

# SHARING WORKS: A POLICY FOR SHARED EDUCATION



Department of  
**Education**

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**Oideachais**

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MÄNNYSTRIE O  
**Lear**

**September 2015**

## **Ministerial Foreword**

As our society emerges from the period of conflict, I am pleased to be in a position to set out the way forward for Shared Education.

Our education system mirrors historical divisions in society here. Despite this, there has been a long history of community relations work in schools and youth organisations throughout the period of conflict.

More recently, many local schools have begun to engage in Shared Education activities, which provide opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together. We now have many excellent practical examples of young people engaging with each other and feeling comfortable about that engagement.

There is widespread political and community support for Shared Education. My Policy for Shared Education builds on these strong foundations: defining and setting out the vision and objectives for the way ahead. The policy is evidence based and has been particularly shaped by the report of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education and their significant engagement with key stakeholders. The policy will be supported with resources to meet the additional costs required to implement Shared Education over the coming years.

Building on our existing educational structures, Shared Education offers the opportunity to create a more integrated education system in which children and young people from different community backgrounds can be educated together.

For over thirty years, Integrated Schools have provided an alternative to education on largely religiously separated lines in response to parental demand. The Department (DE) will continue to support and adhere to its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated Education.

Shared Education provides an overarching approach in which schools of all management types, including Integrated Schools, are encouraged and facilitated to provide further opportunities for the education together of our children and young people.

Shared Education has the potential to impact on raising educational standards and reducing underachievement, and deliver societal and economic benefits. As a consequence of schools collaborating, pupils benefit from enhanced curricular delivery and access to a broader range of subjects and resources. Teachers also benefit from improved professional development opportunities and sharing good practice. Senior leaders and governors across sectors work more closely together and collaboration can become a vehicle for school improvement. Shared Education offers similar benefits across early years and youth work settings. Shared Education provides an environment where innovation, imagination and creativity can flourish.

My vision for the future of Shared Education is one of vibrant, self-improving education communities delivering educational benefits to learners, encouraging the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

Re-building a strong and vibrant society is a role for the Executive but education has a key role to play – one which is challenging but one that we must achieve. There is a new direction of travel in our society and education is playing its part.

**John O’Dowd**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

For almost two decades, society here has been on a journey from conflict and division to peace and there are many tangible signs of social, political and cultural progress.

Whilst our education system reflects historical divisions in society, the benefits of educating children and young people together are increasingly recognised. In recent years, the concept of Shared Education which provides opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together, has developed.

Public and political attitudes have evolved to the degree where moving to a more inclusive educational system is a distinct possibility. Society is changing rapidly and we must respond to that change to best meet the needs of our children and young people.

This document sets out the core components of our policy for Shared Education. It sets out the rationale, vision and objectives for Shared Education. It also explains what the policy proposals mean for those who support, govern, inspect, lead and work in educational establishments within the remit of the DE. It contains a series of key actions that will be reviewed regularly, with progress reported to the Education Minister and published on the DE website.

We also want to make sure through this policy that DE and its education support bodies play an effective role in ensuring that, within available funding, schools and other education environments receive the resources, acknowledgement, support and encouragement to start or continue to develop high quality Shared Education opportunities for their children and young people.

It is intended that **all children and young people** should have the opportunity to be involved in Shared Education. This policy is, therefore, aimed at:

- both statutory and voluntary early years educational settings;
- primary, post-primary and special schools; and
- non-formal educational environments, such as statutory and voluntary youth work settings.

Our vision is for:

*Vibrant, self-improving Shared Education partnerships delivering educational benefits to learners, encouraging the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.*

The equality and inclusion promoted by Shared Education are key features of high performing education systems. Our vision for Shared Education, therefore, also reflects the DE's wider vision:

*To ensure that every learner fulfils his or her full potential at each stage of her or his development.*

Shared Education will also support the Department's two overarching corporate goals:

- raising standards for all; and
- closing the performance gap, increasing access and equity.

This policy has been guided and shaped by many informed contributions, in particular the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education, which reported in March 2013 (*further information, including the report is available at :*

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/shared\\_education/shared-education-ministerial-advisory-group.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/shared_education/shared-education-ministerial-advisory-group.htm)).

