

## PART D

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# Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration



## CHAPTER 11: PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

- 11.1 This chapter deals with integrated education and Irish-medium (IM) education, the two forms of education that the Department of Education (DE) has a legislative duty to encourage and facilitate. It traces the origins of integrated education, sets out the main features of integrated schools, and comments on the numerical strength of the integrated sector. Likewise, it describes the development of IM education, explains significant aspects of the provision for education through Irish, sets out the current level and forms of provision, and identifies the need for DE to develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for IM education. Finally it distinguishes between integrated education and integrated schools, and advocates a more pervasive and inclusive approach, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, in which sharing and collaboration are key features.

### Integrated Education

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#### Background

- 11.2 To a greater or lesser extent the education system in Northern Ireland is linked historically to identity in many forms – religious, sporting, cultural and political – and to sense of nationality. Different schools and different types of school have played a role in supporting the specific identity of parts of society in Northern Ireland. There is a body of opinion that links the largely dual structure of the school system – Catholic schools, and controlled schools with their roots in the Protestant tradition – to societal division. This viewpoint perceives the current schools structure to be an obstacle to the development of reconciliation and the building of social cohesion. Others argue that the way forward to a better and shared future in Northern Ireland's pluralist society is to build relationships through acknowledging and celebrating diversity and bringing differences together for mutual benefit in a climate of openness, tolerance, trust and respect. Thus association between school and personal and community identity may be interpreted as a positive or negative influence on society, depending on the perspective held.

## Origins of Integrated Education

- 11.3 Debate about educating together children from the two main religious traditions in Northern Ireland has punctuated the evolution of its system of schools, a process with a long and complex history. The term "integrated education" is a relatively recent addition to the language of education in Northern Ireland. The origin of integrated schools may be traced to a campaign in the early 1970s by a relatively small group of parents, under the motto "All Children Together " (ACT), to explore the idea of sharing their children's education with other families of differing religious affiliations and cultural traditions in the form of a new type of school, the "integrated school". Since then, integrated education in Northern Ireland has been synonymous with educating Catholic and Protestant children in integrated schools.
- 11.4 In 1978 an Act was passed to facilitate the establishment in Northern Ireland of "Shared Schools", that is schools likely to be attended by pupils of differing religious affiliations or cultural traditions. But no school invoked this legislation to transform to Shared School status. In 1981 ACT was instrumental in establishing, as an independent school, the first planned integrated school. This school received funding as a voluntary maintained school in 1984.

## Legislation

- 11.5 The Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 established a new management type, Grant-maintained Integrated (GMI) schools. This legislation gave DE powers to provide recurrent and capital funding for GMI schools, provided certain conditions were met. The Order also placed a statutory duty on DE to encourage and facilitate integrated education, defined as "education together at a school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils". Under the 1989 Order, DE was also given powers to fund a body that had as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education. As a consequence, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) has received funding from 1991.
- 11.6 The 1989 Order also incorporated transformation legislation, transformation being defined as the acquisition of Grant-maintained Integrated status or controlled integrated status by an existing school. The motive for transformation should be

a desire on the part of the school to provide an integrated school in an area. To encourage transformation, a policy document, *A Framework for Transformation*, was published by DE in February 1997. The policy requires schools wishing to transform to demonstrate reasonable prospects of achieving, over the longer term, a minimum of 30 per cent of their enrolment drawn from the relevant minority tradition. No pre-existing level of integration is necessary; but to ensure that transformation is well grounded from the outset, schools must attract at least 10 per cent of their first-year intake from whichever is the minority community (Catholic or Protestant) before final approval is granted. Changes to the composition of the Board of Governors are also necessary. The policy provides for reviews after five and ten years. DE provides transforming schools with some recurrent financial assistance to support the process. The option of transformation to integrated status has to be fully explored by the integrated sector before a new, Grant-maintained Integrated school would be considered for approval by DE.

## Integrated Schools

- 11.7 NICIE articulate a rationale for integrated schools based on a belief that children as future adults in a plural and divided society should be educated in a context where they will come to know, understand, respect and appreciate those who differ from them – in creed, culture, race, class, gender and ability – and to recognise what they hold in common as well as what divides them. NICIE defines Integrated Education in the Northern Ireland context as:

*Education together in school of pupils drawn in approximately equal numbers from the two major traditions with the aim of providing for them an effective education that gives equal recognition to and promotes equal expression of the two major traditions. The integrated school is essentially Christian in character, democratic and open in procedures, and promotes the worth and self-esteem of all individuals within the school community. The school as an institution seeks to develop mutual respect and consideration of other institutions within the educational community. Its core aim is to provide the child with a caring self-fulfilling educational experience which will enable him or her to become a fulfilled and caring adult.*

11.8 NICIE sets out a number of underpinning principles and values for integrated schools. The main tenets are summarised as follows.

