

22 April 2009

SPECIALIST SCHOOLS FUNDING ANNOUNCED

Education Minister, Caitriona Ruane, today announced that a further 10 schools will be designated as Specialist Schools from September 2009 bringing the total number of Specialist Schools to 44.

Following the assessment by the independent panel, ten schools were assessed as meeting in full the criteria required for specialist school designation. Six of these had specialisms in STEM-related areas (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths).

The Minister said: **"I wish to congratulate the 10 schools on their success. I know they have had an anxious wait for this announcement while I considered how best to deal with the advice I received from the Independent Panel in the context of a very difficult financial climate. This has been a challenging task but I have taken account of the many letters I have received from across the education sector in support of the work of these schools and I am pleased to say that a workable solution has been arrived at but it is not without impact on these schools."**

The Minister went on to say that the continuation of the programme was only achievable by greatly reducing the additional resources and timescale of designation for these 10 schools. She said: **"I met with these schools to outline my new proposals which include a reduction in the support grant from £75k to £25K and a shortened period of designation of 2 years rather than 4 years. Such is the commitment of these schools that, without exception, they accepted the revised conditions for designation. They all recognised that, in a difficult financial context, we have to work harder to deliver quality education to our young people and signalled their readiness to do this."**

In her budget announcement in March 2009 the Minister had indicated that, due to financial pressures, the Specialist Schools Programme for 2009 would be severely curtailed with immediate funding only being available via the Innovation Fund for a limited number of schools with specialisms in science, technology and mathematics. The Minister made clear though that, in recognition of the work that schools had put into their applications and the important contribution of specialist schools in promoting collaboration; widening the opportunities for young people and promoting school improvement, she would look for options to reduce the impact of this difficult decision. She therefore asked the Panel to assess all applications to enable designation should the resources become available. The Minister has indicated her appreciation for the work the Panel has undertaken and for the advice it has provided.

The Minister also indicated that this was a good opportunity to review the current programme and until this review has been completed, there would be no further designation under the Specialist programme. As a result all existing Specialist Schools will end their designation in August 2011. She indicated that she would draw on the evidence and experiences from the existing Specialist schools to develop a more inclusive model with a sharper focus on:-

- raising standards;
- tackling the barriers to learning that too many of our young people face;
- sharing and learning from one another: and
- ensuring that the voice of pupils is sought and listened to in schools.

In conclusion she said:-

"I will be writing to all existing Specialist Schools to outline my plans for the development of a new model. My Department will engage widely, but particularly with those schools in the programme, as I am keen that we involve schools in the work to shape a new model. I would hope that a new model could be developed and information disseminated well in advance of August 2011 when the existing programme will end."

NOTE TO EDITORS

Media enquiries to the Department of Education Press Office Tel: 028 9127 9755. Out of office hours please contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 07699 715 440 and your call will be returned.

The schools announced today as suitable for designation as specialist schools in September 2009 are:-

School Name	Specialism	STEM/Non STEM
St Louis Grammar (Kilkeel)	Technology	STEM
Antrim Grammar	Maths and computing	STEM
Victoria College	Science	STEM
Rainey Endowed	Maths	STEM
St Patrick's Academy	Science	STEM
St Mary's High School (Newry)	Maths	STEM
Assumption Grammar	Music	Non STEM
St Dominic's High School	Humanities	Non STEM
St Ciaran's College (Ballygawley)	Business & Enterprise	Non STEM
St Parick's College Bearnageeha	Humanities	Non STEM

- Applications were received from 20 schools by the 28 February 2009 deadline. A summary of the applications by school type, by Education and Library Board area and by specialism is attached at Annex 1 and a list of all applicant schools is in Annex 2. This brings the total of Specialist Schools to 44 – Annex 3 lists previous cohorts.
- Each school was required to submit the following:-
 - A four-year School Development Plan (SDP).
 - A four-year Community Development Plan (CDP) that involves developing partnerships with at least 5 partner schools.
 - Evidence of how a school intends to raise at least £25,000 of unconditional private sector sponsorship.
 - A bid for a one-off recurrent support grant and an outline of how this would be used.
- However due to financial constraints Cohort 4 Schools will now be designated for a period of 2 years from September 2009 and will receive £100 per pupil in each of the 2 years to support equally the implementation of the school and community development plans and up to £25,000 support grant to add to the £25,000 sponsorship raised to enhance provision in the specialist area.
- The 6 STEM Specialist Schools have been funded from resources available under the Executive's Innovation Fund and the remaining 4 Non-STEM Schools have been funded from within the existing DE budget following a reprioritisation exercise. All schools have been funded at a reduced level and for a shorter period than originally envisaged.
- A review of the programme will also have consequences for all existing Specialist Schools.
 - Cohort 1 will have the opportunity to apply for an extension of their designation for 1 year subject to the school demonstrating that there has been improvement since their designation began in September 2006;
 - Cohort 2 will be designated for a further 2 years as planned: and
 - Cohort 3 will have their designation reduced by 1 year.

This will result in all 44 specialist schools reaching the end of their designation period at the same time in August 2011.
- The Minister plans to review the existing programme with a view to building on the many strengths of the programme, particularly in the context of raising standards and tackling educational underachievement.
- An Independent Panel, chaired by Dr Tom Hesketh (Director of the Regional Training Unit), was established to consider the applications and put advice to the Department on those schools that fully meet the criteria as outlined in the associated guidance. List of panel members is attached in Annex 4. The assessment of the applications was rigorous and a final list of 10 schools, each meeting the criteria, was drawn up and subsequently submitted to the Department for consideration.
- Those schools that have been unsuccessful in this application round will be offered the opportunity to receive detailed feedback from the Chairperson of the Panel.