The Ministerial Advisory Group engaged in a widespread consultation exercise with key stakeholders across the region that resulted in: the receipt of 111 written submissions from a wide range of organisations and individuals; 25 face-to-face meetings with a range of stakeholders; and visits to a number of examples of Shared Education in practice and other schools, colleges and institutions.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Our education system largely reflects traditional divides in society. The vast majority of children and young people in primary and post-primary schools (92.0%) attend controlled schools that are mainly attended by Protestant children and young people or voluntary schools that are either Catholic managed or other managed.

Moreover, the education system also experiences significant divisions in other respects as well. The most notable of these is in relation to socio-economic background where a clear tendency exists at post-primary level for young people from more affluent backgrounds to attend grammar schools and those from more economically deprived backgrounds to attend non-selective schools. These divisions are, in turn, associated with significant achievement gaps.

There also remain concerns as to whether the educational and social needs of particular groups of children and young people are being met, including those who are: Irish Travellers; from an ethnic minority; in care; in the juvenile justice system; living with disabilities and/or special educational needs; and those who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender.

A modern, well-equipped society requires good relations, equality of opportunity and reconciliation. The Executive is committed to creating a united, reconciled and shared society. The *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* outlines a vision based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation. It lays the foundations for a transformed and more shared and reconciled society in the future.

Education can play a key role in building good relations, increasing co-operation and improving attitudes amongst our children and young people. In this context, the timing is now opportune for DE to set out its framework for the future development of Shared Education.

## **Shared Education to Date**

Since the early 1980s, DE has developed and implemented a range of programmes to promote cross-community relations by bringing young people from each of the two main traditions together. The overarching aim was to improve understanding and relationships between the two main traditions without excluding any other tradition.

Many schools also developed their own working relationships with other schools from different backgrounds independently.

In 2011, DE launched a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education policy. The objectives of the policy are to:

- ensure that learners, at each stage of their development, have an understanding of and respect for the rights, equality and diversity of all without discrimination;
- educate children and young people to live and participate in the changing world, so that they value and respect difference and engage positively with it, taking account of the ongoing intercommunity divisions arising from conflict and increasing diversity within our society; and
- equip children and young people with the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to develop mutual understanding and recognition of, and respect for, difference.

In recent years, and with the support of external funding from the International Fund for Ireland and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the concept of Shared Education has evolved and a series of pilot projects were implemented. The Sharing in Education Programme was developed to break down the barriers arising from the conflict by providing a range of opportunities for young people to learn together.



## **The Case for Shared Education**

There is an extensive body of international research regarding the effectiveness of school collaboration generally and in divided societies more particularly.<sup>1</sup> This has been supplemented by specific local evidence, particularly a series of evaluations of Shared Education pilot projects. These include major reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Atlantic Philanthropies funded Sharing in Education Learning Forum on the impact of Shared Education in schools.<sup>2</sup>

The case for Shared Education has now been well established. This may be summarised as:

- The social case – improving societal well being by promoting a culture of mutual understanding through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning between children and young people from different community backgrounds and between early years, schools and youth work settings and their communities.

As a society emerging from conflict, building a strong and shared community is a key objective for government. Improving attitudes amongst young people is critical to achieving this objective. Against the background of an education system which reflects traditional divides in society Shared Education is a crucial way to break down barriers, nurture and improve community relations.

- The education case – improving access for learners to a wider choice of subjects encompassing the full range of the curriculum; increasing access to specialist teaching and to modern facilities; and facilitating the sharing of ideas and good practice between education providers.

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<sup>1</sup> The report of the Ministerial Advisory Group provides an extremely useful literature review of both international research evidence and local studies.

<sup>2</sup> ETI, *A Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme* (November, 2013); RSM McClure Watters, *Evaluation of the Sharing Education Programme – Programme Level Summative Evaluation Report* (May 2014).

Local evaluations have shown that children and young people participating in Shared Education particularly benefit from an increase in self-confidence, self-awareness and self-reflection; being more open to meeting others with differing perspectives; and with improved skills in problem solving, decision making and critical and creative thinking.

It is also clear that participation enables children and young people to develop a greater sense of their own identity and a capacity to articulate their views and opinions with a better understanding and confidence in the accuracy of what they say.

