

Chapter 13

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 As earlier chapters have set out, there are many compelling reasons, linked to socio-economic and cultural factors within our society and in the international context, why Northern Ireland should plan a new way ahead for its post-primary system at this time. Education has always been valued in Northern Ireland, but its role becomes even more crucial in the type of society which is now emerging. High quality education, built on sound principles and accessible to all, is an essential prerequisite for a progressive, prosperous society. All social analyses point to the centrality of education for the knowledge society.

13.2 It behoves societies at this time to examine their inherited educational structures with a view to making the necessary reforms which research, experience and the collective wisdom of the stakeholders judge to be correct. This is the pathway which Northern Ireland has chosen to take. Through research studies, extensive consultation and discussion, analyses and reflection, we have drawn together a proposal which is designed to reshape our post-primary education system to meet the needs of a society which intends to establish a top-ranking position for itself as the 21st Century unfolds. This chapter sets out our views on how these changes should be implemented.

13.3 Our proposal is wide-ranging and would have implications for all interests within the education service, particularly teachers and pupils. The present arrangements have been in place for many years and it would be unrealistic to believe that radical change could be made easily or immediately. The changes we have recommended will be subject to public consultation and this will provide full opportunity for everyone - parents, pupils, teachers, governors, employers, educationalists and politicians - to digest and comment on our proposals and the arrangements for implementation.

13.4 We are conscious that a number of our recommendations would require changes to primary legislation. As we could not predict the timetable for the handling of the legislative process in the Northern Ireland Assembly, we have

not attempted to set out a detailed timetable for the implementation of our proposal. It is essential that this should be planned carefully, and with full regard to the educational interests of all young people, whether they are in pre-school, primary school or already in the early stages of post-primary education. Leadership will be a vital ingredient in the management of change at all stages in this process: leadership from the Northern Ireland Assembly, Government Departments, teacher unions, statutory authorities, governors and from principals and senior management in all schools. Against that background, we envisage four phases of implementation, although it is inevitable that these would overlap in places.

Phase One: Assessment, Transfer Arrangements and Shadow Collegiates

13.5 In this phase, which should commence as soon as is practicable after the consultation stage(s) have been completed by DE, a first priority must be the implementation of new transfer arrangements to replace the existing Transfer Test Procedure. This could not be done in isolation from the proposed changes in assessment and, in particular, the development of the Pupil Profile. It would be essential also for preliminary planning to be initiated for the establishment of the Collegiate structure. These three crucial areas therefore need to be taken forward simultaneously in this phase, as discussed below.

13.6 The implementation of the proposed new transfer arrangements, in their totality, would be dependent on the development of the Pupil Profile as part of an enhanced pupil assessment system, which would play a key part in enabling parents to make informed choices of post-primary school. Given that this new system could take up to six years to develop and test fully before it could be put in place for KS2, **we recommend that transitional arrangements for assessment should be developed by CCEA to enable the Transfer Tests to be eliminated from the process of transfer in the early stages of that potential timetable.** It would, of course, be necessary for these transitional arrangements to be based on the proposals set out in Chapter 8. In our view, a reasonable target for this would be the Autumn of 2003, ie, in time for use in the 2004 transfer process. It is essential that teachers, parents and pupils in KS2 should be given adequate notice of this change, so that the transition from a

selective to a non-selective post-primary system is smooth and to ensure that all primary pupils have a clear understanding of the system which would be in place when they are transferring to post-primary education.

13.7 We recognise that our recommendation for the development of the Pupil Profile and, in particular, transitional arrangements for assessment, would place extra pressures on the resources of CCEA. As mentioned at Chapter 12 (paragraph 51), we believe that it would be of critical importance to the timely implementation of our recommendations that CCEA should be properly resourced to undertake this additional work programme.

13.8 The ending of the Transfer Tests would be the crucial first step in the development of a non-selective system of transfer from primary to post-primary education. Alongside the transitional arrangements for pupil assessment mentioned above, this would require significant changes to be made to the administrative arrangements for transfer and schools admissions criteria, in order to give absolute priority to parental preference (rather than grades in the Transfer Tests, as now). Our recommendations in Chapter 9 would also involve significant changes in the statutory framework of criteria which post-primary schools could employ in circumstances of over-subscription. This would require legislative change, possibly involving primary legislation, and at the very least subordinate legislation. In either event, it should be clearly understood that the introduction of transitional transfer arrangements on the basis set out above would be dependent on the necessary legislative cover being in place, well in advance of the suggested timetable for the 2004 transfer process.

