

Chapter 12

SUPPORT FOR COLLEGIATES: MAKING IT HAPPEN

12.1 In the preceding chapters we have set out our proposals for the organisation and structure of the post-primary education system, supported by new arrangements for the curriculum, for transfer from primary education, for pupil assessment, and the establishment of a Collegiate structure - all designed to support our Vision for the education system in the 21st Century. In this chapter we outline the systems and practical arrangements which would need to be put in place to ensure that the Collegial system would be instrumental in delivering this Vision.

12.2 Throughout the Review, we have listened carefully to concerns expressed by teachers, governors and others about the need to ensure that our proposals should be achievable in practice, with particular regard to the potential implications for pupils, teachers and others who would be most affected by change. This has been a key factor in our consideration of the processes and support systems which we believe to be necessary to make Collegiates work. These can be grouped into three broad categories:-

- **operational issues**, and in particular, the arrangements for admissions, learning support, curriculum support and development, professional development and post-16 provision;
- **infrastructural issues**, covering capital improvements, surplus capacity and small schools;
- **resources**, and in particular, school funding, costs and accountability (including the related matters of quality and standards).

Operational Issues

Admissions Arrangements

12.3 The priority to be given to parental preferences and the use of statutory admissions criteria, would, in time, make the arrangements for transfer from primary education more straightforward and administratively easier for Boards of Governors and education and library boards to operate. This would require flexibility at the level of the Collegiate and, in the short to medium term, it would be important for Boards of Governors and Collegiates to be supported by the education and library boards in developing their own arrangements for handling and transferring admissions applications within and between schools and Collegiates, both at Year 8 and in subsequent years.

12.4 It would be essential also for the education and library boards and Collegiates to collaborate with primary schools in providing guidance to parents about the changes in transfer and admissions arrangements well in advance of their implementation. Particular attention would need to be paid to ensuring that families from socially disadvantaged backgrounds received timely advice.

Learning Support

12.5 The development of learning support arrangements within Collegiates would be a key issue for schools in meeting the challenges of educational underachievement, special needs and social disadvantage. It would be a matter for each Collegiate to assess the overall needs of constituent schools and to consider how those might be addressed. However, we would expect Collegiates to establish a 'learning support service', based on an integrated approach involving outreach teachers from special schools, specialists from social services, health care and education, and other interests within the local community.

12.6 The development of an integrated learning support service would require careful planning and management and it would be for each Collegiate to devise an appropriate framework for the pooling of specialist expertise, existing facilities and the co-ordination of the core support services which would be involved. The service would have an important role also in the planning and

monitoring of strategies for developing teaching and learning styles, pupil learning plans and multi-disciplinary staff development and training.

12.7 The learning support service would not, however, undertake or replace the responsibilities of the constituent schools in the Collegiate for their own pupils. Rather it would be a source of guidance, support and expertise in helping schools to cater better for pupils with learning difficulties and other special needs and would be a stimulus for innovation and the sharing of good practice. The service would also look to individual schools for feedback on a regular basis on its effectiveness and how it might be improved.

12.8 We propose that the learning support service should be developed and managed by a steering committee drawn from member schools and external agencies, supported by the Collegiate Co-ordinator and Support Centre. It would be for the Board of Principals to consider and agree whether and how the additional resources available to individual schools from sources such as the School Support Programme might be secured and deployed by the learning support service, together with any other resources re-allocated from the education and library boards or by the Department of Education.

12.9 We recommend, therefore, that each Collegiate should establish learning support arrangements in which specialists from health care, social services, education (including outreach teachers) and other interests within local communities would work collaboratively and in partnership with schools, on the lines set out above.

Curriculum Support and Development

12.10 An important feature of Collegiates would be their capacity to enhance the potential of constituent schools to offer greater diversity of provision and improved choice in the latter part of KS3, at KS4 and post-16. For example, they would be able to:-

- offer a wider range of learning experiences to all pupils at KS3 through introducing 'taster' courses in collaboration with other schools, FECs, TOs and local businesses. The aim of these courses would be to inform pupils' choice of courses and career pathways post age fourteen, and

they could be organised on a rotational basis in individual schools and in two or more adjacent schools. They could be supported through the provision of distance learning, and, by being organised within the Collegiate, would encourage teachers to work together in tutorial and tele-conferencing groups, thus contributing to their continuing professional development;

- access specialist teaching in other schools, with the support of tele-conferencing and other on-line communication, to enable them to raise standards of provision in existing courses and to extend the range of courses available to their pupils. This would involve some schools, often larger schools, in sharing staff expertise with other schools, for example, in developing schemes of work, in leading in-service courses for schools in the Collegiate or in making expert teachers available to other schools;
- access specialist facilities and equipment in other schools or FECs. This opportunity would be particularly helpful in vocational and occupational courses and, in addition, would have potential benefits for smaller schools;
- offer all pupils enrolled in the Collegiate a wholly comprehensive post-16 curriculum. The combined resources of the Collegiate would ensure that each pupil would have access to a wide range of courses, teaching expertise and facilities, in each of the three strands of the National Qualifications Framework;
- enhance the provision of work experience and work-related learning through sharing experience and expertise, supported through the Collegiate Liaison Council.