General considerations:

- Children attending integrated schools should be nurtured in their parents' religious, cultural and national traditions and identity, while respecting the identity and appreciating the traditions of others.
- The integrated school should be open in its relationships with schools of other management types and with the local community.
- The Catholic and Protestant communities within the schools should be accorded equal respect and standing.
- Commitments to equality should be fostered both structurally (ideally with the Catholic and Protestant traditions having at least 40 per cent of representation on Board of Governors, staff and pupil groups), and culturally through the curriculum of the school.
- Integrated schools should promote the learning of shared culture, beliefs and traditions, while nurturing within each pupil what is specific to his or her own tradition.
- Integrated schools should seek to secure and sustain deep parental participation in the life and work of the school – particularly in its government, in the formulation of its policy, in the creation of a working partnership with the teaching staff, and in the promotion of good relations with the local community.

With regard to religion:

- Children should learn together as much as can reasonably be expected.
- Where the school population includes significant numbers of children of a particular faith, separate provision should be made to accommodate parental wishes for specific religious instruction in aspects of that faith.

- The school should encourage ministers of religious communities to visit the school, take a pastoral interest in the children and get to know the parents and teachers.
- The worship dimension of the school should ensure equal prominence for the two major traditions and fair representation of other groups of significant size within the school community.

The curriculum should:

- reflect the all-ability character and integrative purpose of the school itself;
- make provision for a history syllabus that reflects the historical roots of the two major communities within Northern Ireland so as to illuminate both their separate and shared history;
- reflect the culture of both major traditions in music and dancing; and
- provide for the Irish language and Irish games (optional).

11.9 Over a period of more than twenty-five years, 37 GMI schools have been established and, since transformation legislation was introduced in 1989, 19 controlled integrated schools. The breakdown by primary and secondary type is shown in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1: Number of Integrated Schools, 2005/06

Sector	Primary	Secondary	Total
Grant-maintained Integrated	22	15	37
Controlled Integrated	15	4	19
Total	37	19	56

Source: DE.

11.10 In 2005/06 there were 17,558 pupils attending integrated schools, just over 5 per cent of the number of pupils in grant-aided schools. There were 393 pupils in nursery classes, 6652 in primary schools, and 10,513 in secondary schools.

- 11.11 The enrolments in the GMI primary schools that have reached the stage where they have Year 7 pupils enrolled are well above the thresholds recommended by the Review for assessing the viability of a primary school. Seven of the 15 controlled integrated primary schools have an enrolment of more than 105 pupils, but five have fewer than 60 pupils. Over the five-year period 2001/02 to 2005/06 almost all GMI primary schools have retained or increased their enrolments, some substantially. Over the same period, enrolments increased in about half of the controlled integrated primary schools and decreased in the others.
- 11.12 Of the 15 Grant-maintained Integrated secondary schools, 13 admit pupils from Years 8 to 14. The other two schools have not yet reached the stage where they have Year 12 pupils enrolled. Five of the 13 schools have Year 8-12 enrolments of more than 500 pupils, the threshold recommended by the Review for reviewing the viability of a post-primary school. All the 13 schools have pupils in Years 13 and 14; in 5 of the schools the sixth-form enrolment is more than 100 pupils, the minimum for a sixth form recommended by the Review. The enrolments of the 4 controlled integrated secondary schools are: 865 (sixth form of 75 pupils), 474 (sixth form of 30 pupils), 421 and 294.
- 11.13 Seventeen integrated secondary schools have opened since, or before, 2001/02. Over the five-year period 2001/02 to 2005/06, twelve of the schools have increased their enrolments for the Years 8 to 12 stage (ranging from 1 to 21 per cent) and in the other five schools enrolments for the Years 8 to 12 stage have decreased (ranging from 2 to 18 per cent).
- 11.14 DE sets thresholds for integrated schools to ensure a balanced representation of pupils from the two main faith traditions. For GMI schools, the threshold at opening is 30 per cent of pupils from the minority community, this figure to be maintained in the long term. For controlled integrated schools the threshold is 10 per cent of the first-year intake following transformation, building to 30 per cent in the longer term. Based on school census data, GMI schools achieve a generally reasonable balance between children from the two main faith traditions in Northern Ireland. In the controlled integrated schools, particularly in the secondary sector, the proportions of Catholic and Protestant pupils range more widely, with the proportion of the minority community falling below 10 per cent in a few instances. In interpreting the census data, differences, often substantial,

in the proportions of Catholics and Protestants in communities across Northern Ireland need to be borne in mind. Equally important is that pupils may belong to other Christian faiths, or non-Christian faiths, and some may have no religious affiliation or be of unknown religious affiliation.

