

Chapter 10

STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECOND LEVEL EDUCATION

Introduction

10.1 As mentioned in our assessment of the present structural arrangements at Chapter 7, there are problems and weaknesses in a schools system which is largely based on a culture of competition and separateness. The Northern Ireland schools system is characterised by competition for pupil enrolments, comparisons between the relative performance and outputs of individual schools and, inevitably, in their relative status in the eyes of local communities. In addition, there is competition and vested interest in the development and provision of post-16 courses, both between schools and the further education sector. Many of these characteristics can be inconsistent with the objective of meeting the educational interests of young people.

10.2 This analysis is not intended as a criticism of individual schools or further education institutions. Indeed we recognise that some schools and colleges collaborate and work in partnership in developing their curricular provision - this is discussed further at Chapter 11. We accept also that competition can be healthy and can help to raise standards. Rather this commentary is a reflection of views and concerns which were widely expressed in the public consultation, and which we share, about the circumstances under which schools are required to operate, including -

- an Open Enrolment procedure which is designed to facilitate parental choice, but which, in practice, is dominated by the emphasis on selection by schools;
- a selective system of admissions which operates in such a way as to give significant advantage to schools in the grammar sector - in terms of their ability to attract more applications for enrolment than they can

accommodate within their physical capacity - compared to many other schools in the secondary sector which are under-subscribed and under-utilised;

- formula funding arrangements, under the Local Management of Schools policy, which allocate a significant proportion of school budgets on an individual pupil per capita basis. This can have a disproportionate impact on the teaching capacity of under-subscribed schools in particular, from year to year;
- the way in which funding for post-16 year-olds acts to encourage some eleven to sixteen schools with surplus capacity (due to falling enrolments) to make curricular provision for very small numbers of Year 13/14 students, often at the expense of resources which were intended for the eleven to sixteen cohort; and provides no incentive to schools to collaborate, or to develop more educationally effective arrangements for post-16 year-olds in partnership with FECs.

These arrangements and policies can combine to have a negative impact on enrolments, resources and the educational effectiveness of smaller schools in the post-primary sector, and, in some cases, have served to create a spiral of decline which is self-perpetuating and insidious.

10.3 We recognise also that the present post-primary system has valuable and positive features which should be retained and developed in any new structures. Our objective has been to retain that which is best in our present system and in this way to ensure that high quality education will be available in all schools and that all young people are valued and provided for equally.

Co-operation and Partnership - the Collegial System

10.4 Against this background, we have come to the firm conclusion that a schools structure which perpetuates the notion that individual post-primary schools, regardless of size, can do everything that will be required of them from their own resources, in virtual isolation from the wider post-primary system, is no longer sustainable. Some larger schools, with access to greater resources and facilities, would be better placed to respond to the challenges and requirements

of the new curriculum, although even they may face pressures in coping with and delivering the greater flexibility which will be demanded by the new curriculum at KS4 and beyond. But the inescapable facts are that the present structure is inflexible, fragmented, wasteful of resources and makes it difficult to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. Our objective must be to enable schools to co-exist within a structure which is founded on the basis of co-operation and interdependence, flexibility and choice, mutual respect and inclusion. **We believe that these characteristics can best be developed within a statutory Collegial system of post-primary schools working together to provide the widest possible choice of educational opportunities for all their pupils. The Collegial system would consist of separate groups of schools called Collegiates. Each Collegiate would have a variety of schools representing the different management types. The detailed make-up of Collegiates is discussed later in this Chapter.**

10.5 The establishment of a system of Collegiate structures would provide the opportunity and means of supporting and improving educational standards in the constituent schools. Each school within a Collegiate would continue to be entitled to develop its own ethos and individual identity, with no loss of autonomy, but would also operate in a context of co-operation in sharing responsibility for matters of common interest, including, for example, admissions policy, special educational needs, learning support, professional development, ICT, curriculum provision, and extra-curricular activities.

10.6 The key to success within Collegiates would lie in the ability of the constituent schools to collaborate and develop partnerships, exchange best practice and share resources, facilities and information - all geared to respond to the challenges facing the education service, to enhance educational provision and standards for all pupils, to optimise value for money and, not least, to support opportunities for the professional development of teachers within their own or other schools in the Collegiate.

Benefits and Opportunities within a Collegial System

10.7 The Collegial system is new in concept, in responding to the unique circumstances of schools in Northern Ireland. It carries no threats to individual

schools and will enrich the community through the acceptance of and respect for diversity. We are convinced that a Collegial system of post-primary education would provide the structure and opportunity for schools to co-exist and work together to best serve the educational needs and abilities of all their pupils in a way which is not achievable within the present selective system. We acknowledge that this will require fundamental change in long held attitudes, perceptions and practices which support the existing post-primary system. Our consultation, however, has convinced us that there is readiness for transformational change. We consider that our proposals would have significant benefits and opportunities for pupils, teachers, parents, schools, governors, employers and the wider community, as outlined below -

i. For Pupils

The introduction of a Collegial system would facilitate -

- the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum throughout their primary education without distortion at KS2;
- the development of an assessment and recording system, the Pupil Profile, that would provide formative feedback and recognises progress and achievement;
- transfer based on parental/pupil preferences, informed by a Pupil Profile that would include professional, objective assessment of the pupil's work across the curriculum, attitude to learning, aptitude for particular courses of study and special needs, if any; and involving teacher/parent interviews;
- a choice of school at age eleven that would ensure equality of opportunity in a pluralist society, ie choice within a Collegiate structure that would include many of the school management types currently available (controlled, Catholic maintained, voluntary, grant-maintained integrated, Irish-medium);