12.11 The introduction of a revised curriculum would require investment in a number of areas, including teacher development and changes in the organisational and administrative systems in schools, for example in timetabling arrangements. These changes would be necessary, irrespective of the model of post-primary education in place. However, we believe that the changes in

prospect, especially the enhancement of curricular diversity and choice, would be more easily achieved in the context of a Collegial system.

12.12 Where two or more schools wished to co-operate to provide a wider choice of courses, whether accessed by pupils attending or teachers taking classes in more than one school, it would be necessary to have linked timetabling frameworks and shared principles for the provision. These principles would secure the continuity of learning and teaching and minimise the risk of unnecessary travel between school sites for pupils and teachers. There is some experience of linked timetabling arrangements in schools in Northern Ireland, particularly in post-16 provision. Arrangements of this kind would be essential in order to provide the flexibility and support that the schools in a Collegiate would need, if effective co-operation and complementarity are to be established. The support of ICT and scheduling software would be invaluable, both in decisions about the deployment of staff and location of pupils.

12.13 It would be for each Collegiate to establish and encourage openness amongst its members in planning and developing curriculum provision. Pupils would gain most in terms of improved opportunities for learning, choice, enhanced motivation and the prospect of higher achievement, if the culture of competition between schools were to be replaced by one of co-operation and complementarity. Collegiates would also be able to promote flexibility at KS3, KS4 and post-16 through developing opportunities for and appropriate attitudes to transfer between schools, FECs and TOs where the objective would be to serve the learning needs and career paths of the learners.

12.14 The development of openness, co-operation and trust amongst the schools in the Collegiates and between them and the FECs and TOs would benefit from focused attention by, say, a sub-committee of the Board of Principals. This could include advising, monitoring and developing policy and practice in curriculum provision and its effects on the experience of learners who may move between institutions as they progress along their career paths.

Professional Development

12.15 Teachers in Northern Ireland have consistently demonstrated their professionalism and adaptability in responding to the pace of change in education in particular over the past ten years. As suggested above, the changes envisaged in the curriculum would require new approaches to both teaching and learning. We also recognise that our recommendations for the development of assessment and the Pupil Profile could add to this programme of change. It would be essential that teachers should have access to relevant, ongoing and planned opportunities for professional development in responding to these new challenges. This could not be regarded as optional or low priority. As teachers would have a central role in the development of Collegiates, significant training for all would be required and greater use of ICT in the administration and provision of learning. Our recommendations on curriculum and assessment would also have significant implications for programmes of teacher training.

12.16 There would be considerable potential within the Collegiate structure for the enhancement of professional development throughout all stages of a teacher's career - opportunities which would not be available within the existing post-primary system. For example -

- within the Initial Teacher Education programme (ITE), there would be access to a wider range of school placement opportunities within Collegiates, including schools within the School Support Programme;
- Collegiates could generate more innovative and systematic approaches to partnership with HEIs at all stages of professional development from ITE to Headship. They would have the potential to offer a broader range of development opportunities for teachers in collaboration with a range of networks, including business and community organisations;
- some Collegiates might take the opportunity to extend the role of designated teacher tutors to include responsibility for continuing professional development. They could appoint an experienced teacher to support teacher tutors in developing collaborative approaches to planning, disseminating effective practices, planning new courses across

the Collegiate and supporting the management of inter-professional and multi-agency support services;

- all teachers should be provided with opportunities for non-teaching secondments and sabbaticals to contribute to professional development, secondments to other schools in the Collegiate or in another Collegiate, or to undertake research fellowships or best practice scholarships in HEIs.

12.17 These are some of the ways in which teachers in schools should be supported and enabled by Collegiates to continue their professional development and improve their professional practice. But, of course, much of this would be possible only if teachers were to be afforded the time to take advantage of these opportunities. This should be a priority for Collegiates and the education service, particularly in the early stages of implementation of the revised curriculum, assessment and pupil profiles.

