

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ED 2 (13) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

8 NOVEMBER 2013

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventeenth NSMC Education meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Office in Armagh on 8 November 2013. The meeting was attended by Ruairí Quinn, TD, Minister for Education and Skills, John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education, and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development. Minister Quinn chaired the meeting.

FUTURE SECTORAL WORK PROGRAMME

2. The Council commended the successful high-level engagement that has taken place between officials in both Education Departments since the last NSMC Education meeting in February 2013, noted the collation of the range of existing co-operation between the Education Departments and agreed the future education work programme that has been identified, which includes:
 - Joint Inspection reports on Literacy and Numeracy;
 - Initiatives to address Educational Underachievement and Disadvantage; and
 - Work to promote Good School Leadership.

3. Ministers also agreed the management, oversight, and future reporting arrangements which have been developed as a result of the engagement between the Departments and that further progress in this area will be reported to the next NSMC Ministerial meeting in 2014.

COOPERATION BETWEEN INSPECTORATES

4. The Council noted the report of the Education Inspectorates on the structured co-operation between them including:
 - participation in professional development programmes;
 - Inspector exchanges;
 - joint inspections of specialised projects; and
 - regular meetings of the senior management teams in both Inspectorates.
5. Ministers welcomed and approved continuing endeavours to extend co-operative activities on issues which will be considered in early 2014 to include:
 - Emerging evidence on improvements in learning from the evaluations of DEIS (the Action Plan of the Department of Education and Skills to combat educational disadvantage) ;
 - Inspector exchanges, north-south and east-west;
 - Developments in inspection practice, north and south;
 - Possible joint participation in professional development for inspectors; and
 - Involvement of inspectors (with authority) on inspection teams in respective jurisdictions.
6. The Council welcomed that a report on the joint North-South work on numeracy at post-primary level will be published in late 2014.
7. Ministers noted that a progress report will be made on these matters at the next NSMC meeting.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

8. Ministers welcomed the progress being made by the two Departments and Middletown Centre in facilitating the expansion of the Centre's range of services since the commencement of the expansion in April 2013, and the progress in recruitment by the Centre which allows continued progress to be made in delivering its services to children, professionals and parents.

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

9. Ministers noted that the Educational Underachievement Working Group (EUWG) met on 4 September 2012 to review and advance its work programme, and that the Group has achieved much in terms of cooperation and sharing best practice.

10. The Council noted that, following a review of the EUWG's work, it has been determined that there should now be a greater focus on social-based policies with an intended educational outcome, which will be initially focussing on an analysis of:
 - international benchmarking studies;
 - school-based and social interventions to address underachievement; and
 - the impact of pre-school placements on primary-level performance.
11. The Council noted the current cooperation between the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on the production of two North/South Joint Inspectorate Reports to be published on their respective websites:
 - Best Practice Guidelines in Literacy provision at Post-Primary Level (in early 2014); and
 - Best practice Guidelines in Numeracy Provision at Post-Primary Level (towards the end of 2014)
12. Ministers welcomed the Education Departments' continuing support for all-island initiatives promoting literacy, organised by Children's Books Ireland, and numeracy through Maths Week and noted that the second year of the Department of Education's advertising campaign was launched on 1 October 2013. The Working Group will continue to consider the potential for further joint Departmental co-operation through the medium of web-based linkages.

SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

13. The Council noted ongoing work to implement the recommendations outlined in the joint inspectorate evaluation report of the Dissolving Boundaries project, with particular reference to ensuring progress on greater self-evaluation by projects and welcomed the success of the all island live video-conference broadcast from Dundalk Institute of Technology in May 2013 celebrating Dissolving Boundaries Day.
14. Ministers welcomed the ongoing work of the Causeway Youth Exchange Programme and the North South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) Committee for Youth Work in Ireland.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Teacher Mobility

15. The Council welcomed the progress reported to the North South Teacher Qualifications Working Group (NSTQWG) meeting on 19 September 2013 on the implementation of the recommendations of the joint report from the two Teaching Councils on obstacles to teacher mobility.
16. Ministers also welcomed The Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI) decision in December 2012 to waive the fee for the assessment of qualifications for

teachers from the North currently accredited by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI).

17. Ministers noted that the TCI in consultation with the GTCNI, is also working to simplify assessment of qualifications of teachers for the purposes of their registration with the TCI.

North/South Irish Medium Programme of Work

18. The Council welcomed the collaborative agreement that has been reached between the Marino Institute of Education and the University of Ulster on the provision of assistance and support to students from the North, and border regions of Ireland, wishing to undertake the Scrudú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge & Oiriúnú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (Irish language qualification), and noted that St Mary's University College Belfast, intends to apply to the TCI to deliver the language qualification , possibly in an on-line format.
19. Ministers welcomed the progress made to implement the jointly funded collaborative programme of work in the Irish medium sector for the 2012/13 academic year and that the NSTQWG (and its Irish Medium Sub-Group) has approved in principle an extension of the programme for 2013/14, which is awaiting approval of both Departments.
20. The Council also noted that the NSTQWG has agreed to commission an independent evaluation of collaborative programme of work in the Irish-medium sector to date and is drafting terms of reference for the evaluation. The Working Group is also considering widening the focus of the collaborative programme and taking a more strategic approach to its delivery.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)

21. The Council noted that the 11th annual SCoTENS conference took place on 10th and 11th October 2013 in Sligo under the title of *Learning Teaching: Reimagining the Profession* and was opened by the Minister of Education and Minister of State for Training and Skills.
22. Ministers also noted that the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning are consulting on future funding provision for SCoTENS and that representatives from all three Departments will, as observers, attend one SCoTENS Management Committee meetings each year – the Departmental representatives will be attending their first meeting in February 2014.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23. The Council agreed to hold the next NSMC Education meeting in April 2014.

Joint Secretariat

8 November 2013

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org