

**Voluntary Contributions (Regulation) Bill 2019**

*Mar a tionscnaíodh*

*As initiated*

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**ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS**

Section

1. Interpretation
2. Amendment of section 12 of Act of 1998
3. Amendment of section 18 of Act of 1998
4. Short title and commencement.

An Act to amend section 12 of the Education Act 1998 and to make provision whereby the Minister for Education and Skills shall make regulations governing the voluntary contributions to recognised schools and to provide for the publication of details of the receipt and use of voluntary contributions in the annual accounts and records of schools.

**Interpretation**

In this Act, save where the context otherwise requires—

“Act of 1998” means the Education Act 1998;

“Minister” means the Minister for Education and Skills;

“Schools” means recognised schools as defined by the Education Act 1998, who are primarily funded by the Oireachtas and are not recognised fee paying schools;

“Voluntary contribution” means any financial contribution made by parents of students enrolled in a school towards the operating costs of the school.

**Amendment of section 12 of Act of 1998**

Section 12 of the Act of 1998 is hereby amended by the insertion of subsection (6) as follows:

“(6)(a) The Minister shall, having regard to the principles of inclusion and equality of access to and participation in education, and following consultation with patrons, national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and such other persons as the Minister considers appropriate, make regulations governing the collection and use of voluntary contributions from parents.

(b) Regulations under this section shall:

(i) contain a provision that requires all schools, other than recognised fee-paying schools, to state clearly that any contribution made by parents towards the operating costs of the school are voluntary and there is no obligation on the parents to make such a contribution;

(ii) contain a provision that no student will be differentiated in terms of reasonable access to school facilities due to the choice or otherwise of parents to make a voluntary contribution;

(iii) contain a provision that no school may contact a parent, either in writing or by any other means, more than once per schoolyear seeking a voluntary contribution;

(iv) contain a provision that, upon such date as determined by the Minister, schools will be prohibited from requesting a voluntary contribution from parents, provided that the Minister is satisfied that the monies provided to schools from the Oireachtas is sufficient to provide for the reasonable operating costs of the school.

(v) contain a provision that requires all schools to provide the Department of Education with the amount of monies accrued from voluntary contributions at the end of each financial year.

(c) The Minister shall direct the Department to publish information and guidance for parents about the voluntary nature of any such contributions.

(d) The Minister shall direct the Department to establish a database of voluntary contributions being requested by schools each year and make this information publicly available.

**Amendment of section 18 of Act of 1998**

Section 18 of the Act of 1998 is hereby amended by the insertion of subsection (3) as follows:

“(3) All schools in receipt of voluntary contributions, in accordance with section 12, shall include a financial statement detailing receipt and expenditure of contributions received and shall ensure such statement is available for inspection by parents of students in the school, in such a way that the amount received by any one individual is not identifiable from such an inspection.”

**Short title and Commencement**

(1) This Act may be cited as the Voluntary Contributions (Regulation) Bill 2019

(2) This shall come into operation on such day or days as, by order or orders made by the Minister under this section