Post-16 Arrangements

12.18 As mentioned in paragraph 10.31, the development of relevant post-16 provision will present a particular challenge for all Collegiates. While all stages of post-primary education are important, the post-16 stage is arguably of critical importance for the increasing numbers of young people who choose to continue in full-time education. Concerns about accessibility, and the wide variations in curriculum choice in sixth form provision were raised with us frequently during the public consultation. Some of these concerns are perhaps best illustrated by the fact that out of some one hundred and eighty post-primary schools with sixth forms, sixty have less than fifty pupils in Years 13 and 14, and only forty-five have sixth forms in excess of two hundred pupils. In 1999/2000 there were some twenty-three thousand pupils taking full-time courses in sixth forms: over two-thirds of these pupils were in grammar schools.

12.19 The trends in participation rates in full-time education at post-16 over the past ten years provide clear evidence of the increasing significance of this provision for many young people -

Table 2

Participation Rates in Full-time Education at Post-16

% of 16 and 17 year-olds	1990/91 %	1994/95 %	1999/00 %
Schools	35.3	40.3	43.1
FE	22.6	29.3	27.8
Total	57.9	69.6	70.9

Analysis of these statistics shows that the majority of sixteen and seventeen year-olds in FECs had come from secondary schools and the majority of those remaining in school post-16 were in grammar schools. This pattern is perhaps understandable given the differences in the relative size of the schools and the nature of the enrolments in the two school sectors, including the fact that many secondary schools are designated as eleven to sixteen schools and others have insufficient numbers to sustain viable sixth forms. Whatever the reason, the existence of very small sixth forms in a significant number of secondary schools effectively denies their pupils access to the choice of curriculum to which they have an entitlement.

12.20 There would be little prospect of significant improvement in these circumstances if schools continue to compete with each other and with the FE sector, without proper regard to the needs and interests of pupils. This would not encourage the development of best educational provision between schools and FECs. Schools which are able to offer only a very narrow choice of courses, or where the pupils have limited opportunities for interaction with peers, cannot properly serve the best interests of young people. Our proposals for the development of partnership and collaboration within a Collegiate structure would enhance equality of opportunity and improve access for all who decide to continue in full-time education beyond age sixteen.

12.21 Operating alone, many schools will be unable to provide the breadth of opportunity or flexibility demanded by Curriculum 2000. Access to a balanced and wide menu of courses of all kinds will continue to be denied to many young people, both in grammar schools presently geared primarily to the provision of academic-orientated pathways, and in secondary schools which do not have the necessary resources to provide a broad range of courses for their pupils.

12.22 However, within Collegiates there would be opportunity for schools to collaborate and co-operate with each other and with the FECs and TOs, in ensuring that all sixteen to nineteen year-olds had access to a wide range of curricular pathways, whether or not available at their own school. It would no longer be necessary for schools to offer pupils a narrow and inflexible range of courses at post-16 in the way that happens at present, driven largely by market forces, and in competition with other schools and with FECs, in order to retain pupils on their enrolment. A very real advantage of Collegiates would lie in their ability to use their combined resources to enhance both the quality and range of post-16 provision across the Collegiate.

12.23 This would not necessarily mean that existing sixth form provision in the larger eleven to eighteen post-primary schools should be the only or main source of post-16 courses within Collegiates. They would, of course, continue to provide a main route for GCE A levels and Advanced Supplementaries (ASs) and Vocational A levels. The extent to which provision should be expanded in each Collegiate would depend on the identified demand (in terms of numbers), the range of courses and the physical capacity and technical resources available within the Collegiate. But we would envisage circumstances in which smaller schools, whether eleven to sixteen, or eleven to eighteen, would be in a position to co-operate in the development of enhanced sixth form provision, which might be delivered in its entirety in one or more of the schools, possibly involving the development of additional facilities in surplus accommodation, or the expansion of existing provision in one of the schools. In addition, there would be scope for courses requiring significant technology or other specialist facilities and teaching expertise to be sourced in the FE sector or in a school within the Collegiate which has an established record of excellence or achievement in the subject or vocational area. In this way, it would be possible, even desirable, in the interests of making best use of the expertise and facilities within a Collegiate and associated FEC provision, for young people to undertake advanced level

courses in two or more institutions simultaneously and to mix and match courses as they choose.

12.24 The development of ICT provision and the implementation of the Strategy for Education Technology will have an important bearing in widening access to post-16 courses within Collegiates. Competence in ICT is rapidly becoming a key 'life skill' and for teachers ICT will increasingly become an integral part of the processes and the management of teaching and learning to enhance and enrich education. The implementation of the Strategy for Education Technology will have particular value for Collegiates in opening up access to post-16 curricular pathways in schools in rural communities, through the development of distance learning, and outreach and video conferencing links between schools and FECs.