## Schools in Other Sectors

- 11.15 Integrated schools are not the only schools that draw their pupils from across the community. Indeed, all grant-aided schools must be open to all pupils, whatever their religious affiliation. Non-denominational grammar schools, controlled secondary schools and controlled primary schools enrol pupils from the Catholic community, in significant numbers in some instances. A few Catholic managed schools have significant representation from the Protestant community, while other Catholic schools have small numbers of Protestant children. The community profile of the enrolments of these schools has evolved over time, presumably reflecting parental confidence in the schools.

## Curriculum and Community Relations

- 11.16 The 1989 Order was not confined to school structures. The Order also introduced the Northern Ireland curriculum, which included the educational themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH), with four fundamental objectives: fostering respect for self and others and building relationships, understanding conflict, appreciating interdependence, and cultural understanding. Prior to that, in 1987, DE had introduced a voluntary inter-school Cross Community Contact Scheme (CCCS) with funds to support planned and long-term contact programmes between controlled and maintained schools. A good number of schools participated, although the numbers of pupils involved varied considerably from place to place. The introduction of the educational themes signalled a belief that the content of the curriculum, and the related teaching and learning, should contribute to the development of values, attitudes, understanding and knowledge conducive to learning to live with difference in a spirit of acceptance, fairness and mutual respect in a climate of tolerance and peace. The revised Northern Ireland curriculum also reflects the potential of the curriculum in educating young people for life in a democratic society. The area of Learning for Life and Work includes Local and Global Citizenship, focusing on four

key concepts that seem to be particularly apt to a Northern Ireland society embarking on the journey of building a shared future: diversity and inclusion, human rights and social responsibility, equality and social justice, and democracy and active participation.

## Irish-medium Education

- 11.17 Under the Education (NI) Order 1998, DE has a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), the Council for Irish-medium education funded by DE, was established in the year 2000 to promote, facilitate and encourage IM education and schools in Northern Ireland, and to do this in a planned, educationally efficient, and cost-effective way.

### Forms of Provision

- 11.18 IM education is provided in IM schools and in IM units accommodated in English-medium schools. The number of grant-aided IM primary schools increased from two in 1992/93 to eighteen in 2005/06 and, over this period, the number of pupils increased from 484 to 1849. There are also four independent IM primary schools. Nine of the grant-aided schools have enrolments of more than 105 pupils, and their average enrolment is 167 pupils. The enrolments of the other schools range from 18 to 82 pupils; the number of years for which these schools have been grant-aided ranges from 1 to 5 years, and the number of years since the schools were established ranges from 2 to 10 years. In the period 1998/99 to 2005/06, the number of IM units in primary schools increased from two to ten, and the number of pupils increased from 53 to 516. In the five units that have reached the stage where they have Year 7 pupils enrolled, the enrolment ranges from 38 to 110 and the average enrolment is 66. In the post-primary sector, there is one IM school and two IM streams in English-medium schools, with 2005/06 enrolments of 470, 64 and 36 respectively.

### Irish-medium Education Sector Perspective

- 11.19 For CnaG, the strategic planning objective in relation to IM education is to meet the needs of IM education, while making optimum use of resources. In their

submission to the Review, the Comhairle specifies three fundamental needs of IM education:

- The socio-linguistic environment for pupils and staff must be successfully created, preserved and developed, both formally and informally, to allow for successful language acquisition.
- Those charged with managing the IM provision must recognise the purpose of IM education, which is (i) to facilitate the pupils' acquisition of Irish; and (ii) to facilitate the development of a bilingual community.
- IM education needs to have an organic link with its local community in order to facilitate the development of the community as a bilingual community.

In CnaG's view, DE's policy on IM education should be founded on an understanding and recognition that there is a dual language education system in Northern Ireland. The Comhairle also expressed its dissatisfaction with the current definition of an Irish-speaking school as set out in Part II of the Education Order (Northern Ireland) 2006. The essence of this definition is that a school is an Irish-speaking school if more than one half of the teaching of (a) religious education and (b) the minimum content of the areas of learning other than that called Language and Literacy, is conducted (wholly or partly) in Irish, and "school" includes part of a school.

- 11.20 CnaG emphasises that their approach to Irish language development, the immersion method, places a premium on a discrete linguistic environment as the appropriate sociolinguistic context for both pupils and staff. The stated aim is to facilitate the linguistic ability of the child in Irish and English through a process known as additive bilingualism. Consequently, the Comhairle expressed a strong preference for the provision of IM education in linguistically separate settings. In respect of IM primary provision, the Comhairle suggests several models – free-standing IM schools, multi-campus schools with a campus devoted to IM education, shared campus schools, a confederation of two or more schools, a shared campus model, and a satellite system in which IM satellite schools are supported by an established IM "mother" school. All of these models are aimed at strengthening the linguistic identity of IM schools, but in a way in which the

pupils learning through the medium of Irish are kept entirely separate from the other pupils for all their school day. The models would also entail management and governance arrangements sensitive to and supportive of the distinctive identity of IM schools. The Comhairle also supports the development of transformation legislation that would enable the status of a primary school to be changed from English-medium to Irish-medium. At the post-primary level, the Comhairle favours a satellite system, centred on Coláiste Feirste, or a shared campus between English-medium and Irish-medium schools. Because of its particular philosophical approach to language acquisition, the Comhairle expressed its strong reservations about the suitability of IM units accommodated in English-medium schools.

