



Response from the Council for Catholic
Maintained Schools to:

The Independent Strategic
Review of Education

July 2006

Introduction

As the largest stakeholder interest, CCMS welcomes the opportunity to comment on the issues raised by the Independent Review Team and has, by way of preparation, reflected upon its existing knowledge, experiences and practices in relation to the planning of the school state. In addition, the Council has reflected upon its strategy, guiding principles and processes underpinning the management of the Post-Primary Review (Appendix A). Furthermore, Senior Officers of the Council have visited Scotland to examine the arrangements and effectiveness of the school campus model which has been lauded by the Secretary of State as a way forward for Northern Ireland.

The Council broadly concurs with the 'key values, principles and goals' elucidated in paragraph 16 of the Consultation Paper. Some of them, however, need to be understood within the social and community context of Northern Ireland. The significant extent of rural dwelling is a challenge to efficiency and cost-effectiveness. On the one hand this may be regarded as an encouragement to collaboration and sharing but, on the other, it risks ignoring the separateness of communities in Northern Ireland. The Shared Campus arrangement operating on a small scale in some parts of Scotland may at first glance appear an attractive option but their conditions are very different. In Northern Ireland 70% of public housing is in communities which are over 90% one predominant religious group. This offers the prospect of some form of collaboration around at least part of the remaining 30%. In Scotland most housing is entirely integrated. The Catholic Sector in Scotland accounts for around 20% of provision where as in Northern Ireland it is closer to 50%. Recent research conducted by Shuttleworth and Lloyd (Shared Space Issue 2 May 2006) notes that there was a marked increase in residential segregation between the 1971 and 2001 census, but that the increase between 1991 and 2001 is less. It also identified two other measures of polarisation; voting, which shows significant widening and employment where there has been a lessening of separateness. This data contributes to the debate on education in that there is an accepted relationship between the community in which a child lives and that in which he/she is educated. The employment measure suggests that positive change happens when the conditions are created through confidence building. A similar scenario will have to be created in housing and communities before it can be more generally embedded in education.

This response is formulated to respond to the six bullet points in the letter of invitation of 6th June 2006 to Bishop John McAreavey. The response has been further informed by the Terms of Reference issued by the Minister on 30th June 2006.

1. Developing key mechanisms and processes for successful planning at local area level, as a framework for translating into practice the concept of collaborative and interactive planning by the various sectors.

Strategic planning must be carried out within a framework where a Sustainable Schools Policy has been developed and fully understood by all relevant partners. This would provide the context against which any provider should carry out the mapping of its current and sustainable provision.

The definition of “sustainability” should be driven by educational criteria, but due consideration needs to be given to diversity and the principle of parental choice. As a consequence, the definition of sustainability should not be drawn at an arbitrary and standardised enrolment number to be used across all schools. An urban post-primary school would be deemed to be sustainable, as a free-standing institution at a much higher enrolment than a post-primary school serving a rural area. A distinction should also be made between the sustainability of sites as opposed to the sustainability of a single management entity. A small primary or post-primary rural school can be fully sustainable and provide cost effective provision if the school is supported, or managed as part of a larger institution, as in federation for example. Similarly any policies on education, concerned with buildings or otherwise, needs to take account of the potential of education to contribute to community development and specifically the Children and Young People Agenda.

Robust and reliable standardised data should underpin mapping carried out by school providers and, as far as possible, data should be provided to all authorities from a standardised source.

While the concept of area-based planning is a useful starting point, care must be taken to define this concept more explicitly. Many schools operate across broad catchment areas which cross both Local Council and other boundaries, and existing and future patterns of enrolment require to be mapped carefully. It is clear that, irrespective of sector, there are many schools which are located at a removed site from the communities that they serve and consideration needs to be given to the concept of re-location of schools, closer to those communities. This is particularly, but not exclusively, applicable to the post-primary sector.

There are real sensitivities in this process amongst all stakeholders such as issues of identity, either through community units such as the parish or identification with a particular school.

Within the Catholic Sector the legacy of parishes contributing to the building of schools over generations is a characteristic which needs to be understood and acknowledged.

It is also clear that the planning of the various sectors requires to be reconciled at a strategic level by the Department of Education or by a Statutory Body which holds no ownership role for any of the schools under consideration.

Many of the benefits to be realised are long term and can only be assessed through qualitative analysis. It would be important to ensure ownership of the criteria which underpins the Sustainable Schools Policy and that the benefits are primarily educational, social and community and not exclusively economic and financial.