- the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum in the first three years of post-primary education in which the core components would be common to all schools;
- the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum in the fourth and fifth years of post-primary education in which vocational courses would be of value equal to those which are perceived as academic. The core of the curriculum at this stage would also be common in all schools. The curriculum beyond the core would vary from school to school according to the mission, ethos and aspirations of each school. In this way choice would be available both within the curriculum of individual schools and in terms of the characteristics of individual schools;
- access to a wide range of courses, post-16, in which GCEs, Vocational A levels and NVQs would all be available. A common core of key skills, careers guidance and personal and social education would be provided for all. Learners would be free to transfer from school to school, school to college of further education, and school to training organisation to accommodate their personal career path, preferred learning style and choice of institutional ethos;
- mainstreamed provision for the majority of those with special educational needs;
- access to the large pool of resources (teacher expertise, range of courses, buildings and other facilities) that would be available within the schools that form the Collegiate;
- the option of remaining in the same school from age eleven to sixteen or changing schools at fourteen-plus or any other stage from eleven to sixteen in response to choice of career pathway; the option of continuing in the same school post-16, provided that it could offer the breadth of choice of courses that would accommodate the chosen career path; and the option of changing

schools or moving to further education provision or training at age sixteen-plus;

- a strengthened careers programme which would include careers education, guidance, personal career planning, work experience and the development of work-related skills and understanding;
- improved opportunity to take courses post-14 and post-16 in more than one school or education and training institution concurrently, involving the sharing of resources (teachers and/or facilities);
- new or improved opportunities to take courses post-14 and post-16 where the demand is likely to be small in any one school, of whatever size, and where these courses are of importance to a particular career path or cultural or other special circumstances, eg languages, specialist aspects of mathematics, music, specialist strands of technology, science or manufacturing;
- greater opportunities to participate in inter-school activities including choral, orchestral, sporting and other extra-curricular activities;
- greater opportunity to interact and exchange with others of different culture and community.

ii. For Teachers

The introduction of a Collegial system would facilitate -

- the teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum to all pupils throughout their primary education and at KS3;
- the development of an assessment and recording system, the Pupil Profile, that informs teaching and learning and recognises pupil achievement across the whole curriculum;
- the removal of the stress associated with the current transfer regime;

- the valuing of the teacher's professional contributions to the Pupil Profile, and the reinforcement of teacher/parent/guardian/carer relationships;
- greater opportunity to effect good liaison between primary and post-primary schools;
- the provision of a revised curriculum at KS3 which, in accommodating flexibility in delivery and pre-vocational relevance (through the selection of suitable content and contexts for learning), retains the breadth and balance necessary to allow children to demonstrate their potential to the full;
- access to resources, including continuing professional development, specialist facilities and partnership with other schools, including Special Schools, and statutory and voluntary agencies, to ensure that wherever possible, children's special educational needs are met within the environment of mainstream schools;
- access to ICT networks within and between Collegiates to support the delivery of the curriculum, the dissemination of best practice, and improved professional development;
- greater opportunities for continuing professional development within their own or other schools in the Collegiate (including study visits to other schools, encouragement and support from working with teachers in the same specialist area, etc) and greater opportunities for sabbatical leave to contribute to professional development;
- a new basis for partnership with colleagues in other schools, FECs and TOs in meeting the learning needs and achieving appropriate career pathways for all in full-time education and training, post-16;

- opportunities for teachers to develop leadership roles within a Collegiate if the constituent schools initiate collaborative projects in curriculum or other specialist areas;
- greater opportunities to contribute to initial teacher education through new links/partnerships between the Collegiate and the institutions of initial teacher education;
- the choice of working in a school whose vision and ethos relates to their own professional skills and educational values, while providing greater opportunity for working with colleagues in schools of a different ethos and outlook, serving other communities, for the mutual benefit of all.

iii. For Schools and Boards of Governors

The introduction of a Collegial system would facilitate -

- the freedom for each school and its Board of Governors to determine its ethos, reflecting its vision, values and sense of community;
- the opportunity for each school to determine the scope and particular emphasis/specialisms of its provision;
- increased scope for the sharing of resources including teacher expertise, facilities, etc. between schools;
- the opportunity to offer a wide choice of courses post-16, in partnership with other schools in the Collegiate, FECs, TOs and others;
- the continuing professional development of staff, both teaching and support staff, by opening up opportunities for provision, tailored to local needs, which would be more cost-effective;
- greater influence on initial teacher education, by creating networks of schools to which teacher educators in institutions of higher

education could relate more effectively in establishing teacher education partnerships;

- opportunities to realise savings in administration, resource production, staffing, use of accommodation, etc. and thus achieve the release of additional resources for support for learning and teaching;
- the development of links with other statutory and voluntary agencies and sources of support by making liaison/contacts more cost effective for both partners;
- opportunities for small rural post-primary schools to benefit from the expertise in larger schools in the Collegiate and thus be able to offer their pupils greater breadth of provision and depth of teaching expertise;
- the development of joint ventures between schools in the provision of specialist facilities including, for example, state of the art laboratories, workshops, theatre/performing arts studios, learning support units, and specialist services such as counselling and guidance, and health-related education;
- school development in response to socio-economic change and demography by creating partnerships of schools from which mergers or links could evolve naturally;
- continuity in provision in individual schools during the period of implementation and development of the new system of post-primary education.