## Planning

- 11.21 In considering the provision for IM education in the context of planning the schools' estate, the Review does so in the light of its recommendations on sustainable schools and the principles set out Chapter 9 of this report, emphasising: the quality of education; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; educational and financial viability of schools; optimum use of facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing; and good value in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure. This means recognising that IM schools are first and foremost educational institutions and that the role of IM schools in the context of language revival, while important, must be seen as secondary. Like other schools, the top priority for IM schools must be to provide a first-class education for their pupils. Consequently, the nature and structuring of the accommodation and facilities for IM education must, first and foremost, support high quality teaching and learning.
- 11.22 The accommodation needs of the IM sector should be met within the area-based approach to planning advocated by the Review in accordance with the principles summarised in the previous paragraph. As proposed by CnaG, and endorsed by the Review, options should be considered for reassigning and, where necessary, modernising accommodation that becomes available through rationalisation and re-organisation. The potential of transformation of school status, referred to in Paragraph 11.21, should also be considered. Consistent with the objective of making good use of existing accommodation, the Review considers that the

planning for the IM sector should also make more use of vacant and surplus accommodation in existing school premises, refurbishing and modifying it as necessary. Options such as the multi-campus or shared-campus arrangements – proposed by CnaG – where justified by demand, appear to be potentially practicable at the primary school stage. The untested satellite system appears to pose substantial difficulties and uncertainties in relation to providing curriculum breadth, ensuring a high quality of learning, management requirements, and logistics. The post-primary IM education phase faces intrinsic difficulties, not just in terms of enrolments, but also in relation to the recruitment and deployment of specialist teachers and in meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The weaknesses and disadvantages, inherent in the provision and operation of small schools – expressed in Chapter 7 – would apply equally to the IM sector. The Review, while acknowledging CnaG's views about IM units in English-medium schools, sees a definite role for such units in the spectrum of IM provision, based on educational, social and professional grounds, and on value-for-money considerations. As can be seen from subsequent paragraphs, the Review, in urging a more inclusive approach to integration in education, involving greater sharing and collaboration, believes that this should permeate the entire school system, with all schools and all sectors playing their part and making their distinctive contribution.

## Issues

- 11.23 It is eight years since DE was charged with a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education. Since that time there has been significant growth in the number of pupils educated through the medium of Irish. There appears, however, to be a lack of consensus about aspects of the educational process in IM education and about the most appropriate environment: educationally, linguistically, socially and physically. There is a need for further debate to inform a rationale for an agreed model of immersion education, in keeping with international best practice. In view of the pattern of growth in the sector, the issues that need to be considered, and a radically changing planning context for education, the Review recommends that DE should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for IM education.

## More Inclusive Approach to Integration

- 11.24 *A Shared Future* sets the goal of "a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust", and it makes clear that education has a key role to play in achieving this goal. This role was clearly articulated in the report *Towards A Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education (TACOTIE)* (1998), endorsed by *A Shared Future*, which stated as a key principle that "it is a seminal purpose of the Northern Ireland Education Service to promote a culture of tolerance and reconciliation, and for schools to do so in keeping with the particular ethos and circumstances within which they operate. These different approaches should be valued and all schools should be encouraged to provide further opportunities to promote a culture of tolerance."
- 11.25 The evidence submitted to the Review provides overwhelming support for this purpose of education, and acknowledges the potential of all schools to make their contribution. Building relationships through acknowledging and celebrating identity and diversity and bringing differences together for mutual benefit is a vital part of the process. Education, therefore, has an integrative function in society, through its capacity to help young people to develop values, attitudes, understanding and behaviours that are conducive to working towards the goal of *A Shared Future*. The future depends on motivated young people, proud to belong to our society, keen to develop their talents, and keen to contribute to the public good.
- 11.26 The previous paragraphs have focused on widely shared objectives for a better society in Northern Ireland and on the contributory role of the education system. What of processes and structures? Structures and processes are not ends in themselves but must be assessed in terms of the degree to which they enable good educational experiences and outcomes for pupils and, by extension, for the well being of community and society. Integrated schools, based on a clear rationale and sense of purpose, represent a highly significant and distinctive approach to integrated education, but only a small minority of the school population attend them. The goal of *A Shared Future*, and a commitment by all school sectors, and by each school, to play their part in working towards that goal, suggest a more pervasive and inclusive strategy, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system. The demographic downturn, the urgent need

to develop the schools' estate and to align it with the projected demand for school places through a system of viable schools, and, finally, the requirements of the curriculum, particularly at the 14-19 stage, provide a new context and a purposeful focus for schools to work in an integrated way by sharing and collaborating in the interests of their pupils.

