

PART A

The Context

- 1.1 This chapter sets out the terms of reference for the Review and describes the Review process. It concludes by outlining the main parts of the report.

Terms of Reference

- 1.2 The Independent Strategic Review of Education in Northern Ireland was announced in March 2006 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Peter Hain MP, with the following terms of reference: "To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14–19 year olds, and also demographic trends."
- 1.3 Elaborating on the terms of reference, the Secretary of State asked the Review to look particularly at how new models of schooling could be developed, ensuring that resources are shared in the best way, and giving young people the best environment in which to be educated. In addition, the Review was asked to look at how best to encourage and facilitate integrated education as a vital building block towards creating the conditions necessary for long-term peace and stability in Northern Ireland. It was made clear that the particular importance attached to integrating education was not to limit the different ethos that parents and others want to see in schools, but to focus attention on developing thinking about new ways of working together, and of envisaging approaches to schooling that share resources.
- 1.4 The full terms of reference for the Review were confirmed on 30 June 2006 by the Minister with responsibility for Education, Maria Eagle MP. On that occasion the Minister said:

This Review is a key element in our package of major reforms to deliver a world class education system for Northern Ireland. This Government's continuing commitment to investing in the local education system is clear, but we must be sure that our investment creates maximum benefit for Northern Ireland's young people. We need to ensure that our planning of schools is more strategic, taking account of demographic trends and future educational needs.

Existing and new schools must be sustainable in the long term, and Northern Ireland's young people must be given the best environment in which to be educated. We have too many schools in Northern Ireland with resources spread too thinly, impacting directly on teachers and children. We need to see greater co-operation and collaboration between school sectors, achieving higher standards, better facilities and a better use of resources. This Review will examine arrangements which would deliver these benefits.

- 1.5 The full terms of reference are set out under three headings: Financial Issues, Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate, and Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration.

Financial Issues

- consider the overall deployment of resources across the education system in Northern Ireland and assess how effective this is in delivering a high quality education system;
- compare the overall funding available to the education system in Northern Ireland with the funding made available elsewhere;
- compare teacher/pupil ratios across Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom and advise on optimum educational need, compared to current provision;
- assess the costs associated with multi-sector provision in a divided society, the impact of school size and the impact of the rural nature of much of Northern Ireland; and
- advise on the cost/benefit of the investment and rationalisation programme.

Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate

- consider the proposed approach being adopted to strategic planning of the estate and how the planned investment programme can best be utilised to ensure it is invested in viable schools that make more cost-effective use of capital and recurrent funding;

- advise on how the benefits from the investment and rationalisation of the schools' estate can best be communicated to stakeholders and the wider community;
- advise on the appropriate level of surplus capacity, allowing flexibility for changes and parental choice;
- advise on the best combination of factors that should be taken into account in estate planning, such as projected enrolments, transport, parental choice, the number of small schools, condition/suitability and deprivation; and
- consider how post-primary and Further Education (FE) provision can best be planned together, particularly for 14–19 year olds, given the challenges of the Entitlement Framework, the new curriculum and the need to optimise collaboration with the FE sector.

Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration

- consider how strategic planning of the schools' estate can best encourage and support cross-sector collaboration and models of schooling that promote greater integrating of education in line with *A Shared Future*;
- advise on how the planned investment to renew the schools' estate can best be deployed to incentivise collaboration and sharing, how the barriers to such sharing can be overcome and how best to address the Department of Education's (DE) duty to encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish-medium education; and
- consider what models of collaboration and sharing will work and what are the processes that need to be deployed to ensure that the models can be delivered on the ground, as the investment programme develops.

Review Process

- 1.6 Relatively early in its work, the Review team prepared a consultation paper (Appendix A) focused on the key issues in the terms of reference, and invited written submissions from a wide range of education stakeholders. Responses were also received from a few organisations and individuals who indicated a wish

to present their views. As an important part of the consultation process, the Review held meetings with most of the organisations that provided written responses. In addition, the Review invited respondents to specify the key recommendations they would wish to see included in the Review report. The written submissions received and the subsequent discussions provided the Review with a considerable body of valuable material for consideration in its analysis of the issues and in formulating recommendations. Appendix B lists the organisations and individuals who participated in the consultation. DE provided the Review with information, analyses and perspectives on a wide range of matters both in relation to funding education and to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate. The Review acknowledges the positive and constructive engagement with all those who contributed to its work. The quality of the responses received is a measure of respondents' appreciation of the importance of the issues addressed by the Review.