- The economic case – making more effective and efficient use of limited resources to improve value for money.

### 3. CURRENT AND FUTURE CONTEXT

Shared Education is developing within a wider legislative and policy context that is designed to promote equality and good relations. This includes both an overarching government commitment to develop a more shared society in the future and more specific education goals. **The policy will be both supportive of and supported by this wider framework**

#### Executive Policy

“Building a Strong and Shared Community” has been recognised by the Executive both as a key priority within its *Programme for Government 2011-15* (PFG) and as essential to the growth of a strong, modern economy and society.

The PFG is the Executive's contract with the people. It sets out the Executive's strategic aims and priorities for the years ahead and explains how the Executive will work with the Assembly and with others to achieve these aims and make progress on its priorities.

The PFG sets out three specific objectives for the DE relating to Shared Education:

- to establish a Ministerial Advisory Group to advise on advancing Shared Education;
- to ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in Shared Education programmes by 2015; and
- to substantially increase the number of schools sharing facilities by 2015.

The Executive's commitment to creating a united, reconciled and shared society is also outlined in the *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* which presents a vision for society based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation. It lays the foundations for a transformed and more shared society in the future and Departments are working together to ensure outcomes are delivered on the ground.

The strategy undertakes to “*enhance the quality and extent of Shared Education provision, thus ensuring that sharing in education becomes a central part of every child’s educational experience.*”

## **Legislative Requirements**

Whilst there is not currently any enacted legislative requirements in relation to Shared Education, the promotion of both equality of opportunity and good relations are enshrined in the legislative framework. Legislation that is particularly relevant to Shared Education is outlined below:

- The Human Rights Act (1998) in particular the right to education and the right of parents to ensure education in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions (first protocol article 2); freedom of thought, conscience & religion (convention article 9); freedom of expression (convention article 10) and the prohibition of discrimination (convention article 14).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK 1990) in particular the right of the child to education (article 28) and the right of the child to an education that is directed towards ‘the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin’ (article 29 (d)).
- Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –
  - between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
  - between men and women generally;

- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, public authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group.

DE has a statutory duty under Article 64 of the Education Reform Order 1989 to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education which will not be impacted by Shared Education.

DE also has a statutory duty under Article 89 of the Education ( NI ) Order 1998 to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education which will not be impacted by shared education.

## **Education Policy**

The Policy for Shared Education sits within a broader education policy framework designed to improve educational outcomes for young people and tackle the significant tail of educational under-achievement that has characterised our education system by breaking the cycle of social disadvantage, educational failure and restricted life chances.

Notably, the system has embedded both the concepts of self-evaluation and collaborative delivery that evidence indicates are necessary in the development of effective Shared Education programmes.

The DE's School Improvement Policy, *Every School a Good School*, sets out a robust approach to raising standards and tackling underachievement in all schools.

The policy has successfully encouraged a culture within schools of self-evaluation and assessment focussed on self-improvement. A recent Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD) report noted that schools here benefit from sophisticated tools to support their self-evaluation activities.

Equally, Area Learning Communities supported by Entitlement Framework funding have embedded the concept of collaborative delivery of the curriculum and increasingly also become hubs for the development and dissemination of good teaching and leadership practice.

International research has identified four stages of improvement across school systems.<sup>3</sup> In the final stage of school improvement, the journey from great to excellent, successful systems focus on creating an environment that will unleash the creativity and innovation of its educators. Shared Education has the potential to build on solid foundations and help facilitate the innovation and the collaborative practice that is a feature of successful education systems internationally.

## **The Curriculum**

The statutory curriculum provides a core enabling framework to promote Shared Education. The Curriculum was revised in 2007 with the aim of empowering young people to develop their potential and make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives through three key objectives:

- the development of the young person as an individual;
- a contributor to society;
- a contributor to the economy and environment.

Key elements which focus on the real and relevant issues that young people need to assimilate in preparation for life and work in society are embedded in the individual areas of learning (subjects).