- 11.27 Few would dispute that schools are lacking if they do not deliberately educate their pupils to be enlightened, critically thinking and well-balanced individuals, prepared for the responsibilities and obligations of life in a civilised and democratic society. Good schools are inclusive in nature – that is to say, they welcome all potential learners, and in a way that makes deliberate and well planned efforts to lead learners to be positively disposed to the inclusion of others in their social interactions. The good school, as an inclusive, civilised and tolerant learning community, gives witness to, and promotes, those values, attitudes, understandings and behaviours fundamental to the development of a healthy society. All young people should experience the best of what we currently have: communities of learning, based on respect and tolerance for one another.
- 11.28 Good schools are not isolationist and inward looking but reach out to other schools in mutually beneficial relationships. The quality of those relationships, and their success in developing mutual understanding, respect, trust and tolerance, may be judged on the extent to which they involve significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning, both by pupils and teachers, supported by governors and parents. Children should grow up to feel comfortable in their own uniqueness, and comfortable with difference. For that to happen they need to be able to work together, and "play" together, so that eventually they can assume a shared responsibility for their future. If education can both symbolise, as well as facilitate and make real, through its very structures and the quality of provision the message that learners' interests come first, that distinctiveness and diversity are valued and respected, that productive links with other learners and other providers are desirable, indeed natural, then the prospect of progress towards sharing the future will surely be bright.
- 11.29 The rationale for integrating education and improving collaboration and sharing is not confined to the role of education in promoting better community relations. The argument is more broadly based, resting on three fundamental and inter-related 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. The Review's thinking on the planning and organisation of the schools' estate, therefore, is focused on a cost-effective schools system with appropriate arrangements for sharing and collaboration that enhance the quality, range and coherence of educational experience in the broadest sense, to ensure that all learners have sufficient peer and social interaction to enable them to develop as rounded individuals, self-aware, accommodating of others and their beliefs, and confident in themselves as shapers and sharers of the future within and beyond their own community.

- 11.30 Submissions to the Review demonstrated strong commitment to the concept of integrating education and to sharing and collaboration: while celebrating and reinforcing what is strong, more needs to be done to provide a more integrated and effective education system. There was an appreciation that this process is a journey, in places a sensitive one, but one that all should embark on, and that must, of necessity, begin from where we are, sharing from the strength of distinctiveness and the richness of tradition and diversity. In this chapter the Review has attempted to set out a clear sense of purpose and direction. The journey will require enlightened and sensitive leadership at all levels and an appreciation not only of what is desirable, but what is possible, in particular communities in terms of the scope and pace of sharing and collaboration.
- 11.31 With the publication of *A Shared Future*, and the existing political climate, there is a new opportunity to re-examine the approaches that might be used to promote integration in the education service. The thinking developed in this chapter requires that, within the current legislation that obliges DE to facilitate and encourage integrated education, DE should make clear that, in discharging this duty, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging an inclusive strategy with a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools. Moreover, in undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, there should be a duty on ESA to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools. The Review sees merit in a forum to facilitate discussion about integration, to consider possibilities, to promote trust, mutual understanding and co-operation, and to

review structural, organisational and legislative impediments to creating a climate conducive to integrating education in meaningful ways.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

11.32 This chapter has traced the origins of integrated education, set out the main features of integrated schools, and commented on the numerical strength of the integrated sector. Similarly, it has described the development of Irish-medium education, explained significant aspects of the provision for education through Irish, set out the current level and forms of provision, and identified policy issues. It has distinguished between integrated education and integrated schools, and advocated a more pervasive and inclusive approach focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, with sharing and collaboration as key features in the interests of the quality of education, societal well being and economic efficiency. In light of this, it has advocated that DE should make clear that, in discharging its legislative duty in respect of integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools. The next chapter examines models of integration, sharing and collaboration and considers how these might be realised in practice.

11.33 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:

52. In undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, the Education and Skills Authority should be required to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools.
53. To encourage and support a more inclusive approach to integrating education, additional funding – in the form of (a) an enhanced unit of resource, and (b) special funding for particular areas of work such as staff development – should be provided to schools that are actively engaged in sharing with other schools, or a school that is developing an inclusive environment in recognition of the diversity of its pupils' religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
54. Either through new arrangements under the Review of Public Administration, or through a dedicated strategic forum, the

Department of Education should help education stakeholders to discuss issues pertinent to integrating education and improving collaboration, promoting trust and mutual understanding, and working to develop collaboration and sharing.