iv. For Parents

The introduction of a Collegial system would ensure -

- access for all children to a balanced curriculum, assessment and reporting system throughout their primary education;

- an end to transfer on the basis of an inadequate assessment of children's abilities;
- an end to the stress which they and their children experience as a consequence of the current Transfer Tests and system of post-primary education;
- new and improved relationships with their children's teachers and schools in which they would be partners in discerning, through the Pupil Profile, the attainment, attitudes, aptitudes, and learning needs of their children as they grow and mature;
- open communication with teachers at primary and post-primary levels in the interests of their children;
- improved opportunity to contribute to and foster the ethos and values of the schools;
- a choice of schools with common educational standards and a commitment to provide quality education for all, and which offer specialist elements of study and distinctive characteristics which reflect their ethos, culture and traditions;
- a curriculum, assessment and reporting system for their first three years of post-primary education that would ensure that their children have the opportunity to realise their potential and which would equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding to take more responsibility for their learning and career planning;
- a curriculum, assessment, reporting and qualifications system for children at KS4 which caters for the full range of aptitudes, attitudes, learning styles and career preferences;
- an improved careers programme for all children which would include careers education, guidance, personal career planning, work experience and the development of work-related skills and understanding.

v. *For Employers*

The introduction of a Collegial system would facilitate -

- educational provision, both at primary and post-primary levels, that ensures the centrality of and achievement by pupils in key skills (in particular, literacy and numeracy), coupled with the personal and social development they require if they are to participate constructively in the strengthening of society and the economy;
- further improvement in standards across the system;
- the appointment of employees who have had a broad and balanced general education in primary and early post-primary education (age range four to fourteen), and who, thereafter, have continued to develop their skills and understanding in an increasingly vocationally-focused programme of learning;
- an assessment and qualifications system that takes account of the general, vocational and occupational preferences and preparation of young people in post-primary education and training;
- opportunities to promote lifelong learning and to contribute, through local partnerships with Collegiates, to the curricular opportunities and learning experiences of all in post-primary education;
- the recruitment of employees who have appropriate qualifications for the job and the ending of bias in favour of academic as opposed to vocational qualifications;
- opportunities to contribute to learning for example, through the involvement of staff, in joint projects in applications of science, technology and design, graphic communication, preparing and presenting reports on research findings, development proposals, etc.;

- opportunities to joint-fund specialist facilities in a Collegiate for use not only by the schools, parents and community but also by themselves in their business context or linkages with community development;
- opportunities to inform and inspire the enthusiasm of Collegiates for the world-class standards of education, training, creativity, inclusiveness and achievement that Northern Ireland needs.

vi. For the Wider Community

The introduction of a Collegial system would facilitate -

- educational provision that is inclusive, that respects and caters for, and is enriched through, cultural diversity, is committed to identifying and meeting special educational needs, and has taken account of the social and economic needs of the whole community in its planning and development in the context of a lifelong learning culture;
- partnership and joint working of the advisory and support services, eg, schools psychological service, education welfare service, child protection agencies, school medical service, social services, etc.;
- the development of a wide choice of educational provision, accessible to all, with the prospect of economies of scale, for example, in some capital intensive areas such as specialist scientific, engineering or computing facilities.

10.8 The remainder of this chapter describes the role and operational responsibilities of Collegiates, their composition, management structures and relationships with educational bodies and other interests.

Composition of Collegiates

10.9 In considering the potential make-up of Collegiates, we believe that an important criterion would be to provide, as far as possible, geographical coherence between the constituent schools, for example, taking account of public transport routes, road networks, distances between schools and existing catchment areas. Alongside this, a key objective would be to ensure that each Collegiate had a reasonable mix of the main school management types, as each of these has different strengths and qualities which could contribute to the development of effective partnerships within a Collegiate structure. Within a non-selective system, of course, there would no longer be a need for a statutory designation of grammar schools as such - in the way that is used at present for schools admissions purposes - and the current differentiation between secondary and grammar schools would no longer be appropriate or meaningful. Rather schools would fall into four broad management categories - **denominational**, which would cover schools in the Catholic maintained sector and denominational voluntary schools; **non-denominational**, which would embrace the controlled sector and non-denominational voluntary schools; **Integrated**; and **Irish-medium**. We envisage that Special Schools, because of their distinctive provision and cross-sectoral and all-age responsibilities, would not be constituent members of the Collegiates. They would instead become involved in the Collegiates through contributing to one or more of the Collegiate learning support services. In this way their specialist expertise could be shared more widely with other teachers and provide support for more children with special needs in mainstream education, whilst retaining specialist capacity for those children who need it.

10.10 To facilitate parental choice and to ensure that Collegiates have a reasonable balance of school management types, sizes and facilities, as far as is practicable, we consider also that each Collegiate should contain a minimum of two denominational and two non-denominational schools and, ideally, at least one integrated school. However, as there are seventeen grant-aided integrated post-primary schools at present, it is possible that some Collegiates would not be able to satisfy this objective, at least in the short term. This would be a matter for Collegiates and other interests to review in the light of enrolment patterns and expression of parental preferences. In the case of the Irish-medium sector, there is limited provision at present of grant-aided

post-primary schools, with just one free-standing school in Belfast and an Irish-medium unit attached to a Catholic maintained school in Londonderry. As in the case of the Integrated sector, development of provision in the Irish-medium sector would be dependent to a large degree on the extent of parental demand, and it would be for Comhraile na Gaelscolaíochta and others to consider how the changing needs of the sector might be addressed in the context of Collegiate structures.