Summary of Specialist Schools Applications

A total of 20 schools submitted applications seeking Specialist School designation.

10 Schools have been recommended for inclusion in the programme.

By School Type

School Management Type	Number of Applications	Recommended for Year 4
Controlled Secondary	1	0
Maintained Secondary	3	3
Grant Maintained Integrated	3	0
Voluntary Grammar	11	6
Controlled Grammar	2	1
TOTAL	20	10

By Education and Library Board Area

ELB Area	Number of Applications	Recommended for Year 4
BELB	6	3
NEELB	6	2
SEELB	2	1
SELB	5	4
WELB	1	0
TOTAL	20	10

By Specialism

Specialism	Number of Applications	Recommended for Year 4
Science	3	2
Business and Enterprise	2	1
Sport	2	0
Mathematics	5	3
Arts	1	0
Humanities	3	2
Technology	3	1
Music	1	1
TOTAL	20	10

List of Specialist Schools Applicant 2009

ANNEX 2

School Reference	Name	Location	Board	Management Type	Specialism
142-0029	St Dominic's High	Belfast	BELB	Voluntary Grammar	Humanities
123-0026	St Patrick's College Bearnageeha	Belfast	BELB	Maintained Secondary	Humanities
142-0264	Victoria College	Belfast	BELB	Voluntary Grammar	Science
142-0277	Aquinas Diocesan Grammar	Belfast	BELB	Voluntary Grammar	Humanities
142-0265	Hunterhouse College	Belfast	BELB	Voluntary Grammar	B&E
142-0021	St Mary's CBS	Belfast	BELB	Voluntary Grammar	Sport
341-0209	Antrim Grammar	Antrim	NEELB	Controlled Grammar	Maths and computing
342-0058	Rainey Endowed School	Magherafelt	NEELB	Voluntary Grammar	Maths
341-0297	Cambridge House Grammar	Ballymena	NEELB	Controlled Grammar	Maths
342-0012	Dalriada School	Antrim	NEELB	Voluntary Grammar	Technology
326-0303	Sperrin Integrated College	Magherafelt	NEELB	GMI	Visual Arts
426-0255	Lagan College	Belfast	SEELB	GMI	Science
442-0086	Assumption Grammar	Ballynahinch	SEELB	Voluntary Grammar	Music
523-0152	St Ciaran's High	Dungannon	SELB	Maintained Secondary	B&E
542-0304	St Patrick's Academy	Dungannon	SELB	Voluntary Grammar	Science
523-0108	St Mary's High School	Newry	SELB	Maintained Secondary	Maths
521-0231	Drumglass High School	Dungannon	SELB	Controlled Secondary	Technology,
542-0045	St Louis Grammar	Kilkeel	SELB	Voluntary Grammar	Technology
226-0276	Oakgrove Integrated College	Derry	WELB	GMI	Sport
242-0043	St Michael's College	Enniskillen	WELB	Voluntary Grammar	Maths

Specialist Schools – designated September 2006

Ashfield Girls High School, Belfast	(ICT)
Belfast Model School for Girls	(ICT)
Glengormley High School	(ICT)
Ballyclare High School	(ICT)
St Cecilia's College, Derry	(Performing Arts)
St Louise's College, Belfast	(Performing Arts)
Limavady High School	(Performing Arts)
St Mary's College, Derry	(Science)
Lumen Christi College,	(Science)
St Malachy's College,	(Music)
Shimna Integrated College,	(Languages)
St John's High School, Dromore	(Business & Enterprise)

Specialist Schools designated from September 2007

Hazelwood Integrated College, Newtownabbey	(Arts)
Portora Royal, Enniskillen	(Arts)
Carrickfergus College	(Business & Ent)
St Patrick's and St Brigid's College, Claudy	(Business & Ent)
Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast	(Languages)
Belfast High School, Newtownabbey	(Languages)
St Columb's College, Derry	(Mathematics & Computing)
Loreto College, Coleraine	(Science)
St Patrick's College, Maghera	(Science)
St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	(Science)
St Colman's College, Newry	(Science)
Dromore High School, Dromore	(Science)
Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle	(Sport)

Specialist Schools designated from Sept 2008.

Carrickfergus Grammar School	(Science)
Downshire School	(Business & Enterprise)
Slemish IC	(Humanities)
Ulidia IC	(Arts)
Bangor Academy & Sixth Form College	(Humanities)
St Patrick's Grammar	(Humanities)
Holy Trinity College	(Sport)
St Paul's High School	(Science)
Thornhill College	(Maths)

Members of Independent Assessment Panel:

Tom Hesketh	(Chair) Director Regional Training Unit (RTU)
Matt Murray	Former Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)
Roy Downey	Former ETI and DfES Specialist Schools Assessor
Robert Fitzpatrick	Former Principal of Ballyclare High School and RTU Associate
Grainne McCafferty	Former Principal St Cecilia's College Derry
David Thompson	Former Principal Boys Model Belfast and Regent House Grammar School
Noreen Campbell	Former Principal Hazelwood Integrated College
Sean McIlwee	Former Principal St Patrick's Maghera
Dr Sam McGuinness	Former Principal Limavady Grammar School
Patrick Hugh McCann	Former Principal St Colman's College, Newry