



Provision of School Payment Solutions for the Irish Primary and Post-Primary School Sector

The Department of Education & Skills and its education sector procurement hub, the Education Procurement Service (EPS), in conjunction with the Schools Procurement Unit (SPU), the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) and Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), has established a framework of three market providers in order to provide payments solutions for schools to avail of. The payments solutions will facilitate the handling of payments from parents to schools electronically (including internet, mobile phone app and chip and pin), while continuing to allow parents that wish to make payments by cash, cheque, etc.

The payments solutions are intended to fulfil the following objectives:

- To facilitate flexibility in making, and receiving, payments to and in schools;
- To remove cash payments for school activities from the schools themselves, but without removing the cash payment option for parents; and
- To align school payments with the National Payments Plan – the main goal of which is to ‘deliver a significant increase in the use of secure and efficient electronic payment methods leading to a reduction in the reliance on cash and paper-based payment instruments’.

The solutions available to schools are split by category into 10 lots (5 x primary and 5 x post-primary), based on the payment services that individual schools identify as their requirements:

- One Lot in each category covers the entire electronic payments spectrum (Cash & Cheque, Direct Debit & Standing Orders, Card Terminal, Online and Retail), and is targeted towards those schools that do not have any aspect of a payments solution.
- The other four Lots in each category cover different payments aspects, thereby allowing schools that have varying degrees of payments solutions in place currently to take advantage of whatever aspects of the tender that they require to suit their requirement.

The Department of Education & Skills in conjunction with the SPU and ETBI, has identified approximately 100 schools across the primary, post-primary and ETB sector willing to take part in a pilot project to avail of these solutions. An implementation team, with representatives from the Department, the EPS, FSSU and ETBI, will work with both the pilot schools and the service providers to oversee the rollout of these payments solutions. The framework will be available for other schools to avail of should they wish, but for the purposes of onward close monitoring of the pilot project, the focus will remain on the initial identified cohort.

Further information on the framework is available at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Procurement/Procurement.html>