55. The Department of Education should make clear that, in discharging its legislative duty in respect of integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools.
56. The Department of Education should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium education.
57. The planning for Irish-medium education should make use of a variety of feasible options capable of providing the accommodation and facilities that support a high quality of education through the medium of Irish, including:
  - creating new sustainable Irish-medium schools through new builds, adapting existing surplus capacity in the schools' estate, and transformation; and
  - collaborating and sharing within the Irish-medium sector, and with English-medium schools, including the provision of Irish-medium units or streams in English-medium schools.

## CHAPTER 12: MODELS OF COLLABORATION AND SHARING

- 12.1 This chapter explores practical models of sharing and collaboration, and considers the potential benefits. It focuses on sharing and collaboration between schools, either of the same or different management types, as part of a spectrum of approaches to integrating education. Other chapters of the report have commented on schools with a distinctive integrative function, not only integrated schools, but also schools which, through organic development, are inclusive in that they attract and welcome pupils from different cultures and faith traditions. In Chapter 9 the report has also identified the possibility of establishing schools of new management types with the potential to serve all the pupils in a community, for example a community school or a jointly managed church school. This chapter also reiterates the rationale for schools working in partnership, considers how incentives might be used to encourage and support collaboration, and examines practical issues that may arise. Some of the models are based on emerging practice in local areas of Northern Ireland, and others are influenced by approaches elsewhere.
- 12.2 In the course of consultation, it became evident to the Review that Northern Ireland's educational structure – based almost entirely on institutional independence, and its preservation, within a competitive system – is also at a significant cost to some children's and young people's experiences and opportunities; it is at a cost too, in certain contexts, to the well-being, effectiveness, all-round development and experience of teachers and principals; and last of all, it is at a cost to the efficient use of the schools' estate in terms of duplication and overlaps, empty places and inadequate accommodation. It follows, therefore, that it is a cost to the economic well being, and the integration and health of our society more generally.
- 12.3 There is no avoiding the fact that present arrangements, despite their strengths, are marred by missed opportunities – opportunities to broaden choices; to enrich provision for practitioners as well as learners and their communities; to capitalise on the expertise of teachers and lecturers, which is currently confined, for the most part, to their own sector; to lessen the tension and insecurity that are associated with issues such as budget management, staff deployment and class groupings in the context of falling rolls; and to address uncertainties – on the part

of staff, governors and parents – about the future viability of some schools. Above all, opportunities are missed to secure the best for more children and young people. The education system needs to do better by everyone, not just some, engaged in, or affected by, education, and what that means for a pluralist Northern Ireland in the Twenty-First Century.

## Rationale and Principles

12.4 In Chapter 11 the Review presented a rationale for collaboration and sharing based on three fundamental and inter-related 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 provides good value for money.

12.5 In Chapter 9 the Review set out a number of principles to underpin the planning of the schools' estate. For ease of reference these principles are presented again. Communities should be served by successful schools that:

- provide high quality educational experiences and outcomes for all pupils;
- reflect the pluralist nature of Northern Ireland;
- ensure equality, accessibility, diversity and parental choice;
- taken together, are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the community;
- are educationally and financially viable;
- operate cost-effectively, maximising expenditure on the things that really matter in respect of quality and standards;
- are affordable and sustainable in the long-term;
- optimise the use of their facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing; and
- represent good value in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure.

12.6 It is also pertinent at this point to recall that the first three-year action plan for *A Shared Future* sets commitments for the Department of Education (DE) in relation to planning the schools' estate:

- In decision making on new schools or re-organisation/rationalisation of schools, proposals will be required to demonstrate that options for collaboration/sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored.
- On the basis of clear criteria to be developed, projects relating to new schools, re-organisation or rationalisation are more likely to justify receipt of financial support if they are shared or operate across the community divide.
- A shared model of schooling will be treated as the presumed option for new housing developments which are similarly shared.

12.7 The principles set out above, the three-point rationale for sharing and collaboration, and the requirements of *A Shared Future* provide a frame of reference or set of indicators for assessing proposals for area-based educational provision serving the whole community, including various forms of sharing and collaboration. The indicators may be grouped thematically: quality and effectiveness of provision; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; community well being and cohesion; economy and efficiency (including matching provision to need and reducing over-provision); and cross-community and cross-sector sharing and collaboration.

## Collaboration Between Existing Schools

### Current Developments

12.8 The Review acknowledges the success of local arrangements for joint work where sensitive, high level leadership has encouraged local initiatives in collaboration and has struck the right balance between realism and boldness. There are clear educational, community and financial benefits in self-reliant, and self-generated, arrangements, particularly when parents have been kept informed and made to feel involved. The Review would wish those initiatives to continue.