10.11 Before looking at the number and composition of individual Collegiates, we gave much consideration to the question of whether schools should be allowed to opt into or remain outside the Collegiate structure. While there would be undoubted benefits and strengths in a partnership of schools built on voluntary membership and shared aims, and while we would accept that each school should have full opportunity to put forward views about the Collegiate to which it would wish to belong, we believe that it would be inequitable and damaging to the concept of partnership and interdependence to allow schools to opt out of the system while retaining the same entitlement to grant-aid. **We have concluded, therefore, for reasons of equity, equality of opportunity, and, not least, best use of the available resources, grant-aided schools should not be able to opt out of the Collegiate structure. We recommend that it should be a statutory condition of grant-aid, whether for recurrent or capital purposes, that all post-primary schools should be included in the Collegiate structure.**

10.12 In making this recommendation, we would be confident that all schools will recognise the very real benefits offered by our overall proposals - for pupils, teachers, parents and themselves - and will readily embrace the Collegial system.

10.13 We believe that it will be important for schools, parents, communities and others to have a clear understanding about the potential composition of the Collegiates in their area, in considering the detailed proposals in this Report. Accordingly, using the criteria and principles outlined above, we have drawn up the following proposals for a structure based on twenty Collegiates.

10.14 While we had no pre-conceived ideas about the optimum size of Collegiates, we came to the view, because of the need for Collegiates to provide

both choice and balance of provision, that there should be at least six or seven and ideally no more than fifteen schools in each, if we were to satisfy the objectives outlined above. Nevertheless, we recognised that local factors could be at play in some cases and that it would be important to take full account of these in the grouping of schools. To assist in this, we commissioned a mapping study which plotted the spatial distribution of all Year 8 enrolments at post-primary schools in relation to pupils' home addresses. This exercise was very useful in illustrating the relative compactness of most schools' catchment areas, and in the case of some larger schools and integrated schools, demonstrated that a proportion of their pupils travelled quite long distances. This information was particularly relevant in helping us to consider the grouping of schools in rural areas, where population sparsity can have an important bearing on school enrolments. The maps, provided by C-Star, Queen's University, Belfast, for this exercise are at Appendix J.

10.15 A further consideration in the composition of Collegiates was the need for balance between larger and smaller schools and, in this context, the potential for collaboration in the development of curricular pathways and choices, particularly for post-16 provision. This is particularly important in rural areas where post-primary schools are smaller and sixth form provision can be patchy and limited. We were conscious also of the challenges faced by smaller schools, in particular in the cities, arising out of the downward trend in pupil enrolments and, in the case of Belfast, the greater potential for social division in some areas. We also had regard to established enrolment patterns and pupil movements, particularly in areas such as North Down, Craigavon, Fermanagh, Limavady and North Antrim, in considering the make-up of particular Collegiates.

10.16 Having regard to these considerations, **we recommend that there should be a structure of twenty Collegiates**, as described above, embracing the existing two hundred and thirty-four grant-aided schools in the post-primary sector. It has not been possible to allocate an integrated school, whether grant-maintained or controlled integrated, in six Collegiates, and in the case of four Collegiates there is an absence of either a non-denominational or denominational voluntary school. This is unavoidable, but in all other respects each Collegiate provides a reasonable balance of school type and educational provision: our proposal would provide for one Collegiate of six schools, six

Collegiates with up to ten schools, ten with up to fourteen schools and three with fifteen schools. The aggregated pupil enrolments in the Collegiates, based on the 2000/01 school year, range from three thousand four hundred in West Tyrone (eight schools) to some eleven thousand in the Foyle Collegiate (fourteen schools). The composition of each Collegiate is set out in Appendix K.

10.17 These proposals make no assumptions about the viability or otherwise of small schools, whether in rural or urban Collegiates. It may be inevitable that, as a result of demography, enrolments at some schools will continue to decline to the point where their status has to be reviewed by the relevant management authority. In the context of a Collegiate structure this might allow for a number of options as an alternative to outright closure, including, for example, the development of the school as a second 'campus' of another school in the Collegiate, perhaps for a particular specialism within the curriculum.

10.18 We are satisfied that our proposals for the location and grouping of Collegiates would reinforce choice and diversity of curricular provision in all schools and would facilitate the development of a culture of co-operation and partnership between schools, Collegiates, FECs, TOs and local communities, in the delivery of high standards of education for all young people.

10.19 We considered also whether the determination and composition of individual Collegiates should ultimately be decided by the Department of Education or allowed to develop through a process of negotiation and consultation at the local level. There are arguments for each approach but we have concluded that, having regard to the segregated nature of our schools system, in terms of ability, religion and gender, and the fact that the make-up of individual Collegiates would inevitably transcend education and library board boundaries and other representative interests, it would be difficult to secure a consensus amongst the many local interests and it would be advisable therefore for the allocation of schools to Collegiates to be decided at a regional level.

10.20 We recommend, therefore, that the ultimate responsibility for approving the number and detailed composition of Collegiates should be a matter for the Department of Education.

Role of Collegiates

Introduction

10.21 The overriding objective of the Collegial system would be to facilitate the provision of an inclusive education service within the context of a co-operative, interdependent set of relationships that are non-threatening and which allow constituent schools to retain their ethos, tradition and identity, and which would have the capacity to deliver high quality education for all.