The “preferred option” of Integrated education also needs to be set aside in order for the other sectors and their communities to be confident that they are engaged as equal partners on behalf of their communities and not as un-equals.

2. Forms and models of sharing of facilities and resources and of collaborative arrangement amongst schools, at both primary and post-primary levels, particularly in relation to new builds but also in the context of existing provision.

Collaboration needs to be built upon the equality of those engaged in the collaboration. There are, for example, serious concerns raised by many within the school sector of the quality of the provision provided by the FE sector, and by the competitive approach taken by many FE colleges in respect of attracting pupils. It is clear that the significant expansion and entitlement of pupils 14 – 19 to access the vocational element of their programmes will place the FE sector under serious pressure to consider how delivery of high quality courses is reconciled between schools and further education.

Collaboration Between Schools and Across Sectors, the Current Context

The current Open Enrolment and LMS funding regime mitigate against the development of significant collaborative working arrangements both within a sector and across sectors. The current arrangements serve to reinforce the competitive nature of educational provision particularly between schools that are in competition for declining pupil numbers. There needs to be a fundamental revision of the LMS funding regime to address these issues as well as a consideration as to the priority to be assigned to parents to choose a school type, i.e., is the system driven to accommodate parental choice as the determinant of school planning and provision or is it a system built on core educational principles in which parental choice is acknowledged but is not a key determinant of provision. For collaboration to operate effectively there is a requirement for change and clarity on these matters

Models for Consideration

There exist several models for the sharing of provision which currently operate within legislation in England and Wales:

Federation

Concepts such as Federation, ranging from soft governance arrangements to hard governance and management arrangements, can provide the opportunity for schools to collaborate on a range of curricular and other issues and drive efficiencies and improvements in pupil outcomes. These

arrangements can accommodate the need and the desire to preserve and maintain the ethos of individual schools while making the most efficient use of resources and avoiding duplication of provision, particularly when the federation arrangements are inclusive of the FE sector.

Co-location

Co-location, where schools are located within a short distance of each other, is also another option, particularly where new build for schools is involved. Co-location provides for schools to operate as distinct units, preserving their particular ethos and identity or pattern of provision, being well placed to collaborate with other schools specifically because of their geographical proximity. This collaboration could be particularly effective in respect of cross-phase collaboration, between a primary and a post-primary school within a single community for example, as well as across sectors. There are some significant opportunities for this form of collaboration to develop given the encouragement and the protectiveness necessary to a diverse society.

Shared Campus

Shared campus provision requires careful analysis and evaluation of the perceived educational benefits from using this option. In some areas, the shared campus approach may facilitate the retention of local educational provision for a range of sectors. In other instances this model may facilitate the harmonization and delivery of a range of educational and community support services due to the nature of the facilities provided. In Scotland, the shared campus model has been used in theory to increase the level of facilities that the schools involved have access to as well as providing facilities for community use. In some cases, the approach has facilitated the development of new provision to meet the demand for faith-based school provision. In other cases, it is difficult to see the added value to the schools themselves, even in terms of facilities.

There are clearly some economic benefits to a shared campus, particularly in the avoidance of the duplication of administrative, facilities management and other support staff, but it is unclear as to whether these savings are outweighed by capital and recurrent expenditure arising from the provision of additional buildings and capital facilities and in terms of service benefits to the schools and the community.

Shared campus arrangements will require the development of agreed, objectively measurable criteria against which proposals may be evaluated in order to ensure that the objectives of enhancing educational objectives in a cost-effective way can be met.

At a practical level, post-primary schools, through the E2S arrangements are engaged in a process of identifying the range of subjects and courses available within an area, particularly a post-16. This will lead to a rationalisation of some course provision and the beginnings of collaborative arrangements to help schools move towards provision of the Entitlement Framework. It is likely, however, to be a slow process while many of the existing schools continue to operate with a declining school population. Cross-sectoral collaboration will more likely follow sectoral re-organisation in response to new post-primary arrangements and address the practical issues such as distances between campuses.

Many of the benefits to be realised are long term and can only be assessed through qualitative analysis. It would be important to ensure ownership of the criteria which underpins the Sustainable Schools Policy and that the benefits are primarily educational, social and community and not exclusively economic and financial. It is critical to create an environment wherein rationalisation and reorganisation, through the construction of new schools, will be a change being welcomed not rejected within communities.