- 12.9 The Review has been interested to learn of a range of initiatives, some well developed and others offering smaller beginnings and taking more tentative steps, where post-primary schools of different management types are working together – without any compromise to their own distinctiveness – to provide learners in the 14–19 age range with a broader set of experiences and the flexibility to learn in more than one institution. Collaborative arrangements of this nature represent a significant broadening of partnership arrangements from that between schools of the same management type.
- 12.10 In its submission to the Review, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) described the establishment of “learning communities” at post-primary level, each at various stages of evolution. It is the Board’s view that in these promising developments the seeds have been sown in moving schools from a model of competition and isolation to one of collaboration, centred on the needs of the learner within the learning community. The example is cited of one town, where the four post-primary schools, representative of the different sectors, are working together to offer an extended range of choices at age 16+ to pupils in the area. It is reported that provision is planned jointly, marked collectively, and uses the expertise of staff in the four institutions. The Review concurs with the Board’s belief that the success of this model depends on visionary leadership and the commitment of the schools at local level, but also requires the active support of the employing authority.
- 12.11 In the context of collaboration between schools and Further Education, the Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP) is bringing another and important dimension to collaboration. As the VEP develops, schools are expected to take a more proactive approach to forming collaborative arrangements, for example, by grouping together to ensure that applications meet class size viability thresholds in colleges of further education. Such joint planning should set the pattern for the development of collaborative arrangements between schools and colleges of further education in the context of the Curriculum Entitlement.
- 12.12 The Education and Skills Authority, in consultation with schools, Further Education and training organisations, should have a role to play not only in supporting sharing and collaboration at local level, but in identifying opportunities and needs, developing and bringing forward innovative ideas for consideration, prompting

and proactively encouraging linkages, and working with others to identify obstacles and ways of mitigating them.

## Incentives

- 12.13 Small beginnings can affirm and encourage. A first step could be to create and incentivise additional local "success stories" in collaboration that demonstrate the common benefits. These could be prompted, and promoted, by taking advantage of particular opportunities; for example, where two schools have established a track record in sharing facilities or staff, a next step may be building a new high specification common facility, for instance, in technology. In another scenario, advantage might be taken of the necessary re-organisation of secondary school provision caused, in particular, by requirements of the Entitlement Framework, and the criteria within a sustainable schools policy, to promote sharing of staff and facilities among or between schools. In this context, an incentive could take the form of an extra teacher to facilitate link arrangements and work across schools or between school and college. Furthermore, DE could review the accommodation norms and standards for new schools and major improvements – in which school size is a factor – to make it attractive for two or more geographically close schools to gain additional facilities which, if continuing to operate separately, would be inappropriate or less practicable. Consideration could be given to prioritising proposals for school builds and improvements that incorporate sharing and collaboration.

## Formal Arrangements Between Schools

- 12.14 There are various forms of association that can provide the opportunity for schools, primary or post-primary, to collaborate on a range of curricular and other issues, to procure efficiencies, and to secure improvements in the quality of education provided. The form of association can range from voluntary coalitions and partnerships to a relationship involving formal management and governance structures. These arrangements can accommodate the need, and the desire, to preserve and maintain the ethos of individual schools, while making more efficient use of resources and avoiding duplication of provision, particularly when the arrangements include Further Education.

## Confederation

12.15 In the confederation model, schools of the same, or different, management types in an area work together in arrangements involving the exchange of staff and pupils, or both. Pupils may be taught together for certain subjects, teachers may teach in more than one school, specialist facilities may be used by all the schools, and the schools may share administrative staff. Each school remains accountable to its own education sector and may retain its own principal and board of governors. A confederation is in effect a pool of expertise. The examples of local partnership referred to earlier in this chapter characterise aspects of confederation.

## Federation

12.16 In its strict form federation involves small schools combining to form a single school in law, with one principal and one board of governors, but operating on two or more sites. The teaching arrangements would be similar to those described for the confederation model. This model would encourage a joint approach, which would facilitate future shared working on a single site at a later stage.

## Co-location

12.17 Co-location, where schools are located within a short distance of each other, is another option, particularly where new builds for schools are 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.

## Shared Campus

12.18 This model has been developed in regions of Scotland, particularly in respect of primary schools in the North Lanarkshire Council, involving Catholic schools and non-denominational schools. The Review has been provided with a detailed account of the North Lanarkshire experience. The rationale for the development of

the shared campus approach to primary school design in North Lanarkshire is based on financial and best-value considerations; the integration argument played no part in the Council's decision to support shared campus schools. The building of schools with shared infrastructure generates savings and as a result more schools can be rebuilt or refurbished from the available resources. In addition, the model safeguards school individuality and autonomy, protects services by retaining local educational provision, particularly in rural areas, maintains denominational education, and enables the local community to access enhanced facilities.