10.22 For Collegiates to be effective in contributing to our Vision for education, they must have the responsibility, authority and means to make a difference, and to assist individual schools to respond to the challenges facing the education service. This will be a dynamic process, the success of which will be reflected in the level of contribution made by schools and teachers, through co-operation, high professional standards, commitment to the needs of young people, and the recognition and acceptance of opportunities to maintain and enhance the educational experience and attainments of their pupils. **To support this approach, and to ensure coherence, consistency and progress, we recommend that there should be a planning and operational structure within each Collegiate, with specific objectives, functional responsibilities and dedicated resources to deliver change and improved standards.**

Planning, Management and Support Structures

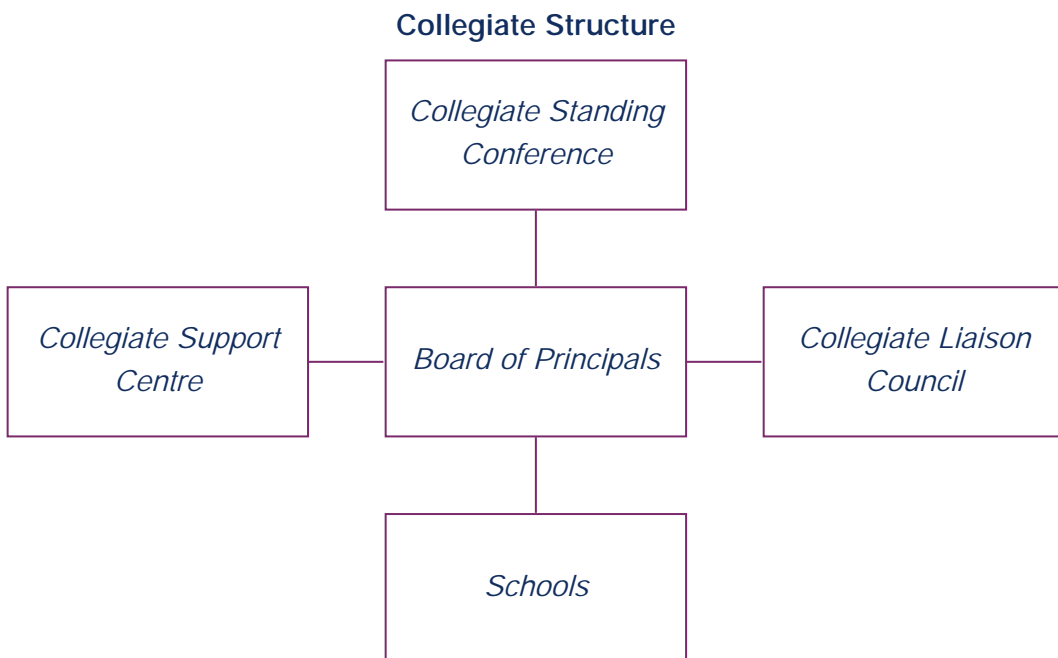
Board of Principals

10.23 **We recommend that the key planning and decision-making body for each Collegiate should be the Board of Principals**, which would comprise the principal of each constituent school (each of whom would continue to be accountable to their own school's Board of Governors), and which would operate primarily as a planning body in developing Collegiate policy and provision across the strategic objectives and functional areas described below. In order to provide appropriate reassurance to school authorities, Boards of Principals would not have a decision-making role in matters affecting the ownership or governance of schools. Decisions on other matters, for example, affecting curriculum partnerships, special projects, professional development,

etc., and involving the allocation of the Collegiate’s own budget for such matters, would be taken by consensus. In circumstances where consensus was not possible it would fall to the regional authority or the Department of Education to give a direction. Naturally we consider that this would be very exceptional, given the potential benefits which would be available to schools.

10.24 The position of Chair of the Board of Principals would rotate annually, as decided by the Board of Principals, and would be supported by two Vice-Chairs, who, in addition to deputising as appropriate, would also have respective responsibilities concerned with the implementation of Collegiate plans, through a **Collegiate Support Centre**; and for liaison with external interests, through a **Collegiate Liaison Council**, about the development of post-16 provision, links with further and higher education, community interests and careers education and guidance. In addition, we consider that the Boards of Governors of the constituent schools of each Collegiate should have a strategic role in the preparation of Collegiate Action Plans, through the medium of an annual Collegiate Standing Conference. The proposed organisational structure is outlined below.

Figure 1



It would be open to each Collegiate to agree whether other members of the Board of Principals should have responsibility for the oversight of particular Collegiate functions, and indeed, whether there was a need to co-opt other interests to the Board for particular issues, from time to time.

Collegiate Support Centre

10.25 The main functions of the Collegiate Support Centre would be to co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of a Collegiate's plans and decisions in matters such as admissions, curriculum support, professional development, support for special needs and post-16 provision, in addition to providing general administrative support to the Board of Principals. These functional responsibilities and their resource implications are discussed in more detail below.

10.26 The Collegiate Support Centre would be accountable to the Board of Principals through a designated Vice-Chair. A full-time Co-ordinator, supported by administrative staff, would undertake operational responsibility. The post of Co-ordinator would be open to qualified teachers, with senior management experience, and would be graded according to the size and number of schools in the Collegiate, possibly ranging between Spine Points one and five of the Upper Pay Scale for qualified teachers, supplemented by an appropriate management allowance, to reflect the responsibilities of the post in a particular Collegiate. While it would fall to the relevant education and library board to facilitate the process of appointment of Co-ordinators, for example, the advertisement of posts and contractual arrangements, they would report to and be directly accountable to the Board of Principals.

