



Research and Information Service

Addendum to the Integrated Education Bill Paper

This paper has been produced as an addendum to the Integrated Education Bill Paper by the NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe).

It contains data requested from the Department of Education NI by RaISe and is intended to further inform the Committee for Education in its scrutiny of the Bill; in particular, Clauses 1 and 5.

1 Further data relative to Clause 1 - Consideration of ‘Reasonable Numbers’

In order to support the Committee in its scrutiny of Clause 1, the Department was asked to provide data on the number of integrated and non-integrated schools with a religious breakdown of at least 10% and at least 30% of pupils from the minority community (Protestant or Catholic) in 2020/21.

This data was requested in light of the fact that Clause 1 provides an updated definition of integrated education, to include not only Protestant and Catholic pupils, but also pupils from different cultural and religious beliefs and of none, and to encompass pupils of differing socio-economic backgrounds and abilities. Whilst Clause 1 makes specific reference to ‘reasonable numbers’ of both Protestant and Catholic children or young people, these are not quantified in the form of targets. This is consistent with Section 66(2) of the 1989 Order and Section 2(2) of the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016¹ which refer to ‘reasonable numbers’ only. However, whilst not defined in existing legislation, the aim for new integrated schools, and those schools wishing to transform to integrated status, has been to achieve a minimum of 10 percent of their first year intake drawn from the minority tradition and, in the longer term, to attract at least 30 percent of pupils from the minority tradition within the school’s enrolment².

Data received from the Department reveals that almost three quarters of integrated schools (72% or 47 schools) had a religious breakdown of pupils that fell below the threshold of 30% of pupils from the minority community (Protestant or Catholic) in 2020/21.³ This comprised:

¹ Legislation.gov.uk *Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016* [online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/20/section/2>

² Department of Education *Establishing an Integrated School* [online] Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/establishing-integrated-school>

³ Data provided by the Department of Education, October 2021, analysis by RaISe

- 20 out of 22 controlled integrated primaries;
- 14 out of 23 grant-maintained integrated primaries;
- All five controlled integrated post-primaries; and
- Eight out of 15 grant-maintained integrated post-primaries.

Further analysis of available data⁴ shows that a large number of integrated schools have a significant proportion of students with no religion, other religion or unknown religion. Of the controlled integrated schools, 11 primary schools and four post-primary schools have at least 30% of pupils with this designation. The numbers for the grant maintained integrated sector are ten and two schools respectively.⁵

It should be noted that the above does not reflect the religious composition of the four schools that acquired controlled integrated status in 2021. The 2021/22 school census is currently being undertaken, therefore, the impact on enrolments is yet to be determined.

Nonetheless, when reflecting on reference to ‘reasonable numbers’ at Clause 1, consideration should be given to the fact that a sizeable proportion of integrated schools did not have at least 30% of pupils from the minority tradition (Protestant or Catholic) in 2020/21.

1.1 Controlled and maintained schools with a significant minority pupil population

Table 1 shows that, when excluding integrated schools, a total of 85 primary and post-primary schools have at least 10% of students from the minority community. The majority of these schools are controlled schools, comprising 65% of schools that have at least 10% from the minority community.

Just ten non-integrated schools have at least 30% from the minority community.

Table 1: Schools where at least 10% or 30% of the pupil population come from the minority religious background in 2020/21⁶

Management type	Minimum 10%		Minimum 30%	
	Primary*	Post primary	Primary*	Post primary
Controlled	45	10	2	3
Voluntary	8	12	1	1
Catholic Maintained	8	2	2	1
Other Maintained	0	0	0	0
Total	61	24	5	5

* Figures for primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes

⁴ Source: NI School Census, accessed 2nd November 2021 at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolment-school-level-date-202021>. Analysis by RalSe.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2021, analysis by RalSe.

2 Further data relative to Clause 5 – Promotion of Integrated Education

If enacted, the Bill would require the Department of Education to promote integrated education, in addition to the existing duties of encouraging and facilitating it. It would also amend Section 2(3) of the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014⁷ so as to require the EA to encourage, facilitate and promote integrated education.

Clause 5 defines ‘promotion’ as follows:

- a) identifying, assessing, monitoring and aiming to increase the demand for the provision of integrated education (including, in particular, monitoring the number and success of applications for integrated education), and
- b) providing sufficient places in integrated schools to meet the demand for integrated education (including expected future demand, and without treating the religious demographics of an area or spare places in existing schools as evidence of lack of demand for integrated education).