The “preferred option” of Integrated education also needs to be set aside in order for the other sectors and their communities to be confident that they are engaged as equal partners on behalf of their communities.

3. The best combination of factors that should be taken into account in estate planning.

There are many factors that should be taken into account such as projected enrolments, transport, parental choice, the number of small schools, condition/suitability of buildings and deprivation. All of these should be taken into account but within the context of an agreed Sustainable Schools Policy. For example, the number of small schools is closely linked to the nature of communities in Northern Ireland, particularly, but not exclusively, in rural areas. Planning for schools including the extent and nature of accommodation, should also take account of the contribution that the Extended Schools concept can make to sustaining and providing services to communities. In addition, a significant factor that should also be considered is congruency with new and emerging planning policies, particularly in respect of accessibility transport and the creation and development of sustainable communities. Primary and nursery provision should be located within easy walking distance of the community that the school serves, and the possibilities that a new school investment can bring into the whole community infrastructure, needs to be factored in.

Future estate planning needs to recognise that there is no ‘average’ school. Robust analysis of data needs to include an assessment of the needs of the community which the school is serving as well as the potential of the school to further develop its core services and those which extend to other schools, the community and other service providers.

In respect of the Catholic Managed Sector, a key input into strategic provision planning has been the use of the Baptismal statistics which continue to provide a robust indicator in respect of the long-term enrolments, and sustainability of any proposed new provision.

Education policy should also be taken into account. In the CCMS Context Paper, reference is made to the need to prevent failure by ensuring early identification of learning or other behavioural difficulties and for a sustained programme to address these while there is an opportunity to prevent a resistance to learning. Some aspects of this context extend to the role of the school as a ‘full service’ conduit to the family and the community.

Planning needs also to take cognisance of broader special needs and inclusion. The influx of migrant families to Northern Ireland has placed unforeseen demands on schools as ‘socialising agents’ within communities. Planning should also take account of health priorities including

safe routes to schools, healthy eating and general health and safety. School Transport Policy needs to be taken into account, particularly in rural areas and with respect to post-primary provision. The siting of school should consider security as well as proximity to support services such as further education or playing fields.

Finally, planning should consider the value added that quality accommodation and learning environments bring to the motivation of students.

4. An appropriate level of surplus capacity, allowing for changes and parental choice.

A new definition of surplus capacity needs to be developed and agreed. The current definition refers exclusively to the use of buildings and bears little resemblance to how a modern school operates in respect of its curriculum delivery and the service it provides to its pupils and the community in which it is situated.

The review of the surplus capacity needs to recognise the range of, sometimes contradictory factors, on which it is based. It is not the intention of this paper to dwell on these. CCMS believes that the issue of 'surplus' can only be considered when there is a proper and agreed understanding of what constitutes appropriate accommodation.

In the primary sector, the issue of the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) existing in the school is a more reliable indicator of need than a standard number of 60 sq mtrs of teaching space for every 29 pupils, regardless of social deprivation or special needs levels within the school and its community.

Only when there is agreement on an appropriate schedule of accommodation, including all extended and community aspects, can there be a consideration of what is 'surplus'. There is a rational case, particularly in relation to the 11-19 phase of post-primary, for 'provided' surplus accommodation to take account of differential choices which young people may make from year to year. Some of this may be of a specialist nature but Council would believe that new builds need to have flexible spaces which could lend themselves to a broader range of use over time.

The advances of ICT and the growth of E-learning and distance learning may have some economies in the longer term and this needs to be an essential element in the design and specification of new schools.

A strategic approach to future planning should also take into account that many of the existing buildings which will be in place over the next few years will reach a point of redundancy. Any new building, even where there is a demographic downturn, should be planned on the basis that surpluses could disappear or reduce with the closure of the older buildings within a specified time frame. Such an initial 'surplus' might prove to be an economic investment.

5. How post-primary and Further Education provision can best be planned together, particularly for 14-19 years old, both to provide access to the curriculum and to optimise the use of the combined resources of the school and further education sectors.

While it is important to acknowledge the political and social context in which the 11-19 curriculum can be delivered, it is equally necessary to recognise, in a much more overt and connected manner, the relationship between education and the economy. Globalisation will require a flexible workforce which can come about only with an acknowledgment that education is lifelong and that new skills, knowledge and attitudes will be in demand. Young people need a broader base to their education and independent, structural and specific advice on course and career choice. Any new arrangements in 14-19 provision and delivery must focus primarily on the needs of the individual and their potential contribution to economic, and by implication, social development. New arrangements cannot put buildings and institutions ahead of these but CCMS recognises that the purpose of this review is to maximise the value from any investment in buildings.

