remain the same. The curriculum, the staff, and extra-curricular activities all remain as they were."

“The main thing that changes is that the ethos in a CNS includes all children and their families equally throughout the school day, rather than prioritising one religion or belief over another. Instead of doing Catholic religion classes only, for example, children learn about different religious and non-religious worldviews, and the religions and beliefs of their classmates. And, for Catholic families, there is still the option for children to make their First Holy Communion or their Confirmation – the only difference is that preparation for the sacraments happens outside of the regular school day. This approach ensures that preparation for the sacraments does not take away from valuable teaching and learning time.”

Further information about the CNS model of primary education offered by ETBs is available at www.cns.ie (<http://www.cns.ie>).

Region

Various Locations

Date Entered/Updated

23rd May, 2024

Expiry Date

23rd Jul, 2024

Source URL: <https://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/news/108457-new-community-national-schools-opening-in-cork-kerry-limerick>