

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ED 1 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

2 APRIL 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth NSMC Education meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Office in Armagh on 2 April 2014. The meeting was attended by John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn, TD, Minister for Education and Skills, and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development. Minister O'Dowd chaired the meeting.

SECTORAL PRIORITIES

2. Ministers had a discussion on various priorities for the Education sector and noted that these will be contained in a report to be considered at a future NSMC Institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review into sectoral priorities.

FUTURE SECTORAL WORK PROGRAMME

3. Ministers received a joint presentation from key Departmental officials on cross-border co-operation between the Departments on educational underachievement.

4. The Council noted the developments since the last NSMC meeting including that a joint Departmental workshop on Educational Under-achievement was held in Armagh on 25 March 2014 and the outcomes from this workshop will be reported to the next meeting.
5. Ministers agreed to the development of proposals to scope a cross-border pilot in support of leadership development involving existing groups of principals in both jurisdictions.

COOPERATION BETWEEN INSPECTORATES

6. Ministers received a joint presentation from the Chief Inspectors of the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on their programme of co-operation.
7. They also approved the continuing efforts of both Inspectorates to extend co-operative activities including their plans to implement the following key actions in 2014:
 - Joint North-South work on Literacy and Numeracy leading to joint publications of good practice during 2014;
 - Enhancing inspection exchanges to involve inspecting with authority in the other jurisdiction;
 - Joint inspection in agricultural colleges and in Irish Medium Education;
 - DES Inspectorate/Educational Research Centre evaluation of ETI work on Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics (PIEM); and
 - Joint work on the development of inspection of well-being in schools.

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.
9. In recognition of Education Ministers' desire to ensure the Centre continues to play an important role in the support provided to children with autism, their parents and education professionals, they indicated their intention for a ministerial visit to take place to the Centre before summer 2014.

TEACHER MOBILITY

10. The Council welcomed the commitment of both Education Departments to continue to work with the relevant Teaching Councils to remove outstanding obstacles to teacher mobility on the island.

11. Ministers welcomed the decision of the Teaching Council Ireland (TCI) to simplify qualification assessment through an increase in the use of an in-house desk assessment of applications received.
12. They also noted that the TCI in consultation with the General Teaching Council (GTCNI), is also working to simplify assessment of qualifications of teachers for the purposes of their registration with the TCI and that this process will follow on from the completion of work on the review and redesign of teacher education programmes in Ireland, expected to finish in the first quarter of 2015.

NORTH/SOUTH IRISH MEDIUM PROGRAMME OF WORK

13. Ministers noted that both Departments continue to work to make it easier for teachers from the North to undertake the qualification to meet the necessary conditions of the Irish Language Requirement in the south .
14. They also welcomed the agreement by all stakeholders that the way is open for St Mary's University College Belfast to deliver the language qualification, possibly in an on-line format, subject to validation of the programme by the Teaching Council Ireland.
15. The Council noted that the Collaborative Programme of Work plan in Irish Medium Education for 2013/14, developed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service approved by both Departments in November 2013, is currently being implemented.

STANDING CONFERENCE ON TEACHER EDUCATION NORTH AND SOUTH (SCOTENS)

16. Ministers welcomed the decision of three funding Departments (DE, DEL and DES) to retain funding of SCoTENS at the current level for the incoming year 2014/15.

SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

17. The Council noted the ongoing work of the Dissolving Boundaries Teams during the 2013-14 school year.
18. They also noted the ongoing work of the North South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work in Ireland, and that of the Youth Council and Léargas in promoting the Causeway Youth Exchange Programme.
19. Ministers agreed for a presentation to be made at a future NSMC meeting by the NI Youth Council and the National Youth Council for Ireland on the linkages between the two organisations.

OTHER BUSINESS

20. The Council approved the appointment of Mr John Pollock to the post of Chief Executive of the Loughs Agency with effect from 2 April 2014.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21. The Council agreed to hold the next NSMC Education meeting on 22nd October 2014.

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Website www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org