The comments in the previous paragraph should be interpreted as taking a realistic view of the conditions in which education will operate. This needs to be strategically planned to avoid a new kind of competition for students and the needless duplication of provision which might lead to unviable courses in several institutions.

CCMS believes that a number of understandings need to be arrived at to create the proper framework for viewing how the 14-19 curriculum can be delivered. These are laid out below not as an exhaustive list, not in any particular order, but as elements which need to be taken into account. There needs to be:

- An expansion of applied or vocational courses designed to a robust level 2 and 3 standard and assessed in a fit for purpose, credible and reliable manner which have currency amongst Higher Education providers, Sector Skills' Councils and Employers;
- Recognition that such courses should reflect existing and future economic trends and be market leaders not followers;
- Acceptance that new courses need to be funded at various levels including development, delivery, promotion and implementation;

- There needs to be an early agreement between DETI, DEL and DE as to what these courses should be, which organisation should be the primary deliverers and how and by whom teachers can be trained to deliver them. While Northern Ireland should take account of what is happening in England and Wales, it is essential for Northern Ireland to have a 14-19 policy which meets its unique needs;
- Clear, brokered agreement between the Schools sector, the Further Education sector and the Skills sector as to who will deliver:
 - (i) full courses
 - (ii) elements of courses
 taking into account the specialist requirements of some courses both in teaching and resources;
- Acceptance of the potential for ICT and distance learning approaches to contribute to future provision needs to be further explored;
- A strategic audit of provision across agreed geographical areas. CCMS has already carried out this process within the Catholic sector and would believe that these areas identified are viable for the whole of the systems with a view to identifying opportunities to promote collaboration and achieve economies of scale. This exercise need to be in parallel with decisions as to what additional or new courses can be delivered and by whom;
- Recognition that within this process there is a need for a strategic assessment of the role of Further Education in level 2 and level 3 course delivery. It is essential that a new competitive environment does not emerge to replace the Grammar/Non-Selective scenario. There is strong research evidence to suggest that most young people tend to complete courses better in a school environment and CCMS believes that schools should be deemed the primary and ‘normal’ route of delivery for 14-19 courses. Further Education and Training Organisations should provide specialist support either in the schools or on site, depending on the circumstances. Further Education should focus its provision mainly on higher level and specialist vocational courses more in keeping with the higher education environment, the provision of life long learning apprenticeship and specialist training. This may suggest an initial rationalisation of some provision but the Council believes that it will create the conditions for Further Education to achieve a higher status with a clearer link to higher education and the economic cycle;
- Agreement that the 14-19 phase should, as far as is possible, be regarded as a unitary phase for delivery. While there is a history of 6th form colleges in some other parts of the UK, the Council does not believe that this is the most flexible approach for the future.

There may be circumstances where this aspiration may have to be tempered to facilitate other priorities.

It is only when these policy and strategic issues are appropriately agreed that a proper consideration of the delivery of the 14-19 curriculum can be considered in the school context. In the longer term, the process of community planning may also need to be taken account of.

It is necessary to carry out a full scale audit of provision against “suitability” criteria and in recognition that the accommodation requirements are going to change continually over future years. The term ‘viable’ must be understood in terms of not just numbers, but appropriateness of design and size as well as condition of buildings and connectedness to ancillary supports. The learning environment is a factor in raising standards.

Any process which focuses on the needs of the individual within an economic and social context may challenge the status quo in terms of institutions or buildings. While accepting this, the Council is mindful of the added value of a strong and supported ethos and would want to build upon this in any new arrangements. Confidence is a key dimension of successful outcomes, and in moving to any new arrangements, all parties need to recognise the necessity of keeping stakeholders, including students and their parents, fully informed and of ensuring that the strengths of existing provision are built upon, not diminished. There is, therefore, a need to look at current provision in the whole 4-19 phase to determine which parts will contribute specifically to 14-19 and in what way.