12.25 We do not advocate a single approach to the development of collaborative arrangements for post-16 pathways within Collegiates and in partnership with FECs and TOs. It would be important, however, that existing, high quality sixth forms should be sustained and developed as a source of expertise and best practice. In this context, it would be for Boards of Principals, in conjunction with their Collegiate Liaison Council, to survey provision across their constituent schools in order to establish the needs of pupils and any gaps in provision, and ultimately to prepare a detailed plan for the development of high quality provision which would ensure access to a wide choice of academic and vocational pathways. In practice, this would result in a variety of different arrangements, with some schools hosting a wide range of courses, some specialising in specific areas, and others involved in joint delivery with other schools or FECs or TOs. Pupils at eleven to sixteen schools would have full opportunity and appropriate guidance to transfer to the school, FEC or TO which is best equipped to meet their needs.

12.26 All of this would involve the development of quality standards for post-16 provision, together with arrangements for induction and support for those who move between schools in the Collegiate, or to an FEC or TO at age sixteen, or whose career paths involve participation in courses involving two or more of these providers.

12.27 As a priority, Collegiates, in partnership with FECs and TOs, should develop principles, criteria and standards governing post-16 provision and use information technologies to the full in order to secure access, progression, coherence, effectiveness and appropriateness for all sixteen to nineteen year-olds in full-time education and training in their areas. **We recommend that, in drawing up the principles, standards and criteria for endorsement by the Collegiate Standing Conference, focused on the policy objectives set by Government, Collegiates should take advice from appropriate professional sources about post-16 curriculum and qualifications and should have regard to the quality standards and findings of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).**

12.28 Our view is that Collegiates offer exciting opportunities to make post-16 provision truly collegial; in short, to develop provision to the stage where learners have access to genuinely open choice across the whole spectrum of curriculum and qualifications, where the relationship of learner to teacher is less dependent on the location in which they learn and more focused on ensuring that the chosen career pathway can be followed without constraints consequent on institutional circumstances. We recognise that our proposals raise questions about the funding of shared arrangements between schools in Collegiates and with FECs. These are issues which should be addressed by our recommendation at Chapter 11 for a joint review by DE and DEL of a coherent strategy for the funding and development of post-16 education and training provision. In the interim, we would accept that individual schools should continue to be funded for pupils enrolled in Years 13 and 14, and where there was joint provision of courses, the Board of Principals would arrange for the allocation of costs between the schools concerned (and the FEC as appropriate).

Infrastructural Issues

Capital Improvements

12.29 The backlog of building needs in the schools estate has been well documented. The Department of Education's Capital Planning List for 2001 indicates that there is a considerable number of high priority building schemes, including post-primary schools, still competing for a place in the school building

programme. The costs of building needs in the post-primary sector alone have been estimated at upwards of £350 million, and when account is taken of the high priority projects in the primary and special schools sectors the overall costs could well exceed £600 million.

12.30 There has been a significant and welcome increase in the capital resources allocated for school building purposes over the past three years, and Private Finance and Public Private Partnerships are also being developed as part of the DE's capital investment strategy. Nevertheless, we believe that more needs to be done to improve the fabric of the schools estate in the medium term if young people are to be accorded equality of educational opportunity and post-primary schools are to have genuine parity of esteem. These objectives cannot be regarded as platitudes or simply part of the Vision for education which can easily be set aside on the grounds of resource pressures and priorities.

12.31 We accept that our proposals for post-primary education are challenging for many interests, but ultimately it would be for schools to deliver the changes. It is essential that they should be able to do so within the Collegiate structure on the basis of mutual respect and equal status. The standard of accommodation and facilities available to schools have an important bearing on their status and the esteem of pupils and teachers. We recognise, of course, that many post-primary schools already have good accommodation and specialist facilities or are in the process of capital improvements. At the same time there is a significant number of secondary schools, possibly as many as sixty, which are not represented in the DE Capital Planning List for 2001, but have some shortcomings in facilities and equipment and, as a result, compare badly with other schools in the sector. We believe that it would be important to help such schools to improve their image, status and effectiveness through a programme of refurbishment and modernisation, including, where appropriate, the provision of facilities which would support a specialism or a particular emphasis in their provision. While it has not been possible for the Review Body to quantify these needs with any precision, we believe that the objectives of the modernisation programme would be similar to those of the Education Reform Capital Programme, which has operated over the past ten years to meet the specialist accommodation needs of post-primary schools. Accordingly, we consider that a '**Collegiate Improvement Programme**' should be established to support the important developmental stages of the Collegiate system.

12.32 **On the basis that about one-third of secondary schools would qualify under this Programme, and assuming an average cost of some £750 thousand for each capital improvement scheme, we would recommend that up to £45 million should be allocated for this purpose, perhaps spread over two to three years.** We propose also that it should be for Collegiates to assess the priorities within their constituent schools, in the first instance, and to submit project bids to DE for consideration. The management of approved projects would be taken forward by the relevant management authority for each school, in the normal way.