- 12.19 The design and operation of the schools conform to agreed principles. The shared building infrastructure includes shared, or adjacent, administration/reception office, adjacent staff rooms centrally located, shared hall/gymnasium, library, multi-functional rooms, and playing fields. There are shared areas centrally located with independent access and a shared public entrance with separate interior entrance. There are physically separate teaching areas and management areas, separate pupil entrances, and community facilities separate from either school.
- 12.20 North Lanarkshire's capital costs analysis shows that the shared campus model costs 30 per cent less than two individual schools and 10 per cent more than a single school (figures based on two schools of 150 pupils each). In addition to capital savings, there are reduced property running costs and surplus sites are released. In terms of "save to spend", it is possible to fund additional schools and to provide enhanced facilities at each campus.
- 12.21 The introduction of shared campus schools in North Lanarkshire has had to be carefully planned. Communication and preparation are identified as essential to the successful operation of shared campus schools, in particular the development of a management protocol and the preparation of the head teachers and staff for the management and operation of a shared campus. The commitment, sensitivity and leadership of the head teachers are considered to be particularly vital.
- 12.22 The possibility of developing the shared campus model to include shared use of a wider range of accommodation and facilities, such as technology suites, merits consideration. Some members of staff could also be shared, including, for example, building supervisors, cleaners, catering staff and secretarial staff. It

should be possible also to share specialist teaching staff and responsibility for specific areas of curriculum development.

## Extended Schools

- 12.23 The report has already commented on Extended Schools in the context of the strategic planning of the schools' estate. Extended Schools have the potential to contribute to greater integration and sharing by virtue of what they offer. Extended Schools should see themselves as the hub of the community, providing a range of services and activities, during or beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community. In so doing, Extended Schools engage in collaboration and partnership with neighbouring schools, and with statutory, voluntary, and community sector organisations operating in the community.

## Evaluation

- 12.24 Paragraph 12.7 listed a set of indicators for assessing proposals for area-based educational provision serving the whole community, including various forms of sharing and collaboration: quality and effectiveness of provision; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; community well being and cohesion; economy and efficiency (including matching provision to need and reducing over-provision); and cross-community and cross-sector sharing and collaboration. Each of the models of sharing and collaboration described in previous paragraphs, from the locally evolving partnerships to the more formally structured arrangements, can be evaluated against these indicators. The same indicators can be used to assess the advantages and disadvantages (benefits and costs) of local provision in the form of one or more types of schools: reorganisation within discrete sectors, new integrated school, transformed integrated school, community school, or jointly managed church school.
- 12.25 The following questions, neither an exhaustive list nor necessarily applicable in all circumstances, may be used to assess arrangements for collaboration and sharing.
- Do the arrangements:
- Help to maintain local provision?

- Provide the pupils with access to a wider range of educational opportunity?
- Allow the pupils to have good learning experiences and to achieve high standards?
- Enable human and material resources to be used more effectively and efficiently?
- Reduce capital costs, recurrent costs or both?
- Entail additional costs, and are these justified by the benefits?
- Address the issue of over provision?
- Result in practically feasible solutions in which the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of, for example, timetabling and travel?
- Involve significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning by pupils, and teachers, from the partnership schools?
- Involve both intra-sector and cross-sector sharing and collaboration?
- Have the confidence and support of governors and parents?

12.26 Arrangements for sharing and collaboration should be evaluated, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement. The manifestations and outcomes of the distinctive character of schools, and the contribution of schools to the spirit of *A Shared Future*, should be included in schools' annual reports, and in inspection reports, taking account of the community environment of the school.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

12.27 This chapter has explored practical models of sharing and collaboration between schools, as part of a spectrum of approaches to integrating education; the models range from locally evolving partnerships to more formally structured arrangements. It has also identified indicators for evaluating not only the various models of sharing and collaboration between schools but also local provision in the form of one or more types of schools: reorganisation within discrete sectors, new integrated school, transformed integrated school, community school, or

jointly managed church school. Finally, it has discussed incentives that could be used to promote and facilitate sharing and collaboration. Change can seem radical – but even radical change can be gradual; it does not necessarily mean sudden chaos and upheaval. Change for the better, and most of all for the benefit of children and young people, both educationally and communally, can be achieved. It will require visionary, creative and open leadership, good communication at all levels, and an ability to develop and apply excellence in managing change systematically.

12.28 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:

58. Local "success stories" of collaboration and sharing should be encouraged, identified, and used to disseminate good practice.

59. The Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Education and Skills Authority should develop a range of incentives to encourage and support local schools to build on existing levels of shared facilities and staff and to develop their partnership further. Examples of incentives that should be considered include:

- providing a new high specification common facility, for example, in technology;
- funding for an additional teacher to facilitate link arrangements and work across schools or between schools and Further Education;
- modifying the accommodation norms and standards to make it attractive for two or more geographically close schools to gain facilities which, if they continued to operate separately, would be inappropriate (due to school enrolment) or less practicable; and
- prioritising proposals for school improvements that incorporate sharing and collaboration.

60. Sharing and collaboration between schools should be evaluated, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement.
61. The manifestations and outcomes of the distinctive character of schools, and the contribution of schools to the spirit of *A Shared Future*, should be included in schools' annual reports and in inspection reports, taking account of the community environment of the school.