Within the Catholic education sector the Post-Primary Review is predicated on a set of principles agreed by the Commission for Catholic Education and managed through a PRINCE 2 Project Management Model which invites local project groups to consider provision across a fairly large, but cohesive area (see Appendix 1). Their options are not constrained but it is expected that most will consider options within the following broad ranges:

- 11-19 Single Management Units on a single site;
- 11-19 Single Management Units on more than one site;
- 11-19 free standing schools linked by service level agreements emphasising curricular collaboration;
- 11-14 satellite schools linked through a single management to a 14-19 school in a central location;

- 11-14 free standing schools feeding into one or more free standing 14-19 schools by service level agreements;
- 4-14 (or 7-14) free sanding or single management units linked to a 14-19 provision.

In all cases there would be collaboration with Further Education, training providers and other sectors. The Council believes that cross-sectoral collaboration should emerge out of agreed needs and may need to be underpinned by tight agreements on ethos protection, behaviour and pastoral care and other practical matters. CCMS believes that cross-sectoral arrangements will take time to build confidence and commitment and that these will be aided by the development of new and motivating courses and the need to extend collaboration in the face of declining enrolments in order to preserve at least the minimum statutory choice. It is important that new arrangements are successfully embedded and achieve sustainability over time rather than be rushed into forced arrangements which do not have the confidence of the users. It is again important to recognise the point made earlier in this chapter about the segregated nature of many communities in Northern Ireland which will require changed approaches to housing management and other public services to foster a more benign environment for cross-sectoral collaboration.

The Further Education sector is already cross-community but it too has to struggle with the impacts of political and social conditions. The placement of any new Further Education provision and the nature of it needs to take cognizance of the accessibility of its services to all communities.

The Council believes that many of the objectives of this review can be achieved in the first instance by economies of scale within the existing sectors.

There is within CCMS a recognition of the many realities including the state of readiness within specific areas and the immediate need to rationalise and re-organise post-primary provision. It also recognises the very real demand by parents for specific types of education including that which is faith based. Council believes that a multi-strand approach to a shared future both within and beyond education has a better prospect of realisation. This will also require the Department to look critically and objectively at its role in encouraging and facilitating Integrated and Irish Medium education to ensure that their needs are met in a manner that is equitable and realistic. Choice is the political imperative elsewhere in the UK and people in Northern Ireland are entitled to have at least choice of the various sectors. A further practical point is that much of

the future provision will be based around accommodation which is already in place and broadly fit for purpose.

The facilitation of collaboration would undoubtedly be enhanced by attention to practical detail such as the placement of any new school in a position which can both recognise the communities which it is intended to serve and the potential for it to link with schools in other sectors which have the same assurances. Neutral or connected spaces are a desirable possibility which might be capable of delivery in some areas where there is availability of land. The notion of a shared 14-19 campus is an aspiration which would have limited currency at present but proximity would clearly facilitate more expansive and beneficial collaboration. The experience of Officers visiting the only post-primary shared campus in Scotland was one of disappointment at the almost solitary nature of each school and the feeling that some services and facilities has been compromised rather than extended. It was also notable that the location of the school did not promote extensive community use. It is important that any new provision is regarded as expansive, progressive and inclusive of the community it serves.

Amongst the practical issues is the need to address movement of students between sites. This needs to be considered in relation to broad policy areas such as transport, school meals etc and to organisational issues such as timetabling, examination entries and cost transfer. A further strategic issue is school funding with the need to ensure that the funding mechanism does not reinforce competition between schools. Council believes that all provision, including new build, needs to have a degree of 'surplus' to reflect the changing demands for courses and demographics. It believes that the funding formula needs to have a number of elements which are differently focussed from the existing model including the need to recognise the higher costs of some, mainly applied, courses, and the need to invest in these over time to help them become established. The Council considers that a more flexible approach to special needs provision is required with a less rigid distinction between inclusion and special school. New provision also needs to take account of the Children and Young People Agenda and specifically the Extended Schools element which can promote the school as a community facility to support the broader education of children through their families and communities. Similarly, local schools need again to recognise their potential to facilitate the Further Education agenda for life long learning, particularly in relation to community education.

This response is intended to sketch out some of the opportunities which this review brings but it is located in the realities of what is possible as a starting point influenced by a vision of an

effective more inclusive, cost effective and connected education service linked more obviously and purposefully to other public services to provide a better future for our young people.

6. What could those in positions of leadership and influence do to promote a climate conducive to integrating education in meaningful ways, to overcome barriers to sharing, and to help bring about new ways of thinking and working.

