



Knocknacarra Educate Together  
National School

# Financial Procedures and Protocols Policy

*This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to provide guidance for the Board of Management and the principal regarding rules and procedures for spending.*

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### **Introduction:**

This school policy outlines financial procedures to ensure oversight, transparency and clarity related to spending money. It was written by the principal and approved by the Board of Management of Knocknacarra Educate Together NS.

### **Background and Rationale:**

Knocknacarra Educate Together NS has important responsibilities related to the spending of money on behalf of the school community. Therefore, clear procedures and protocols are required to ensure that all spending is completed in a transparent and accountable manner that ensures the best use of the school's funds and the long-term sustainability and development of the school community. A number of procedures are in place and referenced in Board of Management minutes, but this policy seeks to gather them together and formalise them.

### **Relationship to School Ethos:**

Knocknacarra ETNS follows the key principles of Educate Together: equality-based, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run. In relation to financial considerations, it is essential that spending rules and procedures are established and followed that ensure money is carefully spent in a manner that fulfils the school's ethos of being child-centred and democratically run.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To establish the requirement for ongoing budgets to be established and reviewed on an annual basis, with a minimum of a two-year spending forecast.
- To provide procedures for procurement that ensure value for money.
- To define protocols for the use of a school credit card as well as online transfers.
- To explain the procedures for accounting and the reporting of spending to the Board of Management as well as outside agencies and stakeholders as required.

### **Policies and Procedures including Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### **Budgeting**

A budget will be maintained with income and expenditure forecasts for the current and following fiscal years. The budget will be presented to the Board of Management at the beginning of each academic year. Budget forecasts will consider previous patterns of income and expenditure as well as known additional factors. Priorities for spending will be determined by the Board of Management in consultation with the staff, Parent-Teacher Association and Student Council, as appropriate.

#### **Value for Money**

- In general, while national procurement processes will be considered, the school will undertake its own value-for-money comparison procedures.
- In the case of utilities and long-term contracts, the school will review options when a contract is up for renewal, endeavouring to seek three quotes.
- Staff are encouraged to find three prices from different sources for any items or services to be purchased. For any single item costing €300 or more, three quotes are preferred whenever

practicable. For a collection of smaller items from a single vendor that total €1000 or more, prices should be checked in multiple sources. This evidence of different prices will be kept on file for a minimum of seven years.

- While price is the primary criterion, other factors may be considered including quality, the desire to support local businesses, ethical considerations and speed of delivery.

### School Expenses

- Parents are asked to pay the school for expenses on an annual basis. Currently set at €90 for children in infant classes and €100 in other classes, this money is used by the school to purchase all school books (including workbooks as well as the use of some books given on loan to pupils), all pupil stationery and pupil personal accident insurance. In addition, this money is earmarked for photocopying, arts and crafts materials and the annual Educate Together subscription.
- In addition, parents are asked to pay for swimming lessons in the senior classes.
- Finally, parents are asked to pay for entrance fees for school tours and theatre performances on occasion.
- No child will ever be denied any learning experience because of an inability to pay.

### Fundraising

- The Parent-Teacher Association currently organises one annual fundraiser. The money raised is earmarked to support enrichment programmes for all children in the school, notably visiting teachers who provide special learning activities linked to the curriculum during the school day, notably art and sports activities.
- Currently the PTA does not have a separate account to the school. A line item in the school accounts for both income and expenditure related to the PTA is included in the general accounts.
- The Board of Management consults with the Parent-Teacher Association and the Student Council regarding spending, notably spending derived from fundraising.

### Voluntary Contributions

- Families are invited to make a voluntary contribution to support the school. The reality of operating our school is that the funding received from the Department of Education and Skills does not cover the full costs of running the school each year. If families feel able to make a voluntary contribution beyond the required school expenses to the school, it will ensure that we can provide the highest quality experiences for the children at Knocknacarra ETNS.
- While the contribution is a voluntary one (because there will always be families in particular financial difficulty, who genuinely cannot afford this contribution), we recommend a specified amount of €50 per child. That being said, any contribution, no matter how small, would be welcome. Equally, if families are in the position of being able to contribute €250 or more in a financial year, the school can reclaim tax on voluntary contributions if you are a PAYE worker.
- The voluntary contributions have allowed us to provide transport for all off-site learning experiences without asking parents to pay for buses and to support the purchase of equipment, books and learning materials.
- A letter and envelope are distributed to all families in the spring of each year. These are returned to the school's post box. They are opened by the chairperson and secretary. Other staff members will not be aware of payments received, and no record or list of contributions will be

made. Contributions may remain anonymous, but receipts will be issued to those who complete a simple form with their contribution. Only one general request for contributions will be made annually to parents.

#### Additional Funding Sources

- The school may rent facilities to other organisations, though the regular functioning of school activities will always take precedence.
- The school community will pursue targeted grants to support special projects, as appropriate.

#### Banking Procedures

- All banking decisions require two signatures. Normally the chairperson, treasurer and principal are signatories.
- The school favours the use of online bank transfers over cheques. The school's online banking system requires two individuals to approve payments, normally the principal and the treasurer. In the rare event that a cheque is used, it requires two signatures.
- The school account does not have a debit or ATM card.
- A receipt or invoice is required for all payments, and these are filed and stored for a minimum of seven years.

#### Petty Cash Protocols

- Petty cash is maintained by the secretary. Only the principal and secretary will handle cash in the school.
- Regarding fundraising or other similar events with cash flow, two people will count together the money raised before it is included in the petty cash account.
- A spreadsheet (cash book) of incoming and outgoing cash payments is maintained by the secretary. Receipts are issued on paper or electronically for payments received.
- All expenditures submitted for reimbursement require a receipt. Individuals who are being reimbursed from petty cash must sign a docket when receiving the cash which is attached to the receipt. The receipt and docket are filed and stored for a minimum of seven years.
- The maximum amount of a payment from petty cash is €150. Any amount over €150 will be reimbursed using an online bank payment.
- The secretary will lodge cash on a regular basis and whenever the balance is greater than €800 including notes and coins.

#### Credit Card

- A business credit card issued by the school's bank may be used for purchases. It can never be used for personal reasons or for cash withdrawals.
- The principal is the only authorised user of the card.
- The treasurer and other authorised members of the Board of Management who are able to approve online payments will be able to access the credit balance and statements at any time.
- The credit limit is set at €3000.
- The full balance of the credit card will be paid in full by direct debit from the school's current account on a monthly basis.

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- As with all other types of spending, a receipt or invoice must be filed and stored for a minimum of seven years for all credit-card charges.

### Accounting Procedures

- The principal, with the support of the secretary, will maintain regular school accounts. These will include detailed income and expenditure records as well as a reconciliation of the accounts.
- A monthly financial report will be presented to the Board of Management. These reports will include year-to-date income and expenditure and allow for budget tracking.
- The accounts will be certified on an annual basis by an accountant and reported to the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU). The FSSU will make the accounts available publicly.

### **Implementation and Review:**

The policy has immediate effect and will be reviewed no later than 2023.

### **Ratification and Communication:**

The policy was ratified by the BoM on the date below. It will be posted on the school website.

Paul Adams, chairperson

Date of ratification: 09/03/2020