Outline of the Report

- 1.7 The report is in five parts. Part A establishes the overall context for the Review. It sets out the terms of reference for the Review and describes the Review process; identifies strategic elements in education provision of relevance to the Review; describes the main features of the Northern Ireland education system; and considers issues concerning quality in education. The remaining parts focus on the three themes in the terms of reference: Financial Issues, Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate, and Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration. Part B deals with education funding, with particular reference to the determination and allocation of the education budget, and to effectiveness and efficiency. Part C focuses on strategic planning of the schools' estate. It examines key considerations in a strategic approach to planning for a system of schools that are educationally and financially viable; it also examines the potential for collaboration between schools and Further Education. In Part D, the Review explores perspectives on integration and collaboration, identifies models of collaboration and sharing, and considers how progress towards greater integrating of education could be encouraged and supported. In Part E, the final chapter makes some concluding observations on the Review's work.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 This chapter highlights major reforms and other drivers for change that define the strategic context for the Review, both in its analysis of issues and in its formulation of recommendations for action. These include demographic trends, reforms within education, the Government's policy and strategy for good relations in Northern Ireland (*A Shared Future*), a ten-year programme of investment in education through the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, and the Government's reform of public administration.

Demographic Change

- 2.2 The schools system is experiencing a major reduction in the pupil population, a decline forecast to continue well into the future, though not uniformly distributed throughout Northern Ireland. As a result of the demographic downturn, many schools have declining enrolments, some, both primary and secondary, to the point where their viability, both educational and financial, is in serious question. Currently, the schools' estate has more than 50,000 surplus places and the number is expected to rise to more than 80,000 (more than a quarter of the current school population) over the next ten years if action is not taken. Although submissions to the Review raised issues about the concept of a surplus place and the method of calculating surplus places, there is overwhelming agreement that the extent of over-provision is an urgent and serious issue. The school system has reached a point where resources are spread too thinly and inefficiency is at an unacceptable level.
- 2.3 Table 2.1 provides school population figures for the ten-year period 1996/97 to 2005/06. As can be seen, there has been a steady decline in primary school enrolments over that period, with a decrease of almost 13 per cent. The downward trend in the post-primary population has lagged behind that in the primary population. The number of pupils in Years 8-12 peaked in 2000/01 and the number of pupils in Years 8-14 peaked in 2002/03.

Table 2.1: School Population Figures for Year 1-Year 7 Pupils and Post-primary Pupils, 1996/97–2005/06

Pupil Groups	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Year 1–7 pupils	184,638	182,261	179,033	175,602	172,491	170,553	167,799	165,347	163,220	161,143
Year 8–12 pupils	130,563	130,914	131,847	132,546	132,671	131,951	130,906	129,502	127,119	125,390
All post-primary pupils	152,743	153,094	153,944	154,964	155,553	155,503	155,747	155,394	153,449	151,840

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

2.4 Table 2.2 provides school population projections until the year 2029 and percentage changes from 2004. By 2012 the number of children aged 4–10 will have decreased by an estimated 8 per cent from the 2004 figure. From 2012, the estimated percentage decrease will not fall below 8 per cent and will reach 11 per cent in 2029. The decline in the population of 11–15 year olds is more marked. Compared with 2004 the estimated number of children in this age range will have fallen by an estimated 10 per cent by 2012 and by 17 per cent by 2024.

Education Policy

2.5 Within the education service, substantial policy developments are underway in relation to the post-primary phase, including significant changes to the arrangements for transfer from primary to post-primary education, the details of which will be a matter for the Assembly to determine once it is established. At the 14–19 stage, the Curriculum Entitlement Framework has been developed to provide pupils with access to learning pathways that offer a broader and more flexible curriculum and that allow them to choose a blend of courses. The Entitlement Framework will require schools to provide access to a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (KS4) and, for schools with sixth forms, a minimum of 27 courses at post-16. At least one-third of the courses must be general (academic) and at least one-third must be applied (vocational or professional/technical). The

Table 2.2: Population Projections for Children of Compulsory School Age in Northern Ireland, 2004-2029^a

Pupil Groups	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Age 4-10	167,184	164,704	162,356	159,872	157,383	156,139	154,711	153,918	153,654	153,382	153,130	152,456	151,394
Age 11-15	129,520	127,793	126,005	124,082	122,937	121,853	120,729	119,037	116,677	113,812	111,677	110,409	110,437
Age 4-10 % change from 2004		- 1.5	- 2.9	- 4.4	- 5.9	- 6.6	- 7.5	- 7.9	- 8.1	- 8.3	- 8.4	- 8.8	- 9.4
Age 11-15 % change from 2004		- 1.3	-2.7	- 4.2	- 5.1	- 5.9	- 6.8	- 8.1	9.9	- 12.1	- 13.8	- 14.8	- 14.7
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Age 4-10	151,015	150,934	151,092	151,432	151,837	152,201	152,444	152,496	152,325	151,905	151,224	150,306	149,182
Age 11-15	110,553	110,566	110,478	109,825	108,678	108,160	107,916	107,916	108,121	108,444	108,806	109,127	109,353
Age 4-10 % change from 2004	- 9.7	- 9.7	- 9.6	- 9.4	- 9.2	- 9.0	- 8.8	- 8.8	- 8.9	- 9.1	- 9.5	- 10.1	- 10.8
Age 11-15 % change from 2004	- 14.6	- 14.6	- 14.7	- 15.2	- 16.1	- 16.5	- 16.7	- 16.7	- 16.5	- 16.3	- 16.0	- 15.7	- 15.6

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Note:

^aFigures for 2004 and 2005 are estimates based on the 2001 Population Census and so include children not at school.