10.27 The physical location of the Collegiate Support Centre would be a matter for each Collegiate to consider and arrange: this could be in surplus accommodation, which could be adapted for the purpose, or within one or other of the schools, or in an education and library board centre convenient to the area served by the Collegiate. The nature of the facilities provided within the Centre would depend on each Collegiate's view of which services should be provided directly from within the Centre or procured elsewhere.

Collegiate Liaison Council

10.28 Each Collegiate Liaison Council would include representatives from the local FECs, NIBEP, HEIs, local employers, the community and the Collegiate, with a total membership of between eight and ten. Its primary purpose would be to act as a sounding board and a source of advice and expertise about the nature and range of the general, vocational and occupational career pathways which should be provided at KS4 and post-16, including the respective roles of schools, FECs, TOs and other education and training providers working in partnership; and in the development and delivery of more effective careers education and guidance. (This is discussed in more detail at Chapter 11.)

10.29 The role of the Collegiate Liaison Council would be critical in ensuring effective co-operation between schools in the Collegiate, FECs, TOs, employers and others, in the planning and provision of relevant and high quality vocational and occupational courses and careers education for all pupils. **For this reason we consider that the Council's role and membership should be given statutory recognition within the Collegiate structure, in order to underline its significance and authority.**

Collegiate Standing Conference

10.30 While the Board of Principals would have responsibility for the operation of the Collegiate on a day-to-day basis, including decisions on matters such as the co-ordination and implementation of professional development and curriculum support arrangements, post-16 provision, learning support, extra curricular activities and admissions, etc., it would be essential for the Boards of Governors of the schools in the Collegiate to be fully involved in the strategic planning and development of Collegiate policy, hence their membership of a Collegiate Standing Conference. We envisage their key task being the preparation and adoption of an Annual Collegiate Action Plan, based on an agreed policy framework and including key Collegiate objectives and targets for the period ahead. This planning function and cycle should be on an annual basis, and facilitated by the Co-ordinator and the Collegiate Support Centre. The Standing Conference should include representatives of each school's Board of Governors, the Board of Principals, the Chair of the Collegiate Liaison

Council (and other co-opted interests). This Conference would be the key strategic planning authority within the Collegiate structure.

Objectives and Functions

10.31 In considering the objectives and functions of Collegiates, it is important to reiterate the strategic purpose of the Collegial system - that is, to deliver the widest possible choice of educational opportunities for pupils and improved standards in constituent schools, within a structure which is based on co-operation, interdependence, flexibility and mutual respect. To that end, we consider that Collegiates must have responsibility for the functions set out below.

- i. **Curriculum Development and Support** - Collegiates should aim to provide all pupils in the constituent schools with access to a broad and balanced curriculum at KS3 and a wide choice of flexible curricular pathways and opportunities at KS4 and post-16, through co-operation and partnership between schools, the FECs, TOs and local employers, as appropriate. In this connection, an important objective would be to work with the constituent schools in ensuring that there was effective complementarity and collaboration in the specialist provision and opportunities offered at KS4 and beyond, as part of the development of their educational identity and ethos. To support this objective, Collegiates should have responsibility for the identification of needs and delivery of a support and advisory service to the constituent schools. This would involve the transfer of resources from the budget for the Curriculum and Advisory and Support Service (the matter of resources is discussed at Chapter 12).
- ii. **Professional Development** - Collegiates should have responsibility for the identification of needs for and co-ordination of professional development opportunities from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to Headship. This would involve collaboration with the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and other external providers of professional development. Collegiates would be able to provide a new focus for the professionalism of teaching through the development of communities of learners.

- iii. **Admissions and Transfer Arrangements** - Collegiates should ensure that arrangements are in place to co-ordinate and manage the admissions process, and provide for the appropriate placement of pupils within the Collegiate schools, in accordance with parental preferences. The Board of Principals should be responsible for the satisfactory completion of the Transfer Process, including arrangements to enable transfer between schools at the end of KS3 and KS4, or otherwise as necessary. The Collegiate should also have delegated authority from the Department to authorise small variations in the approved enrolment number of individual schools - subject to a limit of 5% - to allow the Collegiate to address one-off pressures in admissions applications, which could not reasonably be met elsewhere in the Collegiate, and subsequent to Year 8, transfers between schools, to meet the needs of pupils.
- iv. **Pupil Profiles** - These are fundamental to the ongoing development of pupils throughout all stages of the education continuum - in identifying, informing and guiding progress and needs. They should be maintained and used by teachers, pupils and parents on an ongoing basis. Collegiates should ensure that this responsibility is understood and, in order to ensure quality and consistency, is applied by their constituent schools, in accordance with guidelines developed by CCEA.
- v. **Learning Support** - This is a key issue for schools in meeting the challenges of underachievement, special needs and social disadvantage. Collegiates can make a significant contribution to the promotion of social inclusion and raising educational standards. Many children face a cycle of disadvantage, underachievement and failure which reduces their life chances and often leads to disaffection with school. It would be essential for Collegiates to take responsibility for the development of a policy for learning support for pupils who might be regarded as 'disaffected' and for those with special educational needs. This would include the provision of co-ordinated, common learning support arrangements within the Collegiate, and links with external agencies.
- vi. **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** - ICT has the potential to transform education and play a major role in preparing young people for the world of work. Northern Ireland has been to the forefront

in the implementation of ICT in schools and the current Education Technology Strategy⁽¹⁾ and programme promise real gains for learners, teachers, managers and leaders in our schools. Within a Collegiate, ICT could make a significant contribution to management and administration and also enhance communication between constituent schools. Collegiates should be responsible, in conjunction with the Computerised Local Administration System for Schools (CLASS)⁽²⁾ and other advisory services, for identifying the scope and application of ICT within and across Collegiates, for example, to support networked learning opportunities, structured professional development through online courses, and for enhancing educational provision at post-16. All of this should be informed by experience of effective practice in Northern Ireland, other parts of the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Union and OECD.