The learning areas of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU), Local and Global Citizenship and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) are key vehicles

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<sup>3</sup> McKinsey and Company, *How the worlds' most improved school systems keep getting better* (November, 2010).

for embedding Shared Education through the curriculum delivered in schools. They were developed specifically to enable young people across the key stages to learn about themselves and others, developing tolerance, respect and open-mindedness through understanding similarities and respecting differences between people in the local community and beyond in order to help them address the challenges and opportunities they may encounter in society.

In addition, all subject strands but in particular, religious education, history, geography, English, languages, drama and art and design provide opportunities for teachers to design learning programmes that explore identity, diversity and promote reconciliation, developing the attitudes and dispositions.

## 4. A POLICY FOR SHARED EDUCATION

### What is Shared Education?

Shared Education is described as the organisation and delivery of education so that it:

- Meets the needs of, and provides for the education together of learners from all Section 75 categories<sup>4</sup> and socio-economic status;
- Involves schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements; and
- Delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes inclusion in terms of equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

Specifically, Shared Education involves the sustained provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community, as well as social and economic, backgrounds to learn together.

It is expected that Shared Education will be organised and delivered in such a way that promotes equality of opportunity and social inclusion by providing opportunities for children from differing Section 75 groups (e.g. children from different religious backgrounds, children from different racial backgrounds, children with and without disabilities, children who are carers or school age mothers) and from differing socio-economic backgrounds to learn together at school and in less formal education.



## **Integrated Education**

DE is conscious of its duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education and will continue to do so alongside the advancement of Shared Education.

For the past 30 years integrated schools have been an alternative to largely religiously separated schools. Through their admissions criteria they aim to enroll approximately equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant children, as well as children from other religious and cultural backgrounds.

Since the establishment of Lagan College, the first integrated school, the integrated sector has grown and, currently there are 62 formally integrated schools with a current enrolment of almost 22,000 pupils or around seven percent of the school-aged population.

Our system has a plurality of different school types: Shared Education engages schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements.

As with schools of other management types, integrated schools will partner with a school of differing management types to participate in Shared Education. Schools of differing management types may also choose to partner with integrated schools to deepen and develop their ethos of inclusion. This will provide opportunities for sharing the good practice that has been developed within the integrated sector and provide collaborative opportunities that can equally benefit pupils attending integrated schools.

The level of sharing across schools is at different levels along a continuum where integrated education, which has already embraced a culture of diversity, is at the upper end of that continuum. Indeed, by supporting Shared Education, it is envisaged that a proportion of schools may move along the continuum to a more fully integrated model.

## **Irish-medium Education**

DE recognises the challenges which Shared Education may present in the full immersion environment of Irish-medium schools. However, there are many types of Shared Education and no one size fits all approach. Experience from the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme indicates that partnerships have been able to develop and design Shared Education programmes which complement the ethos of Irish-medium schools. Going forward the Department will take into account the particular needs of the Irish-medium sector in the development of Shared Education.

The Department is conscious of its duty under the Education Order 1998 (Article 89) to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education and will continue to do so alongside the advancement of Shared Education.

## **Types of sharing**

There are a wide range and variety of opportunities for Shared Education. Examples include:

- pupils coming together from different sectors for curriculum based collaboration, for example to study a specific subject through a shared class, or to undertake a project;
- schools sharing to provide greater access to expertise, facilities and resources;
- children and young people involved in statutory and voluntary youth work settings coming together to learn in an informal education setting;
- shared planning days to develop and co-ordinate shared activities;
- joint teaching and learning/assessment policies for shared subjects, joint pastoral policies and joint action plans within each School Development Plan to promote attainment;
- shared professional development for teaching and support staff youth workers and early years practitioners;
- shared teaching and non-teaching staff;

- joint training for Boards of Governors;
- shared Board of Governors or joint sub-committees;
- shared accommodation or campuses.

There is no one size fits all solution. Importantly, creativity and innovation are core elements in the further development of Shared Education.

The Department recognises that the advancement of Shared Education needs to be viewed as movement along a continuum. Educational settings and the communities they serve are at different stages in their readiness for sharing. It is essential to adopt an approach in which identifying and responding to the needs of all children and young people are paramount.

### **Core Principles Underpinning the Delivery of Shared Education**

Regardless of the type of sharing being undertaken there are a number of core features which must underpin the development of high quality Shared Education.

