



# Message from Minister

I welcome this opportunity for contact with you through Headlines.

Since becoming Minister of Education, I have had the opportunity to visit many schools and meet many Principals, teachers and other staff in our schools.

I recognise and applaud the vital roles you have in delivering the best education possible to our children and young people. Through my role, I will do all I can to ensure you have appropriate and sufficient resources to deliver this service.

As you will read later in this publication there are many changes being progressed in education. The change which is attracting most public interest is around my proposals for new

arrangements to facilitate transfer of pupils from primary to post primary schools.

There have been many ill-informed comments about my proposals and I welcome this opportunity to assure you that any changes planned over the next few years will be well thought through and managed.

Since I made my initial statement in December, I have met with all the key participants to hear their views. Many other meetings since then have taken place between these participants and my senior officials as we work to build a consensus. More details are provided later in headlines.

We have many excellent schools providing high standards of education for our children and young people. This year's "A" level



and GCSE results confirm this. Unfortunately, however, there are also many young people leaving school whose literacy and numeracy skills are low. A priority for me is to narrow the gap between these two groups. As leaders, you have a key role in making this happen and together, I believe we can make a real difference.

**Caitríona Ruane**  
**Minister for Education**



## CHANGING TIMES

The beginning of the academic year brings many changes to those involved in education, not least the Education and Training Inspectorate. On 31 August 2008 Marion Matchett retired from the organisation after some seven years as Chief Inspector.

During her time in office Marion has made many changes to the Inspectorate and has contributed widely to the development of inspection, both here and abroad. In reflecting on her experiences Marion stated: "It has been an incredible privilege to lead the Inspectorate through a period of change and to be part of an organisation with such high standards of professional practice. But perhaps the greatest privilege has been the opportunity to work alongside those in the system whose commitment to learners is so evident in all they say and do."



Marion is succeeded by Stanley Goudie, Assistant Chief Inspector, who has been a member of the Inspectorate for some 20 years and who has played a significant role in the corporate development of the organisation. Stanley commented: "I am

delighted with my appointment and am looking forward to the challenges ahead. I want to build on Marion's legacy so that the Inspectorate continues to work to promote improvement in the interests of learners and to contribute further to the education and training systems in Northern Ireland."

## Welcome from Secretary

I am pleased to introduce you to the first edition of Headlines.

We hope to publish regular editions to keep you directly updated on the key policy issues the Minister and Department are developing.

Headlines will be additional to, not a substitute for, the established channels of communication between the Department and your school.

Over recent months a number of key policies have been launched for consultation. These include the School Improvement Policy, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and proposals on the development of Area Based Planning. All of these key policies will impact on your daily work and it is important to give your views. The Sustainable Schools Policy was also published.

Development of a number of other key issues continues and we are making good progress with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority, which will result in savings in the administration of education being made available to benefit schools.

**Will Haire**  
Permanent Secretary



# Implementation of Revised Curriculum Framework



The Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, the Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) are very conscious of the hard work that is going on in schools to embed the revised curriculum. In the interests of all our young people, we are clear that we must keep the momentum of curriculum implementation going, maximising the additional flexibility the revised curriculum offers to maintain a clear focus on raising the standards in literacy and numeracy and to enable every young person to achieve their full potential.

The Department and ETI wrote to all schools on 30 September 2008, setting out the inspection approach until June 2012, and this was accompanied by DE Circular 2008/22, which provided more detail about the curriculum, assessment and reporting arrangements for the 2008/09 school year. The Department also issued leaflets for primary and post-primary parents on the

revised curriculum, assessment and reporting generally.

While the revised curriculum will be in place across Years 1 -12 by September 2010, the Department and ETI recognise that it will take longer than this for progress in planning and teaching practice to be fully embedded. Consistency in support will be maintained and reflected in the inspection approach taken by the ETI, with inspection arrangements reflecting this up until June 2012, when the Department expects to see a full implementation of the revised curriculum across all year groups, with its associated assessment and reporting arrangements.

Training and support will continue to be provided to schools as part of the targeted programme of revised curriculum training, sequenced in line with the statutory implementation timescales for principals and teachers, and building on feedback provided. Support will also be available from ELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Officers in the course of their normal responsibilities. The provision of the 5 + 5 professional development days will continue for the next two years to support principals in leading the implementation within their school. The ETI will continue to evaluate the ongoing support programme for principals and teachers and this feedback will inform the development of the programme.

We all have a part to play in delivering the revised curriculum, assessment and reporting arrangements for the benefit of the young people in our classrooms. We wish you well in the 2008/09 school year as you play your important part in this.



## Making real improvements where it matters most

The countdown is on. The Executive has set January 2010 as the date for the creation of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA). It's the biggest revamp for education administration in more than 35 years – but will schools and colleges reap the benefit? Definitely "Yes" says ESA Chief Executive (Designate) Gavin Boyd.

The RPA in education is about improving the educational experience for every child. But that can't be done simply through better administration. Only those working directly with our young people can do it. Therefore my job, and the job of everyone in the new authority, is to ensure you have all the training,

support and resources required for success.

The modernisation of education administration will allow £20 million per annum to be redirected to frontline services. Less money spent on bureaucracy and more spent in the classroom will make a real difference. ESA will continue to look at ways to ensure more resources are channelled to where they are needed most.

We have spent considerable time talking to school leaders and teachers' representatives about how services should be delivered to schools. I assure you we will continue to gather and listen to your views.