13.9 A key element of the transitional arrangements, in moving to a transfer system based on informed parental preference, would be the need for consistent and objective advice for parents from teachers and principals of primary schools. While it would be for parents - and parents alone - to make the final decisions about which school(s) would be best able to match their children's needs and aptitudes, we would expect these decisions to be influenced by and to reflect the professional judgement and assessment of teachers. Consequently, it would be essential for principals and other teachers in primary schools to have ample opportunity to understand and assimilate the operation of the new assessment and transfer systems, through training and appropriate guidance from CCEA. In addition, in this preparatory phase, say, in

the first school term of the academic year within which changes are made to the transfer procedure, detailed guidance should be issued to the parents of all P7 (Primary Year 7) pupils, setting out the nature and timetable for the imminent transfer system, and, specifically, the role of the teacher/parent/pupil interview in considering school preferences, the purpose of the Pupil Profile (or its alternative under the transitional arrangements), and the operation of post-primary schools' admissions criteria. These transitional arrangements could, if necessary, be introduced in advance of the formal establishment of Collegiates, provided, of course, there had been agreement in principle about the Collegial system and 'shadow' Collegiate arrangements had been put in place, as discussed below.

13.10 The establishment of the Collegiate structure would provide the main impetus for change in the nature of schools' relationships and in their ability, working in close partnership and collaboration, to enhance educational provision and standards for all young people. Primary legislation would be required to establish Collegiates. This will take time to put in place and, **in the interim the proposed Collegiates should be set up in shadow form**, together with their Liaison Councils. This will enable planning to be initiated for, inter alia, the appointment of Collegiate Co-ordinators, for locating Collegiate Support Centres, the development of policy for the learning support service, and the review of post-16 provision across constituent schools.

13.11 While we have emphasised the need for further professional development for teachers in this phase, this is something which would apply at each stage of the implementation of our proposals, and we cannot exaggerate the importance of ensuring that teachers are provided with the necessary professional support, guidance and training throughout this programme of change.

Phase Two: The Curriculum

13.12 The introduction of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, which will emerge from the present fundamental review by CCEA, will be of critical importance to the delivery of our Vision and the Guiding Principles for education in the 21st Century. Clearly the curriculum proposals and changes we have

outlined at Chapter 8 would take several years to develop and test fully and establish in all schools, and it would be unreasonable to expect all of this to be implemented in parallel with the proposed transitional system of transfer and admissions arrangements.

13.13 Nevertheless, we recognise that for the revised curriculum at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 to be effective each element must be developed as a natural progression through the compulsory stages of primary and post-primary education. This will require careful phasing and planning by CCEA, in consultation with schools and education partners. However, given the key role of the curriculum for the transition from primary to post-primary education, and in the development of relevant assessment arrangements to support and inform transfer, **we would recommend that initial priority should be given to the development and implementation of the anticipated changes to KS2 and KS3.**

13.14 For all of this to be managed in an orderly way, and with the KS1 and KS4 curriculum changes being developed and delivered as the next and necessary stage, there must be a substantial investment in the professional development of teachers, with initial priority being focused on teachers involved at Primary Years 6 and 7 and in Years 8 to 10 in post-primary schools. As already mentioned, this support for teachers cannot be regarded as optional within this programme of change. The effectiveness of the curriculum, and of the proposed structural arrangements within which flexibility at KS3 and KS4 would be developed, would be dependent on the continuing commitment and professional development of teachers. This reality must be properly addressed within each stage of planning for the revised curriculum.