#### ***Core Principles Underpinning the Delivery of Shared Education***

- Support of leadership, staff, children and young people, parents and the wider community;
- Clearly defined vision and outcomes for all experiences;
- Effective planning and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation; (for schools this will be embedded in the School Development Plan);
- Adequate training for teaching and support staff and youth workers;
- Engagement with and support from the relevant Managing Authority.

The aim of this policy is:

**To encourage and facilitate collaborative working across educational providers, on a cross sectoral basis, to deliver educational and social benefits to learners, promote equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.**

The objectives of the policy are to:

- provide all children and young people with an opportunity to participate in a programme of high quality Shared Education on a continued and progressive basis;
- provide greater opportunity for leaders, teachers, youth workers and other non-teaching staff from different organisations to work collaboratively in the interests of all learners and their communities;
- improve access for learners to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern educational facilities;
- embed sharing into the ethos of every school;
- improve educational and reconciliation outcomes; and
- contribute to the creation of a more harmonious society.

The intended outcomes of the policy are:

- an increase in the opportunity for young people to learn in a shared environment (both formal and non-formal);
- an increase in the number of children and young people participating in high quality Shared Education programmes;
- qualitative evidence from children and young people of high quality participation, learning, achievement and attitudinal change;
- an increase in the number of schools participating in high quality Shared Education programmes; and
- an increase in the number of schools sharing facilities and resources.

## **5. DELIVERING SHARED EDUCATION**

The Department of Education is committed to encouraging and facilitating a more integrated approach to the delivery of education by embedding the principles of Shared Education across the education system.

This chapter sets out the actions and interventions that we will take to support the development of Shared Education.

### **Area 1: Defining, Encouraging and Facilitating Shared Education**

#### **Key Action 1: Bring forward Legislation**

DE will bring forward a Shared Education Bill which will provide a statutory definition of Shared Education and provide a power to encourage and facilitate Shared Education. A draft Shared Education Bill accompanies this document.

#### **Key Action 2: Provide Co-ordinated and Effective Support for Practitioners**

In order to support effectively the further development of Shared Education, dedicated officers will be appointed in each Education and Library Board (or within the Education Authority) with responsibility to encourage, facilitate and support Shared Education.

These officers will provide effective local, on the ground assistance, working with Shared Education partnerships to promote, plan and implement shared activity.

They will also operate as a regional team, working in conjunction with DE and its Education & Training Inspectorate and with other key stakeholders particularly the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to:

- develop and drive forward a strategy for advancing Shared Education that includes setting targets and goals and monitoring Shared Education activities;
- review existing and proposed policies within education and ensure that where appropriate activities seek to encourage and facilitate Shared Education;
- commission research and evaluation(s) into Shared Education;
- facilitate the sharing and dissemination of good practice; and
- report annually on progress being made.

Sectoral Support Bodies and other stakeholders will also have a role in encouraging and facilitating Shared Education. The Education Authority will consider how best to coordinate the range of support that may be available.

### **Key Action 3: Develop self-assessment tools for practitioners**

The Education and Training Inspectorate will develop a Shared Education Continuum model, which can be used by schools and other non-formal educational settings, to self assess their practices, methodologies and capacity in relation to the delivery of Shared Education. This will be supported by the development of quality indicators. In undertaking this work, the Inspectorate will draw on existing learning and work by other stakeholders who have sought to develop a Shared Education Continuum model.

The Shared Education Continuum will be an effective tool to assist practitioners in carrying out effective initial self-reflection to identify their baseline in relation to Shared Education, to set effective goals and to measure how much progress they have made in meeting these goals.

## **Area 2: Future funding of Shared Education**

### **Key Action 4: Provide funding support 2014-18**

DE is, in conjunction with funding from the Delivering Social Change project and Atlantic Philanthropies, providing a funding stream to support Shared Education in schools over the next four years. This funding will focus on schools that have already engaged in collaborative working. Funding of £25 million over four years will be available. This represents a significant funding commitment against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial landscape in the coming years.

DE will also work with the Special EU Programmes body to advise on how best Peace IV funding can be used to support further the development of Shared Education in schools that have not yet engaged in Shared Education, as well as across pre-school and youth work settings in a way that will complement the Delivering Social Change Shared Education project.