12.33 The Collegiate Improvement Programme would not displace any of the high priority major works projects in the DE Capital Planning Lists unless, of course, a school was satisfied that its main building needs would be met by such an improvement scheme. At the same time, the Collegiate structure could provide the opportunity for major works projects to be prioritised on a Collegiate basis by DE, to ensure that the top educational needs in each Collegiate were given appropriate priority in the building programme.

12.34 Although our proposals above refer specifically to the building needs of the post-primary sector, we recognise also that there is a considerable backlog of need in the primary sector. We do not suggest that these needs are less important, rather our proposals are designed specifically to help non-selective post-primary schools to enhance their educational environment and status within the Collegiate structure and to ensure that children transferring to post-primary schools are afforded the choice and quality of provision to which they are entitled.

Surplus Capacity

12.35 Based on the most recent assessment by DE, there is surplus capacity of some twelve thousand places in post-primary schools. We understand that a significant proportion of this total is distributed across medium to large schools in the controlled and Catholic maintained sectors. The number of spare places is expected to increase over the next fifteen years as the school population is forecast to reduce.

12.36 The existence of this surplus capacity, which is not evenly distributed across the proposed Collegiates, would provide opportunities within some Collegiates for schools to develop specialisms or create new settings for post-16 courses. At the same time, the extent of the surplus capacity in some areas is such that some schools are likely to struggle to maintain a viable enrolment as the school population reduces. This issue must be addressed if schools with significant spare capacity are to be afforded equality of opportunity to develop a reputation for excellence and to provide diversity of choice for their pupils. Possible options might include the development of joint sixth form provision with one or more larger schools in the Collegiate (in response to the demands of Curriculum 2000), or amalgamation on a split-site basis with a larger, more popular school, or possibly the removal of some temporary classroom accommodation in larger schools, to help other schools to improve their enrolment numbers, effectiveness and status within Collegiates. Accordingly, in preparing bids for capital development we would expect schools and Collegiates to take account of existing facilities and accommodation. Collegiates would be required to show in their annual Action Plans that they were making good use of existing capacity, including any surplus accommodation. In preparing these plans, Boards of Principals would be expected to consult Boards of Governors and other interests.

Small Schools

12.37 About 10% of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland have an enrolment of less than three hundred pupils. These schools are found in both urban and rural environments. In the former case their small enrolment reflects the competition for pupils in an open enrolment policy context and a period of declining birthrate; in the latter, the school size is directly related to the sparsity of population in rural areas, the commitment of the school authorities to provide schools within reasonable distance of children's homes and the desire to sustain the public services infrastructure for rural communities.

12.38 Small urban post-primary schools draw a high proportion of their pupils from disadvantaged communities and, generally, they have a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and behavioural problems. Typically their pupils have poor literacy and numeracy skills and achieve only modestly in public examinations. These schools are eligible to

apply for additional financial resources through Government initiatives such as the School Support Programme. Some have made significant progress in improving the effectiveness and quality of their provision and a few have succeeded in attracting a substantial increase in enrolment. Apart from these gains, most of the schools are unable to compete on an equal footing with larger schools, particularly in respect of curricular choice at KS4 and in post-16 provision, and their pupils are not benefitting sufficiently from their education. The schools have not won the confidence of parents and their viability is insecure.

12.39 By contrast, most small rural post-primary schools are well-supported by pupils, parents and local communities. They attract pupils with a wide range of abilities and from across the social spectrum and although they are unable to offer a wide curricular choice at KS4 and most of them do not provide post-16 courses, their ability to sustain good pupil-teacher relationships, and to achieve good standards in public examinations, often alongside a well-established pattern of transfer to sixth forms in larger schools and to colleges of further education, is viewed by most pupils and parents as more than compensating for any lack of curricular choice. Nonetheless, the educational opportunities of the pupils are restricted in comparison with those of their peers in larger schools and the cost effectiveness of the provision is low.

12.40 The demands on teachers in meeting the educational needs and aspirations of the pupils in both groups of small schools are high. Most teachers in small schools are required to teach, at least for part of the time, outside their specialist areas: they need to be skilled in working with a wide range of pupil attitudes, aptitudes and expectations in a single class group, and they lack the opportunity for peer support and collaboration in introducing changes in curriculum, assessment and examinations. They deserve commendation for their professionalism in circumstances which, often, are very taxing and, particularly in urban schools, can be disheartening.

