

Our Ref: CE/eb

6 March 2006

Post Primary Support Team  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
Room 602  
43 Balloo Road  
BANGOR  
Co Down  
BT19 7PR

Dear Sir/Madam

## **PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT EDUCATION (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the public consultation on the above proposed Draft Education (NI) Order. Please find below the comments of Limavady Borough Council on the contents of the proposed Order:

### **1. The Curriculum**

#### **(a) Articles 3 to 13 – General Duties Relating to the Curriculum**

The Council supports the underlying aim of these Articles as they are designed to ensure pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of key cross curricular activities. The Council would also support the proposal to assess pupils in each school year in all key stages and the proposal to retain religious education as part of the core syllabus.

#### **(b) Articles 14 to 17 – Special Cases**

The Council supports these proposals as they offer a degree of flexibility for schools within the straightjacket of curriculum requirements.

#### **(c) Articles 18 to 22 – Access to Courses for Older Pupils**

The Council generally welcomes the proposals to extend the range of courses available to pupils in Key Stage 4 and those over compulsory school age but emphasises the need for these courses to develop skills and abilities at all levels in a range of practical and life skills as well as academic areas.

However, the Council would object to the inclusion in Section 18(1)(d) of the statement that *“at least one shall be a course in an official language of the European Community (other than English and Irish)”*, may adversely impact on the study of Irish. The Council would wish to see Section 18(1)(d) replaced with the following statement:

*“... any other language of the European Community other than English and, in Irish speaking schools, Irish”*.

The Council welcomes the new powers given to Boards of Governors as a means of empowering the Board to meet local needs and the particular requirements of their pupils. The ability to enter into arrangements with other schools, FE colleges, etc., is also to be welcomed as it helps extend the range of courses on offer to pupils and offers increased flexibility in the provision of education.

## **2. Miscellaneous and Supplementary**

### (a) Articles 27 to 29 - Admissions

The Council considered the numerous arguments that surround the retention or abolition of academic selection when discussing this proposal and members felt strongly that more clarity was required as to the system that would be put in place following the abolition of academic selection before an informed comment could be made.

Councillors were also concerned that any new selection system would result in children being allocated places at post primary schools based on a “postcode lottery”.

## **3. General Comments**

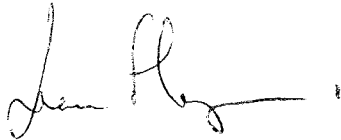
Councillors also made the following general comments in relation to issues associated with the proposed Order:

- (a) Concern was expressed that the recommendations could lead to teachers being made redundant.
- (b) Members were also concerned that parents who could afford it would increasingly turn to private elite schools of excellence, leaving other children with an inferior level of education.
- (b) Councillors commented on the increasingly diverse number of ethnic identities living in Northern Ireland and queried how the needs of children whose first language was not English were to be addressed.
- (c) Associated with this concern was the issue of the growth of different religious beliefs in Northern Ireland and Councillors queried how this issue would be addressed in the new system.

- (d) Councillors also queried why the United Kingdom had such a high rate of expulsions and suspensions among school children and expressed the view that this issue needed to be urgently addressed.

The Council believes that, in general, Northern Ireland has a very good system of education which provides excellent results for its pupils but members were extremely concerned that such widespread change to the educational system was being brought in when so many important issues lacked clarity and had not been thought through in sufficient depth.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liam Flanigan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**LIAM FLANIGAN**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**