Curriculum Entitlement Framework represents such a radical change from current curricular provision that it poses fundamental questions about the arrangements necessary to meet the diverse needs and interests of pupils in the 14-19 age range. The implementation of the Entitlement Framework carries significant implications for the planning of the schools' estate, for the provision of facilities in schools and the further education sector, and for collaboration among schools and between schools and the further education sector. The implementation of the revised curriculum for primary schools also has implications for the design of primary schools. Moreover, DE is currently conducting a review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. That review is due to be completed by late 2006, for implementation in late 2007, subject to the legislative timetable. Chapter 7 of this report describes the main features of the review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.

- 2.6 A programme, financed by the Children and Young People funding package, is underway to develop a network of Extended Schools throughout Northern Ireland. At the time of writing some 476 schools – nursery, primary, secondary and special schools – have become involved in the initiative, representing about one-third of schools and pupils in Northern Ireland. The concept of the Extended School suggests that in addition to their core educational purposes, schools should be used more widely for a variety of community purposes and for the provision of services complementary to education. Such developments have significant implications for the planning and design of schools and call for integrated and holistic planning of education and other services, both across departments and at local level.
- 2.7 On 25 April 2006 the then Minister for Education, Angela Smith MP, announced that policy responsibility for early years functions would transfer from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to DE, so that DE will assume the policy lead in relation to all early years provision. The new arrangement is intended to provide better co-ordination of services in this area.

A Shared Future

- 2.8 The Government's policy and strategy framework for good relations in Northern Ireland, presented in *A Shared Future* (March 2005), is another major feature of

the strategic context in which the Review addressed its terms of reference. In the realm of education, *A Shared Future* calls for:

- promoting sharing in all levels of education and encouraging integrated education – in its widest sense;
- developing opportunities for shared and inter-cultural education at all levels;
- ensuring that schools through their policies, structures and curricula consciously prepare their pupils for life in a diverse and inter-cultural world; and
- encouraging understanding of the complexity of our history.

2.9 The First Triennial Action Plan for implementing *A Shared Future* sets out commitments for DE in relation to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate. DE is committed to:

- proposals on new schools or re-organisation/rationalisation of schools demonstrating that options for collaboration/sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored;
- projects related to new schools, re-organisation or rationalisation being more likely to justify receipt of financial support if they are shared or operate across the community divide; and
- a shared model of schooling being treated as the presumed option for new housing developments which are similarly shared.

Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme

2.10 The Government's commitment to invest some £3 billion in the Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme over a period of ten years is a clear acknowledgement of the need for substantial improvements in the schools' estate. The stated goal of the capital investment programme is a "fit for purpose schools' estate, efficiently delivered and managed", where fitness of purpose is measured in terms of sufficiency, suitability and condition of accommodation. The objective

of the estate planning process is to provide a sufficiency of school places through the right mix of schools of the right size in the right locations.

- 2.11 There is widespread agreement that current planning, procurement and delivery arrangements are inadequate to achieve this objective in a cost-effective manner and on the scale required within acceptable time frames. Nor, without a radical reconfiguration of the schools' estate, is it possible to fund improvements that will provide all schools with suitable accommodation and facilities that make for a stimulating, safe and healthy learning environment. The long-term development and maintenance of the estate needs to be planned to ensure cost-effective use of public funds and to avoid placing unsustainable demands on capital and recurrent expenditure to the overall detriment of schools.
- 2.12 There is unanimous agreement that to overcome the weaknesses in the current arrangements a strategic approach to the management and development of the schools' estate needs to be adopted. Part C of this report deals specifically with this issue. Reconfiguring the schools' estate offers a real opportunity to clarify and give effect to a common vision for education and the school system, and to a strategy for working towards that vision. The challenge is to make best use of funding to ensure that communities are well served by sustainable, educationally effective and efficiently functioning schools, optimising the use of their facilities for the benefit of all through, where appropriate, agreed models of collaboration and sharing. Working and planning together in new ways for the common good will require visionary and courageous leadership, persistent commitment, innovative thinking and, perhaps most of all, skill in developing relationships, managing change, and building confidence in new ways of working.

