

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

General Duty, Statutory requirements relating to curriculum, Duties relating to the curriculum

Articles 3 to 13, together with **Schedule 1**, are revised requirements on Boards of Governors and Principals as to the curriculum and assessment in grant-aided schools. The curriculum must include religious education (this requirement is unchanged), the relevant areas of learning set out in Schedule 1, and must ensure that pupils acquire and develop the specific cross-curricular skills of communication, using mathematics and using ICT and any other skills specified by the Department. The Department of Education will specify the minimum content for each area of learning, and levels of progression for the cross-curricular skills. The Department will also specify the arrangements for assessing pupils in each school year, which will include a requirement for the cross-curricular skills to be assessed using the levels of progression.

Whilst the Ulster Unionist Party supports the general thrust of this section, the vagueness in the detail provided by the Department means that it is impossible for an accurate assessment to be made. However we do support the development of mathematics and ICT with the provision of the appropriate funds being made available. Equally we note with interest the suggestion of specified assessments in each school year as these could be used within the pupil profile to help indicate the most appropriate school for a young person post primary, assuming that the pupil profile is made available to the receiving school.

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Special Cases

Articles 14 to 17 re-enact without amendment Articles 14 to 17 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, which make clear the special cases when the statutory curriculum can be modified or disapplied.

The Ulster Unionist Party broadly agrees with this provision however each case must be thoroughly reviewed on its individual merit.

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Access to Courses for Older Pupils

Articles 18 to 22 are new requirements on schools to provide access to a wider range of courses known as the Entitlement Framework. The number of courses to which schools must provide access for pupils in Key Stage 4 and for those over compulsory school age will be specified by the Department. At least one third of these courses must be general and at least one third applied. The Department will issue lists of general and applied courses and these will be

revised as necessary. The Department will be able to modify or disapply these requirements as they apply to individual schools or categories of schools. Boards of Governors will have a new power to enter into arrangements with other schools, FE colleges and other providers approved by the Department to provide that access. In making such arrangements, Boards of Governors may include specified terms and conditions, and must take account of guidance issued by the Department. Correspondingly, FE colleges will be able to provide secondary education under arrangements entered into with schools.

As there remains a lack of detail in the definition of applied and general courses it is impossible to fully respond to this proposal. Likewise as it is the belief of the Party that these proposals have the potential to irrevocably change the character and ethos of our schools we in principle oppose these measures as part of the Costello Report.

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Article 23 re-enacts without amendment Article 29 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, which requires each Education and Library Board to provide curriculum advice and support for all grant-aided schools in its area in accordance with a scheme prepared by the Board and approved by the Department of Education.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports these proposals as long as the funds fully follow the curriculum as suggested. We do have a concern that as the current Boards wind down in view of the RPA proposals that there will be a temptation on behalf of the Boards to not fulfill these obligations.

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Article 24 re-enacts, with minor amendments resulting from the changes in Part II, Article 31 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, which allows the Department to make regulations requiring Education and Library Boards, Boards of Governors or Principals to make available certain information relating to their schools whilst protecting the privacy of certain individuals.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports these proposals.

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Article 25 re-enacts Article 33 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, with

amendments to enable curriculum appeals tribunals to consider complaints against Boards of Governors in carrying out their functions under Articles 18-22.

In broad terms the Ulster Unionist Party supports this proposal however we would oppose any suggestion that this could be used by individuals or lobby groups to change the ethos of a school along a narrow sectional interest.

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Article 26 lists provisions in Part II which do not apply to nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools, or hospital schools.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports this proposal.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Admissions

Articles 27 to 29 provide for all post-primary schools to use similar arrangements for admitting pupils. All grant-aided schools must have admissions criteria, and where schools receive more applications than they have places, they will use their admissions criteria to determine who shall be admitted. All post-primary schools will draw up their admissions criteria from a menu of criteria specified in regulations made by the Department. Schools will be prohibited from using any form of academic selection based on the ability or aptitude of the child. The regulations may specify criteria which may, or may not, be used, and may also specify the order in which criteria must be used. The Department is required to consult post-primary schools and other bodies before making such regulations.