Creating the climate conducive to encourage greater cross-community support for all schools from whatever sector, to develop greater co-operation and collaboration within and between sectors and to remove allegations of sectarianism or separatism, is absolutely critical for those responsible for our Education Service. However, given that significant proportions of our society live in segregated housing or in isolated communities, that our schools exist in an extremely competitive environment and that there remains deep distrust between communities, these objectives will be exceedingly difficult, but not impossible, to achieve. Central to making progress is leadership, and a strategy which is strategic, multi-dimensional, long-term and funded. To date, many of the Government's initiatives in this area have been based on a structural, curricular, piecemeal, exclusive and insensitive approach, which has had limited success.

The publication of the *Shared Future* is clearly a major step forward but unfortunately it's focus in respect of education remains largely structural, piecemeal and reinforces the perception that there is a preferred government solution i.e. the establishment of Integrated schools. Ironically, this perception has created a paradox in so far as that the legislative responsibility of DE to encourage and facilitate Integrated education, has become an inhibitor to the development of a shared future in so far as those who are not part of the preferred solution feel diminished and excluded. In spite of the attractiveness of the 11-19, all ability curriculum in a selective environment, and an aggressive publicity campaign extended over a period of 25 years, the limited success of a structural approach is self evident in the relatively low percentage of children attending Integrated schools, the social mix, location of their intake and the opportunistic use by some of Transformation legislation to ensure survival, rather than integration. There is now growing recognition by all of the Education Partners, including recent Ministers, that the structural route to a shared future has not only become extremely wasteful of resources but, by and large, has exhausted its potential. The Secretary of State's decision to conduct a review of the school estate is a clear signal that a new strategy needs to be developed. Clearly, the emergence of the concept of **integrating education**, referred to in the Terms of Reference, in a meaningful way is a strategy which is more inclusive and less threatening to identity, a critical feature of Northern Irish society. Enabling Communities to move at their own

pace, recognising and respecting the contributions of all and encouraging them to consider new ways of thinking and working, as an untapped resource with tremendous long term potential, will ultimately produce greater and more sustainable outcomes than the present strategy.

The basis of any new strategy has its origins in the Culture of Tolerance Report which articulated five core principles which the Council believes should underpin and drive the strategy. The purpose of these principles was to create a climate where there was a clearly articulated role for education to promote peace and reconciliation, where parents' wishes in exercising their choice of school would be recognised, and where there would be a pluralist system of schools, all of which would be equally valued for the contribution they make to the promotion of peace and reconciliation. Whilst it is unfortunate that a strategy to embed these principles within our Education System was not developed following the publication of the Report, it is nevertheless important to recognise that they remain valid in developing a way forward.

To the credit of the Northern Bishops, they, on the back of the "Good Friday Agreement", and the "Towards a Culture of Tolerance : Integrating Education Report" (1998), published their document "Building Peace, Shaping the Future" (2001). Within this publication they articulated the role of Catholic schools in the promotion of peace and reconciliation, healing and understanding. In addition, they openly challenged Catholic schools to reconcile and cherish diverse identities, to create a climate of openness and to encourage young people to play a full part in a just and equitable society. Since then, the Bishops and CCMS have developed a corporate vision for all Catholic schools, held a major conference, "Promoting Reconciliation through Education", published a document on the Promotion of Inclusion, engaged in conversations with the Transferors and others and extended the membership of its Council and Committee to include men and women of other denominations and from a range of public sector organisations. Council supports Irish Medium education through the provision of units within Catholic Maintained schools and through its Council. It works effectively with the Integrated Sector on the "integrating" of education. Unfortunately much of the above, where it has appeared in the Council's Business Plan, has been challenged by DE as not being part of the Council's core activities. Others, however, such as the Community Relations Council and NIO (Good Relations Branch) have recognised the importance of this activity and supported the direction of travel of the Northern Bishops and CCMS.

In addition, the Trustees of Catholic schools have recently agreed a set of guiding principles governing the Post-Primary Review of Education. These principles state explicitly the need for greater co-operation and collaboration between schools.

Conclusion

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools recognises the need for this review. It would contend that while there is an emphasis on the planning and provision of schools, this can only have relevance when considered alongside broader educational policy, public expenditure and its priorities and the real social and economic conditions pertaining to Northern Ireland. There is a real need for connectivity and coherence in both policy and delivery.

The Council looks forward to engaging with the Review Group and to the final report.