- vii. **Post-16 Arrangements** - This is a key stage of post-primary education and offers real opportunities for Collegiates to assist in the development of coherent and high quality provision for all pupils. It is essential that Collegiates should have responsibility for both the planning and development of provision, including for example, joint sixth form arrangements and provision by FECs and TOs.
- viii. **Extra-Curricular Activities** - Joint participation by constituent schools in extra-curricular activities would be essential for the development and encouragement of a culture of partnership and mutual respect within Collegiates. In addition, these activities can bring very real benefits to individual schools, pupils, parents and teachers, in developing creativity and enjoyment in education. Collegiates should initiate, promote and develop joint activities, including for example, in the performing and visual arts, volunteering in service to the community, sports, and other activities where scope exists for the sharing of skills and resources and the personal and social development of the participants.

(1) *SGET (1997), A Strategy for Education Technology in Northern Ireland, Bangor: DENI*

(2) *CLASS is a computer based management information system used by post-primary schools to support LMS and assist with the recording and reporting of pupil progress.*

- ix. **Community Support** - All schools can benefit from active support and involvement from their local community. Initiatives such as Communities in Schools can help schools in responding to social needs and educational disadvantage through the integrated provision of services such as health, welfare, etc. This form of initiative may be more relevant for those schools which have significant numbers of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, or where social structures are weak, although it is essential that all schools should have well-developed plans in place for responding to challenges and responsibilities such as alcohol and drug abuse, bullying, and other aspects of child protection. Collegiates, because of their structure, would be in an eminently suitable position to press for and initiate partnerships with and between the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies. All Collegiates should give priority to the development of effective relationships and liaison arrangements with the wider community.
- x. **Improving Standards** - The interdependence of schools in a Collegiate structure would be a significant factor in improving and raising standards in the quality of provision. We believe that there would be scope for the Collegiates to contribute positively to continuous self-evaluation and development in constituent schools leading to improvement in outcomes in the longer term. We set out our views on this important area in Chapter 12.

10.32 These are the main areas where Collegiates would have a significant role in developing partnerships and co-operation between their constituent schools and associate providers of education and training. In addition, while the broad issue of ownership and governance of school property is clearly not a matter in which Collegiates would have any functional responsibility, there would be real potential for Collegiates, in conjunction with the relevant management authority, to establish collaborative arrangements and a Collegiate role in optimising and managing physical capacity within a Collegiate. (Infrastructural issues are discussed more fully at Chapter 12.) **It is important to emphasise here that the primary role of Collegiates would be to promote and support collaboration between schools, FECs, TOs and other local interests.** Most

of the activities mentioned above would be taken forward by the Collegiate Support Centre and the individual schools, once policy had been established by the Board of Principals. Leadership would be a vital ingredient in the development of effective partnerships, and in recognition of the additional responsibilities of the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs, we propose that there should be compensating payments to the budgets of their schools, both to enable the schools to give financial recognition of their roles in Collegiates, and to offset any additional costs within the senior management teams of the schools as a result of their absence on Collegiate business. We hesitate to make a firm proposal as to the quantum of such payments, but would suggest that they might be based on the additional management allowances payable to teachers. It would be for Boards of Governors to decide how these resources should be allocated. We would suggest that an equal split between the school budget and the salary remuneration of the principals might be appropriate. Some functions of the Collegiates, such as Curriculum Support and Professional Development, would be dependent on the availability of adequate resources. In some cases, this could involve a transfer of resources from the budgets of education and library boards and other education interests, although additional capital and recurrent resources would also be required specifically to support the early stages of implementation of the Collegiate arrangements. The question of resources for the development of effective Collegiate structures is discussed in more detail at Chapter 12.

Relationships with Education Bodies

10.33 In general terms, the working relationships between individual schools and statutory education authorities may be largely unaffected by the establishment of a Collegiate structure. Many of the existing statutory support services would continue to be administered by the relevant authority either as a common, central service for schools, including for example, the LMS formula funding system, the school meals service, school transport arrangements, Appeals Tribunals, the School Library Service, the employment of teachers and other staff, school development proposals, and the overall co-ordination of admissions arrangements across Collegiates, or on a direct, as needed, basis to individual schools, for example, capital works needs and landlord maintenance.

10.34 At the same time, there would be matters for which it would be essential for the constituent schools to act in concert, through the Board of Principals of the Collegiate, in their relationships with statutory authorities. A fundamental objective of the Collegiate system would be to develop a culture of interdependent, collaborative relationships between the constituent schools, in the delivery of equality of educational opportunity and access to uniformly high standards of provision. Accordingly, as explained above, it would be imperative that Collegiates should have a direct involvement in services such as the planning and co-ordination of curricular support, professional development, post-16 provision, and other educational services.