Review of Public Administration

- 2.13 Our Review takes place against a backcloth of major reforms in public administration in Northern Ireland, the Review of Public Administration (RPA), heralding not only far-reaching changes in the administration of education but in the provision of public services more generally. The Review's analysis of the issues central to its terms of reference is set in the context of current policies, practices and administrative structures, but its recommendations are formulated in the light of emerging arrangements for education policy, strategy and administration in Northern Ireland. In formulating its recommendations and in considering their

implementation, the Review has taken account of the proposed functions of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA), including its role in the strategic planning of the schools' estate, and the role of the Department of Education (DE) focused on the development of policy and strategy, the monitoring of standards, the allocation of resources, and the maintenance of accountability. ESA will absorb all the functions of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the operational functions of DE. In addition, the functions of the funded sectoral bodies – the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) – will also be transferred to ESA.

- 2.14 This Review is an integral part of a programme of major reforms in education in Northern Ireland and is also set in a broader context of other developments, in particular *A Shared Future* and the RPA. Issues arising from the significant and long-term decrease in the demand for school places are central to the Review, as are the implications of substantial changes in curriculum provision, particularly for 14–19 year olds. Finally, the Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme is the vehicle for much needed improvements in the schools' estate to be achieved by a new strategic approach to planning.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN IRELAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

- 3.1 This chapter outlines current arrangements for the administration of education in Northern Ireland and explains the structure of the school system. It also refers to expected changes in administrative arrangements.

Administration

- 3.2 The Department of Education (DE) is responsible for the central administration of education and related services in Northern Ireland, with the exception of the Further and Higher Education sectors, which are within the remit of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). DE's primary statutory duties are to promote the education of the young people of Northern Ireland and to secure the effective implementation of education policy. Its main areas of responsibility are pre-school, primary, post-primary, and special education; the youth service; the promotion of community relations within and between schools; and teacher education.
- 3.3 DE's powers of inspection, and hence the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), are conferred by Article 102 of the 1986 Education and Libraries Order, as substituted by Article 33 of the 1996 Education Order. The Ministerial statement on the Review of Public Administration (RPA) reiterates the agreed principle that inspection and monitoring of all education and training establishments will continue to be the direct responsibility of ETI, which will be operationally independent of all providers and users for which it provides inspection services. On all education policy initiatives ETI will provide an independent professional assessment of the effectiveness of existing or proposed policy. This independence is in keeping with key government principles for inspection.
- 3.4 Responsibility for the delivery of day-to-day education services within the policy, strategy and procedures set by the Department currently lies with:
- the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), including the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards;
 - the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS);

- the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA);
- the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI);
- other grant-aided bodies, including the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); and
- schools.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs)

3.5 The ELBs are the local education and library authorities for their areas. They have a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient schools for providing primary and post-primary education to meet the needs of their area; to provide all the finance for the schools under their management; and to equip, maintain and meet the other running costs of maintained schools. They provide milk and meals, free books, and free transport for eligible pupils; enforce school attendance; provide a curriculum advisory and support service to all schools in their area; regulate the employment of children and young people, and secure the provision of youth service facilities. ELBs are also required to secure the provision of recreation services (overseen by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)), and are responsible for student support services (overseen by DEL). ELB expenditure on schools and youth is fully funded by the Department of Education, primarily through a block grant.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

3.6 CCMS is responsible for the employment of teachers in Catholic maintained schools, for promoting and co-ordinating the planning of school provision in the Catholic maintained sector and for a number of other, mainly advisory, functions.

Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

3.7 CCEA's duties are both advisory and operational. In general, it:

- advises DE and DEL on matters relating to the curriculum, examinations and assessment;

- regulates all qualifications offered in Northern Ireland, apart from NVQs; and
- conducts a range of examinations and assessments including GCSE, GCE AS and A-levels, end of key stage assessments (including the Key Stage 3 tests), and the Transfer Procedure tests (11-plus).

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

3.8 The Youth Council's responsibilities include:

- advising DE, the ELBs and other bodies on the development of the Youth Service;
- encouraging cross community activity by the Youth Service;
- encouraging the provision of facilities for the Youth Service; and
- grant aiding the administration of Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations.

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG)

3.9 NICIE and CnaG receive grants from the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education and Irish-medium education respectively.

Review of Public Administration

3.10 On 22 November 2005, the Secretary of State announced major changes to the administration of education resulting from the overall Review of Public Administration (RPA). In effect, implementation of the Review will put in place a simplified structure, with fewer organisations and with the functions of currently funded education bodies, including the operational functions of DE, being absorbed into the new proposed Education and Skills Authority (ESA). DE will be responsible for developing and implementing education policy and strategy, for monitoring standards and allocating resources, and for maintaining accountability.

System of Schools

3.11 The system of schools in Northern Ireland is sub-divided into five main sectors: Controlled Schools – including Controlled Integrated Schools – Catholic Maintained Schools, Voluntary Grammar Schools, Grant-maintained Integrated Schools and Irish-medium Schools. There is also a small number of “other” maintained schools. Controlled schools are fully funded by the ELBs. Catholic maintained schools and approved Irish-medium schools are funded by the ELBs for their running costs and by DE for capital building works. Voluntary Grammar schools and Grant-maintained Integrated schools are funded by DE for both running costs and capital building works. There is also a small number of independent schools that do not receive government funding.