12.41 The needs of pupils who attend small schools are obviously no less important than those of their peers in larger schools. They are entitled to the same provision and opportunities, but this will involve a significant change of attitude from those who manage, lead, work in and support small schools. Meeting the needs and aspirations of the pupils and parents should be the

central objective in the planning, review and development of provision. Compromise on this overriding objective, in the interests of the schools or those who work in them, will diminish the prospects of the pupils and affect adversely the economic and social strength of the community.

12.42 There is a range of ways and means by which the challenges faced by small schools could be addressed within the Collegiate structure and transformed into opportunities. For example, a small school could work in partnership with other small schools or with a large school, and share teaching and other resources; a small school could come under the management of a large school or amalgamate with it; or a small school could become a specialist centre drawing pupils from a number of other schools. In addition, the potential of ICT to support learning and teaching is enormous and offers other solutions to many of the needs of small schools. In some cases, it might be necessary, in the interests of the pupils, to close a small school and transfer the pupils to another school.

12.43 It is our considered view that a combination of these potential developments will be necessary in a number of Collegiates in order to meet the needs of their pupils and teachers, and the wishes of parents, employers and the community, as well as effecting best value in their provision.

12.44 Our proposals have the potential to help the sustainability of small schools in the context of the projected demographic trend in enrolments. We understand the importance of these schools to their local communities and would want any changes to their status to be considered in the light of a thorough review of the needs of the pupils. Each of the models mentioned above requires creativity and flexibility in thinking and action, the setting aside of vested interests and open communication and trust. If we are to effect the improvement in provision and outcomes to which all children are entitled, we cannot justify anything less.

Resources

School Funding

12.45 While our Terms of Reference did not specifically require us to address the arrangements for allocating resources to schools, during the consultation process and in our discussions with school representatives, concerns were expressed about anomalies and inequalities within the present LMS funding scheme. In particular, our attention was drawn to two features of the formula funding arrangements which, it was suggested, were not sufficiently transparent or did not serve the best interests of some schools (and their pupils):-

- the first issue concerns the differential funding arrangements for voluntary grammar schools and grant-maintained integrated schools, compared to schools funded through the education and library boards. The perception was that these schools are being funded at a higher level, and that this, together with their ability to enrol pupils up to their approved capacity, gave voluntary grammar and integrated schools an unfair advantage; and
- the second concern related to the way in which LMS, and in particular the effects of the age-weighted pupil unit element (AWPU), encourages a competitive approach by schools to the enrolment of pupils. We were told that this serves to discourage meaningful co-operation between schools and between schools and the further education sector (at post-16). Indeed it was claimed that it instils a sense of unhealthy competition between schools under the Open Enrolment system, often to the disadvantage of smaller schools.

12.46 We are aware, of course, that the LMS scheme is being reviewed by DE at present, with the objective of introducing a common funding formula for schools. This should address the first of the concerns outlined above, but, in any event, it will be important for the outcome of the LMS formula review to be transparent and equitable, in order to avoid any continuing misconceptions about differences in the funding of the different school types.

12.47 The second issue is, however, more problematic. We understand that the great majority of schools are satisfied with the principle of devolved responsibility for decisions on the use of school budgets, and would not welcome any diminution of the freedom to determine their own spending priorities. Nevertheless, given that at least 75% of LMS budgets are allocated on the basis of the numbers of pupils enrolled by schools, even small annual movements in pupil enrolments can have a detrimental impact on some post-primary schools, in that they are often required to reduce their teaching staff in response to reductions in their budgets. Clearly such events, which in an Open Enrolment environment are largely outside a school's control, make forward planning and curriculum development difficult to manage. It is therefore understandable that schools should have developed such a competitive edge.

12.48 Against this background, while we would not advocate any reduction in the responsibilities and funding delegated to schools, we believe that consideration should be given to the scope for modifying the way in which the AWPU element of the LMS scheme impacts disproportionately on the budgets and teaching resources of those post-primary schools which are particularly sensitive to changes in pupil numbers. Equally, we would not wish to see the needs and opportunities for pupils to transfer between post-primary schools restricted inappropriately by the current funding arrangements. In recognising that the exercise of parental preferences, and the extent of the surplus capacity in the post-primary sector, are factors which need to be taken into account in this regard, **we recommend that the pupil-related element of budgets be calculated on the basis of a three-year rolling average of pupil enrolments, rather than on a precise head count, in order to ameliorate the impact of very small changes in enrolments from year to year, and to give smaller schools (in particular) more certainty in their budget allocations and financial planning.** We would like to see this modification of the LMS scheme given urgent and sympathetic consideration by DE.

Costs

12.49 Our Terms of Reference specifically required us to consider the costs of any revised arrangements. To assist with this we commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to undertake a strategic economic appraisal of our proposals, including the potential resource implications of a range of delivery

sub-options. The PWC Executive Summary of the Economic Appraisal is at Appendix L.