As we move forward, education support services will be delivered closer to schools through the provision of local support teams. Recognising that every school is different, we will tailor our service to

your needs, with the shared goal of helping every school deliver better outcomes for young people.

Therefore the creation of ESA will bring significant changes to the education sector and the transition to ESA must be carefully managed. Working closely with the Department and the existing Chief Executives, we will ensure a smooth transition to the new organisation.

On Day One of ESA you should expect 'business as usual'. When changes to the services you receive are being made you will be informed well in advance. As ESA takes shape you will continue play a key role in moulding our services and driving improvement within the new organisation.

I am determined that we will take this opportunity to make real improvements where it matters most – supporting you in the education of our young people.

## Post-primary Transfer

The Minister brought proposals for the future of post-primary transfer to the Executive on May 15, 2008 and is now seeking a legislative framework for these proposals. The proposals are that following the last Transfer Test this year we will move towards a system in which children transfer to post primary school at 11, based on non academic criteria, and then informed choices on their educational pathway at 14.

These changes will be phased in over three years to give schools that need it, time to adapt to the new system. In September 2009 – pupils will transfer on the basis of the current system (11+) for the last time. In September 2010 – Pupils will begin to transfer under the new arrangements to post-primary school at 11 on the basis of non academic admissions criteria. To facilitate transition grammar schools will be able to apply for the option of admitting by academic selection on a limited basis. In 2010 this will permit selection of up to 50%

of a grammar school's intake. The CCEA will draw up a standard test which will not distort the teaching of the Revised Curriculum. In September 2011 the ratio of intake will become 30% academic – 70% non-academic admissions; in September 2012 the ratio of intake will become 20% academic – 80% non-academic admissions.

In September 2013 all admissions will be on the basis of non academic criteria. This will also be the first year of pupils making informed choices for their educational pathway at age 14, based on the full Entitlement Framework. Preparation of the system for the delivery of the Entitlement Framework is a key part of the task being taken forward by the Area-based planning process I announced on March 4, 2008.

The Minister has recently said that in the absence of achieving a political consensus to progress her proposals of 15 May 2008, she will issue guidance for admissions to post primary schools in 2010.

# Changes in Education

The Department of Education is always striving to improve the service we offer to our customers as well as help to ensure the best services are delivered to schools and pupils.

Recently a number of high-level consultations and strategies have been launched, with the aim of doing just that – developing and progressing our policies in a way that will benefit everyone.

Every school a good school is the heading under which the Department is developing a number of policy areas. It is the umbrella term for the ongoing work and a number of consultations are in the public at the moment under this strap line.

The 'Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy' and the 'New School Improvement Policy' are pupil centred policies with equality and improvement at their core. They aim to reflect and build on the work that many excellent and committed teachers are already doing in many classrooms across the north.

The Area Based Planning Policy Paper has been published for consultation, while the Policy for Sustainable Schools was subject

to public consultation last year. Together, both policies will influence significant reform in education.

The Area Based Planning Paper sets out the general policy approach to area-based planning and the future respective roles of the Department of Education, the Education and Skills Authority and the education sectoral interests. It is about how our schools work together in local communities to deliver maximum choice and access to the Entitlement Framework.

The Policy for Sustainable Schools is very much about ensuring all our children receive a high quality and wide ranging educational experience to prepare them for later years.

The purpose of all these policy changes and improvements is to

ensure that every child in every classroom is receiving that same high quality teaching to help them develop essential skills they will need throughout their lives. That every young person has the same opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background, gender or race.

The policies are not intended to sit alone but have been developed to work alongside the revised curriculum and complement developments already taking place such as the extended and specialist schools programmes.

The strategies have now been issued for public consultation and I would encourage you to participate and let us know your views. This will help us to offer all our young people the quality education they deserve.



# Irish-medium Education

Caitriona Ruane launched a consultation on the Report of the Review of Irish-medium Education on the 11 October 2008. Consultation will run until the 10 January 2009 and copies of the Report and consultation response document are available in Irish and English on DE's website.

We encourage all interested parties, English-speaking and Irish-speaking, to respond. Some recommendations will resonate beyond the Irish-medium sector and the Review team encourages sharing of these amongst all educational sectors, for mutual benefit in the interests of children.

Other recommendations take account of the different needs of the growing Irish-medium sector at this time. As the sector evolves, the Review team believe the recommendations should be kept under scrutiny, to ensure

they continue to meet the needs of the sector.

The Review focuses on delivering high-quality education and looks ahead for the next 10 years. The structure of the Review was, broadly:

1. Where are we now?
2. What are the issues?
3. How do we move forward?

Pre-school, primary and post-primary were all considered. The Review team sought imaginative and robust solutions, and key recommendations included:

1. allowing Irish-medium pre-school to access PEAGs funding even in areas where

English-medium places remain unfilled;

2. using federation to develop new Irish-medium primary provision;

3. ensuring new post-primary provision is developed at optimal locations;

4. how support for Irish-medium educators should be delivered;

5. how Irish-medium teaching resources should be developed; and

6. how Irish-medium Education should be embedded as part of the whole education system.



In March, the Education Minister Caitriona Ruane launched a new major capital works framework aimed at delivering the schools modernisation programme.

A legal challenge to the framework was lodged by a contractor who had not been included on the framework and the court ruling was not in favour of the Department of Education. The implications of the court ruling are currently being assessed.