- *Controlled schools* are owned and funded by the ELBs and managed through Boards of Governors. The ELBs are currently contracting authorities for capital projects in this sector and are the direct providers of maintenance and facilities management services to schools.
- *Catholic maintained schools* are owned by Trustees and managed through Boards of Governors. The running costs of the schools are funded through the ELBs and capital costs are funded directly by DE. The Trustees are normally the Bishops of Dioceses and/or their nominees, or senior members of the religious orders or congregations that have provided the school. The Trustees are currently the contracting authority for capital projects in this sector, with advice and support provided by CCMS. Maintenance and facilities management services are provided by the ELBs.
- *Voluntary Grammar schools* are owned and managed by Boards of Governors or Trustees and are funded directly by DE. The Boards of Governors or the Trustees of each school are currently the contracting authority for capital projects and services.
- *Grant-maintained Integrated schools* are owned and managed by Boards of Governors and funded directly by DE. Under current arrangements, NICIE fulfils the role of contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish the school. The role of contracting authority for capital projects and services transfers to the Board of Governors once the viability of the school is established and it qualifies for capital funding.

- *Irish-medium Schools*, in which teaching is through the medium of the Irish language, are almost all owned and managed by their Boards of Governors. The running costs of the schools are funded through the ELBs. CnaG fulfils the role of contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish a new school. The role of contracting authority for capital projects and services transfers to the school's Board of Governors when the school is recognised for capital funding.

3.12 The present structure of the schools system has evolved over a lengthy period of time and reflects long-established traditions and policy approaches. Ownership of the schools' estate has developed in a range of ways at different stages in history. At one stage ownership of most of the schools was in the hands of the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. Over a period of time (from the 1930s to the 1950s), the Protestant churches transferred almost all their schools to state control on the understanding, enshrined in an Act of Parliament, that the Christian ethos of these schools would be maintained. As a result of this, Transferors were given rights of representation on school management committees (equivalent now to Boards of Governors) and Education Authorities (now ELBs). Table 3.1 shows the number of schools by management type in 2005/06. Of the 1,264 grant-aided schools, almost half are controlled and approximately 43 per cent are in Catholic trusteeship.

3.13 In response to parental wishes, Grant-maintained Integrated schools and Irish-medium schools were established. The legislation to fund integrated schools was introduced in 1989 and the corresponding legislation for Irish-medium schools in 1998. Under different funding arrangements, the first integrated school received grant aid in 1984 and the first Irish-medium school also in 1984. DE has a legislative duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education and Irish-medium education. Although Grant-maintained Integrated schools are established with the prime purpose of ensuring a balanced representation from the two main faith traditions in Northern Ireland, the other types of school are also open to pupils whatever their religious affiliation. Legislation also exists to allow schools to transform to integrated status; a small number of schools, all controlled, have availed of this option.

Table 3.1: Number of Schools by School Type and Management Type, 2005/06

School Type	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Irish-medium ^a (IM)	Other Maintained (non-IM)	Integrated ^b	Voluntary	Non-grant aided	Total
Nursery	67	33	0	0	0	0	0	100
Primary ^c	416	410	18	5	37	0	0	886
Post-primary	83	75	1	0	19	52	0	230
Special	42	2	0	1	0	0	0	45
Independent	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	19
Hospital ^d	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	611	520	19	6	56	52	19	1,283

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aIncludes one Irish-medium controlled school (53 pupils) and one Irish-medium Catholic maintained school (147 pupils).

^bIntegrated includes controlled integrated and Grant-maintained Integrated schools.

^cDoes not include 17 grammar school preparatory departments.

^dEducation and Library Boards have a statutory obligation to provide education for children in hospitals.

3.14 The diversity of school type, the selective system of education, the existence of single sex schools, and the substantially rural nature of Northern Ireland primarily explain both the relatively large number of schools that exist and the sizeable proportion of small schools. The continuing decrease in the school population is fuelling a decline in enrolment in many schools. Table 3.2 shows the number and percentage of primary and post-primary schools in various enrolment bands.