The Department will also make regulations about the admission to postprimary schools of pupils with exceptional circumstances. The regulations will specify the meaning of exceptional circumstances and provide for a body to be established to consider such admissions. Pupils with exceptional circumstances who are admitted to a school will be regarded as additional to the admissions number for the school.

The Ulster Unionist Party opposes these proposals as outlined in our response to the Admissions Criteria document. A copy of our Party response to that consultation is attached.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Suspension and expulsion of pupils from grant-aided schools

Articles 30 to 33 require the Department to prepare a common scheme for the suspension and expulsion of pupils in all grant-aided schools, which must be followed by Education and Library Boards and Boards of Governors.

Education and Library Boards will become the expelling authority for all grantaided schools in their area. Regulations made by the Department will provide arrangements for the consideration of appeals against suspensions and for a tribunal to be set up to consider appeals against expulsions. The education of a suspended pupil will be the responsibility of the school and, in circumstances determined by the Department, the Education and Library Board can provide assistance to the school in providing that education.

The Ulster Unionist Party has concerns relating to this proposal. We believe it is essential that a school should have the ultimate sanction to suspend/expel pupils in extreme cases to ensure the health and safety of the pupils and staff in that school. Equally the UUP believe that the Board of Governors must be able to protect the ethos and standards of a school under the guidelines produced by the Department. In such cases an appeal mechanism to the Board would be appropriate. We would also question the current proposals as they currently relate to the Education and Library Boards that are currently remote but when the current RPA proposals are enacted this remoteness may become even more acute and thus these proposals may not work.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Articles 34 to 36 will enable the General Teaching Council to approve the qualifications of persons for registration as teachers; to remove from the register any person found guilty of serious professional misconduct; and to determine the terms and conditions of service of the Registrar.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports this proposal.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Institutions of further education

Articles 37 and 38 enable the Department for Employment and Learning to make an order to amend the membership of the governing bodies of institutions of further education; and provide for members of those governing bodies to be paid for their service as members.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes all systems of appointing Boards of Governors need to be reviewed so as to ensure all school boards have the correct skill sets required to run a modern school; plus we must ensure that those serving on Boards of Governors have the appropriate qualifications to carry out this very important role. At this point the question of remuneration could then be considered across the whole range of educational establishments.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Miscellaneous

Article 39 removes the existing requirements to carry out baseline assessments of pupils in their first year of compulsory education as a result of the new requirement to assess pupils in each school year (Article 9).

The Ulster Unionist Party supports this proposal.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Miscellaneous

Article 40 removes the existing requirement on Boards of Governors of schools to hold an annual parents' meeting.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports this proposal.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Miscellaneous

Article 41 makes it clear that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) may charge people fees for attending courses of education or instruction that it provides. DARD will specify in regulations how much it will charge and what it will charge for. At the moment, DARD charges fees for students attending higher education programmes at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). This fee is the same as that paid by students attending other colleges of further and higher education or universities and goes towards the costs of providing the course. DARD has no immediate plans to introduce fees for other types of course.

As the details of these proposals again are not clear the Ulster Unionist Party reserves its position on this proposal and how this proposal would affect school budgets.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Supplementary provisions

Article 42 is concerned with the content and approval of orders and regulations made under the Order.

Article 43 and Schedules 2 and 3 amend or repeal a number of provisions which are minor in nature or are required as a result of the changes made by other parts of the Order. The amendments resulting from the introduction of the Entitlement Framework include provisions to:

- make clear that a pupil who may attend another school for part of his education can be registered at only one school;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of Boards of Governors and Principals under the Education Orders where a pupil is registered at

one school and attends another for part of his education; and

□ ensure that information is made available about courses being provided in FE colleges and that information about a pupil's attainments in an FE college is made available to the school at which he is registered.

The current proposal presupposes endorsement of the concept of the "Entitlement Framework". As this could damage the Ethos of many schools the Ulster Unionist Party has consistently opposed this. In such circumstances it is impossible for the Ulster Unionist Party to support these proposals. However where there is a natural and necessary exchange of pupils to fulfill a course of study not currently available within the pupil's main school the current proposals do provide adequate safeguards. Nonetheless each case must be assessed on its individual merit.