### **Key Action 5: Develop Sustainable Long-Term Delivery Arrangements**

Whilst a significant number of pilot projects have taken place with external funding support, the Department wants, in the longer term, to see Shared Education not as an 'add on' or optional enrichment activity but as a normal and common experience for all young people firmly embedded within the ethos of each school.

Consequently, DE will use the learning from both the Delivering Social Change and Peace IV projects, as well as other long standing practices of collaborative, inclusive and citizenship education, to determine how best to support educational establishments in offering Shared Education in the longer term from 2018 onwards.

### **Area 3: Structures for Shared Education**

#### **Key Action 6: Develop Innovative Options for Sharing**

DE will develop innovative options for sharing. The Executive's '*Together: Building a United Community*' strategy includes a target to commence 10 new Shared Education Campuses in the next five years.

In response to the interest of some controlled and maintained schools, DE has, in consultation with the Catholic Trustees and Transferors Representative Council, brought forward guidance for a jointly managed school model that will provide an alternative model for educating pupils from different community backgrounds together at the same school (i.e. one that will provide shared education with a Christian ethos managed by a Board of Governors with balanced community representation).

#### **Key Action 7: Provide Capital Investment to Support Schools Sharing Educational Facilities**

As noted above, the Executive's '*Together: Building a United Community*' strategy includes a target to commence 10 new Shared Education Campuses in the next five years. DE is responsible for delivering this programme.

The Shared Education Campuses Programme complements work already underway in DE on Shared Education and area planning. It is aimed at providing capital assistance to schools to facilitate Shared Education (on a cross community basis) by either providing new shared educational facilities, enhancing existing shared facilities or through shared education campuses.

The programme targets schools that can demonstrate the following types of sharing:

- shared educational facilities – where new educational facilities are built to allow for shared use by all schools within the model;
- enhanced educational facilities – where current educational facilities are improved to allow for shared use by all schools within the model; and
- shared campus – where schools are co-located and share infrastructure.



The key purpose of the Shared Educational Campuses Programme is to ensure high quality educational benefits to children and young people. To ensure the best chance of successful long-term collaboration among schools, projects need to build on a solid foundation of existing sharing and have the support of their local community.

#### **Area 4: Embedding sharing throughout the education system**

##### **Key Action 8: Develop Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements**

Effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements for Shared Education will be put in place.

DE in conjunction with its Arm's Length Bodies will require schools engaging in Shared Education programmes to outline specific plans and goals for Shared Education in their School Development Plans.

The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations require schools to outline their strategies for raising the standards of attainment among all pupils. It is expected that School Development Plans will explicitly set out the contribution Shared Education programmes are expected to make in raising pupil attainment.

In monitoring and evaluating arrangements for Shared Education, the Department will seek to assess the attitudes of children and young people through on-going research (eg: Young Life & Times survey).

Where schools and other educational institutions are in receipt of a Shared Education funding, the Education and Training Inspectorate will explicitly review the use of that funding in its inspection reports particularly in relation to:

- the added value of such Shared Education activities;
- the quality and effectiveness of the Shared Education activities;

- the value for money of the funding provided; and
- the sustainability of the initiatives.

The Chief Inspector's Report, which is published biennially, will make specific comment on the current range and extent of Shared Education activities across the education sector, highlight good practice and make recommendations regarding how these could be extended and improved.

### **Key Action 9: Develop the Workforce**

DE will, as part of its work to finalise a new teacher professional development strategy, ensure that this includes steps to provide teachers, from initial teacher education through to the most experienced teachers, with opportunities to learn together, including preparation for teaching through Shared Education.

DE will contribute to and await the outworking of the independent review of teacher education infrastructure commissioned by the Department of Employment and Learning and will consider the outcomes in the context of future arrangements for initial teacher education and its proposed strategy for teacher professional development with a view to ensuring that student teachers and teachers returning for professional development can be provided with opportunities to learn together, including preparation for teaching through Shared Education.

DE will liaise with Higher Education Institutions and other relevant education providers on aligning their approaches to professional learning for practitioners in Shared Education with the vision and aims of this policy.