3.15 More than one-third of primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 90 pupils. Approximately one-sixth of post-primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 300 pupils and nearly two-fifths have an enrolment of fewer than 500 pupils. This large number of small schools comes at a significant educational cost to some pupils in terms of reduced educational opportunity. Furthermore, the number and size of schools are highly significant determinants of the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the education system. The substantial demographic downturn exacerbates the inefficiency. The diversity of school types,

coupled with the relatively high proportion of small schools, inevitably results in a less than optimum use of the finance made available for education. Although the range of provision is explained, and indeed justified, by the principle of parental choice, the manifest inefficiencies in the system need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Table 3.2: Number and Percentage of Schools by Size, 2005/06

Number of Pupils	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools (%)	Number of Pupils	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools (%)
Primary^{a,b}			Post-primary		
< 30	36	4.0	< 200	18	7.8
30 - 59	127	14.1	200 - 299	18	7.8
60 - 89	145	16.1	300 - 399	24	10.4
90 - 119	104	11.5	400 - 499	25	10.9
120 - 149	84	9.3	500 - 599	24	10.4
150 - 179	70	7.8	600 - 699	19	8.3
180 - 209	67	7.4	700 - 799	29	12.6
210 - 299	104	11.5	800 - 899	20	8.7
300 - 399	88	9.7	900 - 999	16	7.0
400 - 499	39	4.3	1000 - 1499	33	14.3
500 - 599	26	2.9	> 1499	4	1.7
> 599	13	1.4			
Total	903	100.0		230	100.0

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aIncludes preparatory departments in grammar schools.

^bExcludes nursery and reception pupils.

3.16 The legislative basis for parental choice is provided in Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which states that the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. DE, in its strategic plan, undertakes to ensure equality of access to education and youth service provision, to facilitate parental choice as far as possible, and to promote respect for, and the value of, diversity, equality and human rights.

- 3.17 Following from this general principle, Part III of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 provides the legislative basis for the Department of Education's open enrolment policy. Submissions to the Review expressed concerns about this policy, particularly in the context of a selective system of secondary education. Under the policy of open enrolments, parents have a right to express a preference for the school to which they wish their child to be admitted, and schools must comply where they have places available up to their approved admissions and enrolment numbers; hence the realisation of parental preference is not unconstrained as it is restricted in practice by the physical capacity of schools.
- 3.18 Current arrangements under the Department's transport policy provide for free transport to pupils who have been unable to gain a place in all suitable schools within statutory walking distance of their home (two miles for primary and three miles for secondary age pupils). For the purpose of the transport arrangements, the term "suitable school" relates solely to controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish-medium, and in the grammar sector, denominational and non-denominational schools. Currently, pupils who qualify for free transport are granted transport assistance to any school of their choosing (within the relevant category) regardless of the distance involved. This can result in many pupils travelling excessive distances and by-passing nearer "suitable" schools – as defined above – with a consequent additional expenditure by the ELBs. The cost of providing the transport service is expected to rise to around £68 million in 2006/07. The Department of Education is conducting a review of home-to-school transport.
- 3.19 Although tempered by an obligation to avoid unreasonable public expenditure, the legislative position on parental choice is reflected in international and European instruments on the human rights of parents in relation to the education of their children, particularly with regard to their religious and philosophical convictions. Basically, the state has a duty to respect the right of parents to choose education and teaching, including religious and moral education, in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions, and which meet minimum educational standards laid down by the state. The diversity that originates from a primarily faith-based system of schools and a selective system of secondary education, augmented by the more recently extended range of choice to integrated schools and Irish-medium schools, may be viewed as a reasonable response to meeting the wishes of parents in relation to choice in education. The

acceptance, indeed the promotion, of choice in state-funded educational provision is a characteristic of current education reforms in England, and in some other countries, not only on philosophical or religious grounds, but as a strategy for improving the quality of education for all pupils through developing a system of thriving successful schools. Ultimately, parents want what they consider to be a good education for their children, and their school preferences are influenced by a variety of factors.

- 3.20 This chapter has outlined the current arrangement for the administration of education in Northern Ireland, arrangements that will be replaced by new structures arising from the RPA, as indicated in Chapter 2. The chapter has also described the main features of the system of schools and traces the development of the diverse multi-sector provision now in place. It has explored the principle of parental choice and explained the policy of open enrolment, indicating that submissions to the Review had raised concerns about the consequences of this policy, including aspects of the transport policy.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

- 4.1 This chapter is of particular importance in the context of the Review's terms of reference. It would not be meaningful to examine issues concerning funding and the provision of schools without considering the fundamental question "what are schools for?". Drawing on submissions to the Review and on material from other sources, this chapter establishes a framework of purposes and principles for which there appears to be broad support. The chapter also draws out the vital importance of good schools at the heart of educational provision and examines in general terms how the education service and schools could play a significant role in developing good community relations in Northern Ireland.

Purposes and Principles

- 4.2 A review of the funding of the education system generally and of the planning and organisation of the schools' estate in particular must give prior consideration to the fundamental purposes and principles that give direction and coherence to the education provided for learners. This view was strongly emphasised in a number of submissions that stressed the need for, and importance of, a shared vision for education in Northern Ireland founded on an agreed understanding of the purposes of education in schools. Purposes and principles reflect values and choices. It is reassuring, therefore, that submissions made to the Review, together with material from other sources, reflect a large measure of agreement on such fundamental matters, central to which is the paramount importance of the pupil as learner and as a unique human being living in community with others.
- 4.3 The aims of education in schools proposed in the consultation paper were widely endorsed. It was proposed that, in broad terms, the education system should:
- provide all pupils with high quality educational opportunities and experiences in terms of curriculum, learning and teaching, through which pupils achieve high standards in terms of their attainment, personal growth and social development, and achieve their potential; and
 - be vital to social and community well-being, contributing effectively and appropriately to broader social and economic goals and processes.

