

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ED 2 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

22 OCTOBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The nineteenth NSMC Education meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Office in Armagh on 22 October 2014. The meeting was attended by Jan O'Sullivan, TD, Minister for Education and Skills, John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education and OFMDFM, Junior Minister Bell, MLA. Minister O'Sullivan chaired the meeting.

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2. Arising from deliberations at the recent Plenary in Dublin Castle on 3 October, the Ministers also had a discussion on the various funding sources available to their Departments from the European Union. It was agreed that both departments would work closely to maximise the drawdown of European funds.

FUTURE SECTORAL WORK PROGRAMME

3. The Council noted the latest developments on the North-South forward work programme including the joint DE/DES workshop on Educational Underachievement held in Dublin on 8 October 2014. They also agreed that

work be taken forward to establish a means whereby the experience of schools across the island can be shared in order to support improvement in addressing educational disadvantage. The Council received a presentation from DE/DES officials on the Forward Programme for the sector including outcomes from the joint workshop held on 8 October 2014.

PRESENTATION FROM THE YOUTH COUNCILS

4. The Ministers welcomed the presentation received from the Northern Ireland Youth Council and the National Youth Council of Ireland on the linkages between the two organisations.

COOPERATION BETWEEN INSPECTORATES

5. Ministers recognised the continuing endeavours of the Inspectorates to extend co-operation activities including their plans to implement the following key actions in 2014:-
 - (i) Publish Joint North South work on Literacy and Numeracy; two separate reports by Spring 2015;
 - (ii) Continue with the programme of inspection exchanges and co-operation; and
 - (iii) Invite DES Inspectorate to evaluate ETI work on Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics (PIEM).

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

6. The Council welcomed the continuing progress being made by the two Education Departments and the Middletown Centre for Autism in expanding the Centre's range of services, which are tailored to meet the specific needs of each jurisdiction; and noted that expansion in service has included:-
 - (i) recruitment of additional staff and refurbishment of an existing residential block as office accommodation;
 - (ii) the provision in the North of intensive multi-disciplinary educational assessment and learning to an increased number of children with complex autism;
 - (iii) piloting provision of direct outreach assessment and learning to children in the South;
 - (iv) training for educational professionals and parents in both jurisdictions; and
 - (v) expansion in the availability of online information and training resources for parents and professionals.

7. Ministers also noted that the Centre's 2014-2017 Corporate and Business Plans have been approved by both departments, and welcomed the preparations for a two-day international conference which the Centre for Autism is hosting in Dublin in January 2015 on the theme of *Enabling Education*. The conference programme will be delivered by leading experts in autistic spectrum disorders and will be targeted at education professionals; parents and carers; and people who have autism.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Teacher Mobility

8. Ministers also welcomed the continued commitment of both Education Departments to work with the Teaching Councils North and South to remove outstanding obstacles to teacher mobility on the island.
9. They noted that work on progressing a desk-based Qualifications Assessment process will commence following completion of the professional accreditation of revised programmes of initial teacher education in the South, expected to be completed in early 2015.

Irish Language Requirement

10. The Council noted that the Teaching Council Ireland (TCI) is progressing the development of outcomes-based criteria for the Irish Language Requirement registration condition with a view to securing TCI's approval in December 2014 and with a view to making them available to St Mary's University College and other Higher Education Institution (HEI) providers.

North/South Irish Medium Programme of Work

11. Ministers also welcomed the ongoing implementation of a programme plan for 2014/15 developed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) approved by both Departments in September 2014.

Independent Evaluation of the North South Collaborative Programme of Work in Irish Medium Education

12. Ministers were advised that an independent evaluation of the first four years of the North South collaborative programme of work (2010/11 to 2013/14) is underway and due for completion by the end of 2014. It was also noted that the outcome of the evaluation will inform thinking on the focus of the programme of work going forward.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)

13. It was noted that the 12th Annual SCoTENS conference had taken place on 21 and 22 October 2014.

SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

14. The Council noted the ongoing activities of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work and to welcome in particular the Committee's plan to develop a formal mechanism for the recognition of youth work training programmes at all levels on the island of Ireland.
15. Ministers welcomed the range of activities being delivered in 2014 under the Causeway Youth Exchange programme which provides an important foundation for young people on these islands to explore together identity in a collaborative and respectful environment, and build capacity for these young people to engage actively in ever more diverse communities.

OTHER BUSINESS

16. The Council approved the appointment of Mr Tarlach Ó Crosáin to the Board of the Trade and Business Development Body from 22 October 2014 to 12 December 2015.
17. The Council, on behalf of Waterways Ireland, approved the sale of the freehold interest in property at 9 Hanover Quay, Dublin 2.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18. The Council agreed to hold the next NSMC Education meeting in March 2015.

Joint Secretariat
22 October 2014

Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org