12.50 As indicated in the preceding chapters, our proposals for the development of assessment and the Pupil Profile and the establishment of Collegiates, would have cost implications for the education service. We consider that these costs represent an essential investment in developing the education system we believe is crucial to the future well-being of our society.

12.51 The resource needs of Collegiates fall into two broad categories - first, existing resources which should be re-allocated to Collegiates, and second, the extra resources which we consider would be essential to establish and make the new structures work in the interests of all schools and our young people. The existing resources which should be made available to Collegiates would relate specifically to the services and functions identified at Chapter 10 for which Collegiates should have direct responsibility, in particular, curriculum support, professional development, the learning support service and careers guidance provision. Based on figures obtained from DE and DEL, the existing level of resources in these areas total some £19.5 million. The re-allocation of these resources to Collegiates would therefore be neutral in cost terms, although we are convinced that their delegation to the Collegiate level would allow for a more effective and responsive approach to locally determined needs. It would be open to Collegiates to use the resources to purchase these services from existing providers within statutory authorities or from external sources of expertise, according to their needs. As such, we consider that there would be no diseconomies of scale, rather a better use of the existing resources. At the same time, it is essential, if Collegiates and the other integral parts of our proposal are to work, that there should be adequate resources made available, particularly in the early stages of implementation. These essential needs include:-

- the development and application of the Pupil Profile and the expanded assessment system described at Chapter 8. This would have implications both for CCEA in its development and the external moderation of the Key Stage Assessment Tests, and for the training and professional development needs of teachers in both primary and post-primary schools. It is important that priority should be given to these

requirements, particularly their implications for teachers at KS2 and KS3. Including up to £1 million for external moderation by CCEA, these resource needs have been estimated at some £2 million per year for up to three years, beyond which it might be possible for these arrangements to be absorbed within standard training and development programmes;

- the staffing and support costs of the co-ordination arrangements for Collegiates, and including the costs associated with the Collegiate Standing Conferences, Collegiate Liaison Councils and the location of Collegiate Support Centres, have been estimated at some £2.7 million for all Collegiates, ie, an average of £135 thousand each. We cannot, of course, be precise about the scale of these resource needs, particularly as they would be influenced by the way in which Collegiates developed their collaborative arrangements between member schools and with FECs and others. The needs of each Collegiate would be determined by their size and we would not wish to attach spurious accuracy to our assessment of costs as informed by the Economic Appraisal. These costings are intended to illustrate that we do not envisage the creation of another expensive layer of administration, rather the arrangements would reflect the facilitating and co-ordinating aspects of the roles of the Collegiate, Co-ordinator and the Support Centre.
- as mentioned in Chapter 8, and earlier in this chapter, there would be significant **capital development costs** associated with our proposal. It is arguable that the need for improvements to the fabric, appearance and facilities of some secondary schools which have not been identified as priorities for capital development within the DE Capital Planning Lists, for whatever reason, should be accorded much higher priority for capital investment, regardless of our proposals for Collegiates. That said, the **Collegiate Improvement Programme** mentioned at paragraph 31 would be critical to the development of those schools, particularly in the secondary sector, which have been neglected in terms of capital investment over many years. We accept that this programme would need to be planned and co-ordinated alongside the ongoing schools building programme and the overall needs are difficult to quantify in the absence of a detailed condition survey of the estate. Nevertheless, we consider that in order to address the needs of schools which may wish to develop

specialist provision, together with potential sixth form developments and the general upgrading of the secondary schools sector, upwards of £45 million would be required, and should be earmarked specifically for the development of Collegiates.

12.52 We believe that the additional cost implications outlined above, which are intended to be indicative of the potential magnitude of costs likely to be associated with the introduction of our proposal, are relatively modest and, ultimately, are inescapable, if the changes set out in our Report are to happen.

Accountability

12.53 As mentioned earlier, the financial autonomy of individual schools would be unaffected by the establishment of the Collegiate structure. They would continue to be directly accountable, through their Boards of Governors, for the effective and efficient use of LMS budgets and other resources allocated for running costs and capital developments. The present arrangements, whereby controlled and maintained schools are accountable to the relevant education and library board for recurrent expenditure, and grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary grammar schools are funded directly by and are accountable to DE, would not be altered by the new structural arrangements, in themselves.

12.54 As mentioned in our proposals at Chapter 10, Collegiates would also be allocated resources and budgets for the planning, co-ordination and implementation of a number of key services. However, as Collegiates would not be corporate entities in their own right, and they would not therefore have the ability to let contracts or make payments, it would be important to establish formal procedures which would ensure that they had the necessary authority to determine their spending priorities, and were properly accountable for their expenditure.