10.35 Clearly this approach would require an adjustment in some of the administrative or operational roles of the education and library boards (and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services in particular) and CCMS in these areas, to some degree or other. We have considered a number of possible models for the management and development of such activities, ranging from a shared responsibility, based on an advisory role for the Collegiate and executive responsibility remaining with the statutory authority, to the full delegation of responsibility and the associated resources to schools within Collegiates. **We have concluded that if the objective of interdependence and partnership is to be meaningful, ie, to have tangible purpose, it would be important that Collegiates should have direct responsibility for the planning and co-ordination of the key group of functions outlined at paragraph 10.31, to ensure that they are developed in a way which is fully supportive of Collegiates' priorities and development plans.**

10.36 We recognise that the transfer of responsibility and resources for these functions will require careful planning and co-ordination between the education and library boards and the Collegiates, and that a graduated, phased approach might be appropriate for services such as curriculum support and professional development to ensure the effective exchange of expertise and best practice, and to allow for the potential development of alternative sources of provision.

School Transport Policy

Background

10.37 The Department of Education's school transport policy is designed to facilitate pupils' attendance at school. Under the present arrangements, post-primary pupils can qualify for assisted transport to and from school where their school is more than three miles from their home, measured by the nearest available route. Transport assistance can take a number of forms including bus passes, education and library board buses and contract taxis.

10.38 Under Open Enrolment, parents can choose to enrol their children in any school, regardless of distance from the home. Admission to the school of preference is governed by the school's admissions criteria, where a school is over-subscribed. The arrangements for assisted transport are designed to support the principle of parental preference, subject to the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. The Department's current policy guidelines provide that -

- assisted transport will be provided where the school is the 'nearest suitable school';
- 'suitable' school means the school type in which the pupil is actually enrolled at the end of the Transfer Procedure;
- for the purposes of transport assistance, the term 'suitable' refers to the established school management categories. These are -
 - i. Controlled
 - ii. Maintained
 - iii. Integrated
 - iv. Irish-medium
 - v. Voluntary Grammar (denominational)

vi. Voluntary Grammar (non-denominational)

and 'nearest' is determined by reference to schools of the same management type.

Under these policy guidelines, transport assistance would be provided only where a pupil is enrolled in the nearest available school of the same management type. In practice, this means that application must have been made (and refused) to all schools of that type within the three mile radius if a pupil is enrolled in a more distant school. Parents are not obliged to apply to nearer schools, of course, but their children would not then be eligible for assistance.

10.39 The costs of maintaining these arrangements are considerable - in 1998/99 over seventy-two thousand post-primary pupils received transport assistance, at a total cost of £24.6 million.

Transport Assistance in a Collegial System

10.40 While schools' admissions criteria have most bearing on parental preferences, the arrangements for transport assistance can also influence parents' choices of schools. We believe, therefore, that the school transport policy should reflect and support the objectives of the post-primary education system and, in particular, the fundamental principle of equality of opportunity. This has been a key factor in our consideration of the role of transport in a Collegial system.

10.41 We considered a number of options for the development of school transport policy within a Collegiate structure, ranging from the status quo, to the provision of transport assistance to any school outside the three mile qualifying distance. In considering possible options, it was necessary first to consider the implications of the proposed changes in the transfer and admissions arrangements in a non-selective system. As there would no longer be the present distinction in management type between secondary and grammar schools, the classification of schools, for the purposes of transport assistance, would be reduced to four main categories - denominational, non-denominational, Irish-medium and integrated. However, we have concluded that, in a new

post-primary education system, which would be founded on partnership and mutual respect, inclusiveness and equality of opportunity, it would be entirely wrong that an arbitrary classification of schools, each of which would have its own identity and ethos, should be used either to direct or constrain entitlement to transport assistance. But neither do we advocate unfettered entitlement to transport assistance. The exercise of parental preference carries certain responsibilities and obligations, and parents who choose to apply to more distant schools should be aware of the potential travel cost implications. Rather, we believe that the transport policy should be used to facilitate parental preferences within reasonable limitations, in the context of a Collegiate structure. For these reasons, we rejected the status quo and options which would carry unreasonable public expenditure implications.

10.42 We propose that transport assistance should be provided to any suitable school within the Collegiate which is designated as the 'local Collegiate'. (The designation of 'local Collegiate', which would have no significance or use other than for the purpose of deciding eligibility for transport assistance, would be determined by reference to the nearest school of the type in which the pupil actually enrolls.) As all Collegiates would contain between six and fifteen schools, with a mixture of denominational and non-denominational schools, and in most cases, at least one integrated school, this would offer a reasonable choice of schools for parents who wish also to qualify for transport assistance. Nevertheless, as Collegiates would not have defined catchment areas and some may not include the type of school preferred by parents, there would need to be a flexible approach to the designation of 'local Collegiates', for example, in the case of Irish-medium or integrated schools. Pupils who choose to enrol at schools outside their 'local Collegiate' would not qualify for transport assistance, except in circumstances where they had been unable to secure a place in a school of the same management type within the 'local Collegiate'.

Summary

10.43 Our proposal and associated recommendations for the establishment of a Collegial system of post-primary schools flow directly from our Vision for the education service in the 21st Century. While most schools perform to the best of their ability in addressing the needs of their pupils, the present post-primary

structures, with their focus on the independence and separateness of schools, do not encourage schools to work together, to share resources and expertise, or to develop partnerships. The introduction of a Collegiate structure would not threaten the ethos, educational identity or character of any post-primary school; rather it would provide a strong statutory framework, status and resources for schools to develop and co-operate, on the basis of interdependence and mutual respect, with the overriding objective of ensuring access to high quality education provision for all young people.

10.44 The development of Collegiates, alongside our earlier recommendations in relation to the curriculum, pupil assessment and new transfer arrangements, would have implications for teachers, schools and other education partners. Those implications are discussed in the following chapters.