4.4 These aims are consistent with the strategic aims set out in the Department of Education's strategic plan, particularly the following that pertain to fulfilling potential:

- to provide flexible learning opportunities that meet the varying needs and abilities of all young people;
- to raise educational attainment for all young people;
- to foster the personal development of young people, including an understanding of their rights and responsibilities within society; and
- to foster creativity and provide young people with the knowledge and skills for life, employment and further learning.

4.5 The Costello Report (*Future Post-Primary Arrangements in Northern Ireland*) sets out seven guiding principles, the first four being pupil-centred and the others relating to the education service.

- *Equality*: Each young person should be highly and equally valued.
- *Quality*: Each young person should enjoy education of the highest quality in all aspects of teaching, learning and wider educational provision.
- *Relevance*: Each young person should be equipped with the values and skills needed to lead a fulfilling life and contribute positively to a changing society and economy.
- *Access*: Each young person should have effective access, with appropriate support, to education that allows them to fulfil their potential and that fosters lifelong learning.
- *Choice*: The education service should be flexible and provide a range of choices with information and advice so that all young people and their parents may make informed decisions relating to their educational development.
- *Respect*: The education service should promote tolerance and reconciliation through an understanding of, and respect for, diversity.

- *Partnership:* The education service should foster effective partnerships among pupils, parents, teachers, education bodies and the wider community based on trust, openness, transparency and mutual support.

4.6 The views expressed in consultation reflect and build upon the aims and principles set out above, and the Review considers it important to reflect those views in this report. The paragraphs that follow endeavour to encapsulate the thinking presented to the Review on the nature and purpose of education and the underlying principles and values, explicit and implicit. The source of, motivation for, and the practical expression of what are shared core values and principles are influenced or determined by specific educational philosophies, whether based on religious and faith-based perspectives or other viewpoints. These perspectives make for a certain distinctiveness in the educational experience and should be manifest in the ethos of the schools, but with scope for each school to develop and maintain its own particular character.

4.7 Education, in all its phases and aspects, has vital social and economic purposes in the service of the common good. Education is concerned with all aspects of life and as a path to self-realisation and personal fulfilment, civic well-being, and economic prosperity. A commitment to, and appropriate investment for, excellence in education, in all phases, is an essential investment in Northern Ireland as an economic entity and, as importantly, a stable society respectful of diversity and individual needs. Education, in its fullest sense, embraces both the formal and informal and is the responsibility not just of professionals but of students, parents and society as a whole. There should be a coherent system of provision that ensures access to the highest quality of educational opportunities for all young people; meets the increasing demands of society while remaining in the service of the individual; acknowledges his or her dignity; and promotes a rounded human development whereby pupils' multiple intelligences, including their emotional, moral, ethical and spiritual development can be promoted. As the submission from the Transferors' Representative Council (TRC) put it "we would reject a utilitarian view of education in favour of a holistic vision which encompasses a spiritual purpose".

4.8 Education, in developing social and human capital, should facilitate personal development and empowerment and contribute to communal well-being and social cohesion. Education policy should seek to address the debilitating effects

of social, cultural and economic deprivation, and education as a moral enterprise should embody a commitment to social justice. Education structures, therefore, should not, in practice, facilitate greater social gaps.

4.9 The submission from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) describes four "essential pillars of learning" as serving the personal, social and economic functions of education":

- *Learning to Know:* in recognition that knowledge is the basis of future development and is growing at an exponential rate.
- *Learning to Do:* concerned with applying knowledge in a creative and productive way.
- *Learning to Be:* focusing on the area of personal understanding and development, and the need to recognise the notion of personal worth and personal responsibility.
- *Learning to Live Together:* particularly apposite to society in Northern Ireland and for relationships in a pluralist and diverse world.

4.10 The relationship between school and community was a recurring theme in the responses to the Review. The general view was that the education system and individual schools should acknowledge and strengthen the primary role of parents, families and society in the education of young people. Good schools both benefit from, and contribute to, social cohesion through their relationship with healthy communities, which in turn play a major role in educating young people and make a real contribution to education and to social stability. Good schools contribute to the development of identity, confidence and reconciliation as key elements in building a healthy and thriving society, where all individuals, families and groups can live and celebrate their unique contribution to a diverse and genuinely pluralist society. The corollary is that rationalisation of schools cannot be based on economic considerations alone and need to take serious account of the importance of active community building. To quote from the response by the Catholic Bishops: "once social capital has been spent or destroyed, it is very difficult to replenish; fragmented communities exact a huge price on those who live there and on the public purse. Schools with clear identity and which serve specific communities have made a huge contribution to holding communities

together and enabling young people to develop confidence and hope for the future.”