12.55 We considered a number of possible options for the delegation and management of Collegiates' financial resources, including direct funding by DE and the designation of a single education and library board as the responsible body for the allocation, of resources to all Collegiates. Bearing in mind current structures, we propose that the responsibility for allocating resources should be

divided between the five education and library boards, each dealing with the Collegiates which have most schools in their Board area. In practice, this would mean that the Western Board would lead for five Collegiates, the South-Eastern Board would lead for three Collegiates, and each of the other Boards would deal with four Collegiates.

12.56 The primary functions of the education and library boards in this regard would be the allocation of resources to Collegiates, payment and accounting procedures, including letting contracts on behalf of Collegiates, support and personnel management responsibilities for Collegiate Co-ordinator posts - possibly on a secondment basis - and the administrative support staff in Collegiate Support Centres, and oversight of budgets and expenditure. It would, of course, be open to Collegiates to agree that one or other of their constituent schools might act in a contractual capacity on behalf of the Collegiate in particular matters, for example, in relation to the arrangements for a careers seminar or the annual Standing Conference, with any costs being recouped through the Collegiate's operating budget. In all such circumstances, it would be for the Collegiates alone to determine their spending plans, in accordance with their Action Plans. They would be accountable to the education and library boards for the proper use of their resources, under the normal Government accounting rules and conventions, and in accordance with detailed guidance from DE, to ensure consistency and equity across all Collegiates.

Quality and Standards

12.57 The pursuit of best value is an obligation and a responsibility set out by Government for all who work in public services. A truly learner-centred post-primary education system will need, therefore, to focus its self-evaluation on economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality if the pursuit of improvement is to be well-founded and successful.

12.58 Self-evaluation needs to be informed by a range of indicators. These should relate to all aspects of the work of a teacher, school, and Collegiate, include qualitative and quantitative dimensions, and address both process and outcome. The indicators in the self-evaluation should take account of the performance targets set by Government for post-primary education and the

indicators of quality (focussing on ethos, learning and teaching, and management) published by the ETI.

12.59 We recommend that Collegiates, in their research and development programmes, should give priority to defining indicators, criteria and measures that will give them reliable feedback on the extent to which they are achieving best value, and provide insight into the aspects of their provision which are most in need of improvement. This work should be undertaken in partnership with external agencies, both in the public and private sectors, which are engaged in quality assessment, target setting and performance management, and in consultation with the ETI, whose evaluations of educational provision should inform the decisions of managers and the practice of teachers in schools within Collegiates, as well as the planning of the Boards of Principals, Collegiate Liaison Councils, and Standing Conferences. **We also recommend that Collegiates, through Boards of Governors and the Collegiate Standing Conferences, should arrange to consult pupils, parents, the local community and business, in the process of developing standards, indicators and procedures for self-evaluation.**

12.60 We are aware of the excellent practice in continuous improvement in a number of schools and of the growing commitment to this work in many others. It is our view that teachers, schools and Collegiates, in developing their continuous improvement provision, should draw on the experience of those whose practice is highly regarded and has been independently affirmed as such by quality assessment frameworks such as Investors in People, the Business Excellence Model, Service First, and the quality assurance inspections undertaken by the ETI.

12.61 The Review Body was impressed by the openness and positive response of many schools to the findings of self-assessment and external quality assessment and inspection. It will be important to foster this self-confidence in all schools and Collegiates in pursuit of the improvement of standards. It is our view, informed by research and inspection evidence, that progress will be least likely where the school or Collegiate is inward-looking, defensive in responding to challenge, and ineffective in internal and external communication.

12.62 As mentioned earlier, a number of quality assessment frameworks are already being used in schools in Northern Ireland. We commend these to all schools and Collegiates and would encourage them to complement quality assessment with statistical analysis and other quantitative techniques. There is a wide range of research and development focused on added-value measures for education. It will be important for schools and Collegiates to keep abreast of this work and engage in further pilot studies as one means of ensuring that all young people receive the best possible education.

12.63 The establishment of a Collegial system would also need monitoring and evaluation at regional level. The school management authorities and DE, in consultation with DEL and DCAL, should determine a monitoring and evaluation framework which would include statistical analysis, research and inspection. The objectives should be to determine the extent to which the Collegial system is achieving the desired educational standards and objectives, both qualitative and quantitative, and, through publication and dissemination of the findings, to influence the ongoing improvement of outcomes for all learners, the economy and society. The ETI, working in partnership with other public sector Inspectorates and the Northern Ireland Audit Office, would have a key role to play in evaluating outcomes within and across Collegiates and the inspection findings should be influential on provision, practice and policy at local and regional levels.