DE will also consider the development needs of early years practitioners and youth workers. In working with the Special EU Programmes Body, DE will seek to encourage the inclusion of capacity building for early years practitioners and youth workers within the Peace IV Shared Education thematic area.

## **Key Action 10: Align Educational Policies**

It is critical that a coherent and effective approach to Shared Education is embedded across educational policies.

The Education & Training Inspectorate will undertake independent reviews of current practice in relation to the delivery of:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (Pre-School Education);
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2);
- Local and Global Citizenship (Key Stages 3 and 4);
- The Curriculum Framework for Youth Work (Youth Service); and
- The Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy (including consideration of the opportunities that are provided for children and young people to discuss and explore issues associated with divisions, conflict and inequalities).

Work will be undertaken with CCEA, which has statutory responsibility for advising the DE on matters concerned with the curriculum and the development and production of teaching support materials for use in schools, in order to address recommendations regarding the content of these areas of learning and in supporting teachers and other educationalists in their delivery.

## **Key Action 11: Support Special Schools and Learning Support Centres**

DE encourages active participation of pupils with Special Educational Needs to engage in shared learning activities with their peers. Special Schools will be encouraged to partner with other schools for Shared Education.

In supporting this, DE will consider how Shared Education and the enhanced collaboration between mainstream schools, learning support centres attached to mainstream and special schools can most effectively meet the needs of children and

young people with disabilities, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with special educational needs. This work will focus on the development of effective models for collaboration that can ensure, wherever possible, that children and young people are taught in mainstream schools.

For the small minority of children and young people where mainstream schooling is not suitable, the Department in conjunction with its Arm's Length Bodies will seek to ensure that, where possible, they have meaningful opportunities to learn with children and young people in mainstream school environments.

An ETI 'Guide to Collaborative Practice', which is based on learning from twenty four special schools that worked collaboratively on a joint curriculum project of their choosing with a neighbouring mainstream school, has already been produced. This guidance sets out the key elements arising from these projects which support and encourage collaborative working. It provides a template, alongside a synopsis of the case study projects, to all schools and Area Learning Communities to use to build their capacity to respond more effectively to a wider range of pupils needs through collaborative working.

### **Key Action 12: Promote engagement with Parents, Carers and Wider Community**

The Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will encourage schools and other educational establishments to ensure Shared Education supports, encourages, and enables the development of meaningful relationships with and between parents, caregivers and the wider community.

Specific plans for engaging with parents, caregivers and the wider community will be expected within their plans for advancing Shared Education. Schools will be expected to specifically reference this within their School Development Plans.

### **Key Action 13: Promote engagement with Children and Young People**

In advancing Shared Education, the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will encourage schools and other educational establishments to continue to develop meaningful ways of giving children and young people a voice and of listening and responding to their views. This is in line with UNCRC Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child) which encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making

To facilitate effective pupil participation within schools, the Department has published a circular that provides further guidance for Principals and Boards of Governors on how to encourage pupil participation in decision making. The circular includes information and guidelines on best practice to help schools identify the method and degree of participation that best suits the needs of their pupils. One of the case studies included in the circular showcases an example of two neighbouring post-primary schools, one from the controlled and one from the maintained sectors, who have developed a joint school council to discuss areas of mutual interest.

The DE website also contains information on school councils, which are one mechanism by which effective pupil participation can be achieved, and links to the Democra-School programme.

### **Key Action 14: Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations**

DE recognises that schools and other educational institutions have an important role in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Department will, in conjunction with OFMdfM (which has responsibility for equality legislation), consider the case for schools and other educational institutions to be designated as 'public authorities' under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and thus to be required to comply with the statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. In doing this, consideration will be given to reducing the demands that will be placed on schools and other educational institutions in terms of

meeting their specific responsibilities under Section 75 whilst maintaining their core duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

In the event that schools and other educational institutions are designated as 'public authorities', the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies will, in consultation with the Equality Commission, consider the support arrangements that schools would need following a decision by OFMdfM on whether and how to designate schools as 'public authorities'.

It is expected that one aspect of meeting the duty to promote good relations will include engagement in Shared Education initiatives.

Sharing Works: A Policy  
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Policy

*September 2015*