Importance of Good Schools

4.11 Equality of opportunity should underpin any decision on educational policy; it should include the right of every young person to have access to high quality education and training in a good school (or college of education or training organisation), with the flexibility to experience learning and training in more than one institution, if that is appropriate. Ultimately, a good education depends on good educational institutions. Recommendations within the three main themes of this Review – funding, strategic planning of the schools’ estate, and integrating education and improving collaboration – are of great significance for developing a system of successful and viable schools as the foundation for a good education.

4.12 The argument for cost-effective and cost-efficient infrastructure and arrangements rests on the premise that the maximum proportion of expenditure should be directed towards those things that determine high quality and standards. At school level, it is widely recognised that the quality of learning and the standards achieved by pupils are dependent on such key factors as:

- the suitability of the curriculum to meet pupils’ needs;
- the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and governance in schools (sufficient well qualified, effectively deployed, high performing and motivated teachers and support staff);
- the quality of the learning environment, including the suitability and condition of the accommodation, facilities and resources for teaching and learning, and an attractive, safe and well-maintained environment;
- the quality and effectiveness of support services; and
- the confidence and support of parents and the wider community.

As well as reflecting the key indicators on standards, pedagogy, curriculum, pastoral care, and effective partnerships, a good school or learning organisation will also ensure that the resources and facilities it provides, and its structures and

management arrangements, are suited to the age, maturity and range of learning styles of its learners.

- 4.13 In view of the vital importance of good schools (where appropriate, in partnership with colleges of further education) to a good education, a coherent strategy for quality assurance and improvement should be a vital element in ensuring that all pupils have access to a good school that meets their needs. Within a culture of self-evaluation leading to self-improvement, external evaluation through inspection should have a key role in assuring government and parents of the quality of learning and teaching and the standards achieved. The availability of appropriate performance data should be integral to monitoring and evaluating standards. Such data facilitate self-evaluation at school level and enable managing authorities to exercise a challenge function. High quality support arrangements for schools whose performance is not up to standard should be part of an improvement strategy that aims to bring all to the level of the best.
- 4.14 A good school is distinguished by the high quality of teaching, leadership and management and the calibre of other professional and support staff. A comprehensive and coherent educational improvement strategy needs to give priority to issues concerning the supply, recruitment and deployment of suitably qualified and trained teachers and headteachers and to their continuing staff development. There also needs to be a review of the school workforce and particularly of whether there are aspects of a teacher's current workload that could be undertaken by appropriately skilled and qualified support staff. In the context of collaborative approaches to 14-19 provision between schools and colleges of further education, the desirability of a common set of standards for qualified teacher status across 14-19 provision should be explored.

Education and Good Community Relations

- 4.15 This chapter has already referred to vital purposes of education in relation to the personal and social development of pupils – including an understanding of their rights and responsibilities – to civic well-being and social cohesion, and to learning to live together in a pluralist and diverse world. These goals, and commitment to realising them, assume a particular significance at this point in the development of Northern Ireland society, often described as a divided society emerging from a long period of conflict, a people divided on many counts and now

moving along the path of reconciliation towards, to quote *A Shared Future*, "a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust". There are acknowledged differences of opinion as to a causal link between the nature of the school system and the state of community relations in Northern Ireland. Submissions made to the Review, however, highlighted the stabilising role of schools, many of which were in severely challenging circumstances, and their contribution to social cohesion, throughout the period of conflict.

- 4.16 Looking to the future, and in line with *A Shared Future*, the education service in general and schools in particular are faced with the challenge of contributing to the building of a better future, an aspiration universally endorsed in the submissions made to the Review. Within the terms of reference of the Review, Chapter 11 explores in some detail a rationale for integrating education and improving sharing and collaboration based on three key and interrelated factors: the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money.
- 4.17 Northern Ireland is a changing society, where communities are working together to move forward and deal with the past constructively. People have also put to us that although much work needs to be done in the area of reconciliation, it would be unfortunate if the only division to be addressed by the Review were to be that based on perceived religious affiliation. Issues of social and economic disadvantage also need to be addressed. Moreover, the arrival of new citizens from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds to our communities and schools is a significant part of the changing landscape. As a society, we need to consider how to include and celebrate the diversity of cultures that will increasingly characterise our society.
- 4.18 The important message of this chapter is that a consideration of quality and purpose in education, and of the underlying principles, is an essential prelude to examining issues of funding and the planning of the schools' estate. The chapter

has highlighted the vital importance of good schools at the heart of educational provision and identified indicators of quality. It has also signified, in general terms, how the education service and schools could play a significant role in developing good community relations in Northern Ireland, a theme to be developed in Chapter 11.