13.15 In this context, the planning and delivery of support and training to teachers for the revised KS2 and KS3, and assessment, should be organised by CASS, in collaboration with CCEA and the shadow Collegiates. However, we envisage that this responsibility (for KS3 and KS4) would transfer in due course to Collegiates as an integral element of their function in shaping and supporting curricular provision across their constituent schools. This transfer of function, together with the related resources which would be made available to Collegiates for curricular and professional development purposes, would require careful phasing and management, to ensure continuity of service provision to

schools and the planned transfer of expertise and resources. **We recommend that the overall transfer of this function should be completed within two years of the formal establishment of Collegiates.**

13.16 In this intermediate phase, arrangements should be developed by DE, in consultation with the education and library boards and DEL, for the determination of the quantum of resources to be made available to Collegiates, as outlined in the discussion of costs at Chapter 12. This would include the development of an equitable resource allocation system for the distribution of the designated resources between the Collegiates.

13.17 At the same time, preliminary plans should be developed for the review of the capital improvement needs of secondary schools. This planning should involve the shadow Collegiates, with appropriate support and guidance from DE and the statutory authorities.

Phase Three: Structural Change

13.18 During this phase, the Collegiate structures would come into place and the transition from a culture of competition and separateness to a system based on co-operation, interdependence and mutual respect, would evolve. This evolutionary process would involve the shift of responsibility for the planning and delivery of important educational and support systems from education and library boards to users within Collegiates, the development of trust and shared interest between schools in raising standards, and widening access to a diverse range of provision.

13.19 Each Collegiate would have a dedicated budget for its management, administration and support services. Clear lines of accountability would be essential at the commencement of this operational stage. An early priority would be the formal appointment of Collegiate Co-ordinators, administrative staff and the membership of the Collegiate Liaison Councils. When this management and support structure has been put in place, Collegiates would be expected to prepare medium-term Action Plans, setting out their plans for the development of partnerships and collaboration between member schools - including curricular support, professional development, learning support arrangements and post-16

provision. This process would be led by the Board of Principals and the Boards of Governors of the constituent schools, working through the Collegiate Standing Conference. Ideally the first such Conference should be convened within six months of the establishment of the Collegiate structure, and thereafter each Autumn, geared to the review of the Collegiate's performance during the previous school year, and to the development of forward planning and objectives.

13.20 An important objective of Collegiates' Action Plans would be the transformation and strengthening of relationships between schools. The Action Plans would set out Collegiates' learning strategies, based on agreed shared values, with clear plans for future developments. While many schools would continue to be well-regarded and generally over-subscribed, some schools would need time to adjust to the new arrangements, in order to improve their image and to establish a distinctive mission within their Collegiate, and it would be the collective responsibility of the Collegiate to enable every school to play its full part. This would require ongoing support from the Collegiate, and in some cases, additional resources for improvements to accommodation and the development of a specialism. We anticipate that this process could extend over a period of up to seven years or so, in parallel with the full cycle of KS3 and KS4, and into post-16 provision.

Phase Four: Organisational Review

13.21 In this phase, which should be initiated when the Collegiates have been in place for at least five years, the objective would be to review the new arrangements, taking account of the experience of Collegiates and any changes in the environment within which they had been operating. Such a review would also provide the opportunity to develop and consolidate the organisational structures and relationships with statutory authorities, with a view to the possible delegation of further functions, responsibilities and resources to Collegiates.

13.22 A particular focus for this Review would be the extent to which the new structures had extended and enriched learning opportunities, raised standards and established effective partnerships and a culture of co-operation and interdependence between schools and with other interests in the community.

This could be measured by reference to the effectiveness of their approach to social disadvantage and special needs, the ways in which collaboration on post-16 provision and careers education/guidance had developed, and, not least, the arrangements made for professional development and the delivery of flexibility and choice in curricular provision across KS3, KS4 and beyond.

13.23 The Review Body is under no illusions about the challenges which our recommendations will pose for the education service. This implementation plan is not intended to be prescriptive; rather it is our view of the sequence of actions which will be necessary to deliver our Vision for post-primary education in the 21st Century. We believe that this is both realistic and achievable and, with commitment and leadership, can be fully put in place over the next five to eight years. This will be a major programme of change and the arrangements for its implementation must be properly resourced and monitored to ensure that progress is achieved within an agreed timescale. It would be important also that key interests within the education service, including those with experience in managing change in large, multi-disciplinary organisations, be involved in this process.

13.24 Substantial change to our education system has been delayed for many years, for a variety of reasons. The Review Body offers this Report as a contribution to the development of a new post-primary education system which our consultation process has shown to be both overdue and in great demand, and which our children deserve.