To further support the Committee in its scrutiny of Clause 5, RalSe requested data from the Department relative to ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ in the integrated education sector. The following paragraphs present the information received in relation to assessment for demand, applications for integrated school places, and levels of over and undersubscription.

2.1 *Assessment of Demand*

The Department confirmed that it does not assess demand for individual sectors for the purposes of long-term planning⁸.

It further noted that data on the preferences nominated by parents for individual schools is held by the Education Authority (EA), given EA’s role in facilitating the school admissions processes. Data on applications to schools, including the number of preferences considered by each school and the number of children placed at each preference, is published on the EA’s website.⁹

2.2 *Applications to integrated schools*

Data shared by the Department reveals that, for the 2021 Year 8 post-primary admissions process, **84.07%** of children who applied at first preference to an integrated post-primary school were admitted to that school. Across all schools the figure was **84.49%**.

For the Year 1 process, **96.58%** of children who applied to an integrated primary school at first preference got into that school. Across all schools, the figure was **98.25%**.

⁷ Legislation.gov.uk *Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014*: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/12/section/2>

⁸ Information provided by the Department of Education, November 2021

⁹ Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2021

2.3 Available places

Table 2 demonstrates that, for the last three years, integrated schools have had fewer available places than non-integrated settings. Most recently, 12.4% of places in integrated primaries were available compared with almost one fifth in non-integrated primary schools. Whilst there were consistently fewer available places in integrated post-primaries between 2018/19 and 2020/21, the difference has narrowed over the last three years.

Table 2: Percentage of available places¹⁰

	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Integrated	Non-integrated	Integrated	Non-integrated	Integrated	Non-integrated
Primary	12.1%	20.5%	12.2%	20.6%	12.4%	19.4%
Post-primary (non-grammar)	12.6%	20.1%	11%	16.5%	10.3%	14.7%

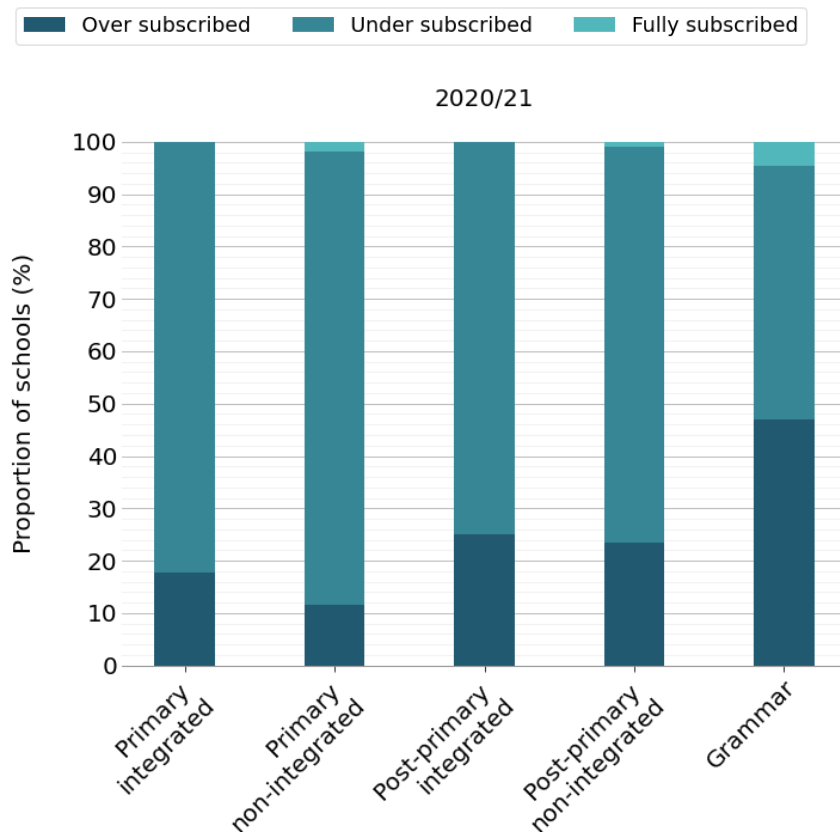
2.4 Levels of over- and undersubscription

Figure 1 (overleaf) illustrates the levels of oversubscription and undersubscription at integrated and non-integrated schools in Northern Ireland in 2020/21. It shows that a greater proportion of integrated primary schools (17.8%) were oversubscribed in comparison to non-integrated primaries (11.5%). Nonetheless, 82.2% of integrated primary schools were undersubscribed. This compares with 86.6% of non-integrated primary schools.

Figure 1 also highlights that a slightly higher proportion of integrated post-primaries (25%) were oversubscribed compared to non-integrated non-grammar post-primaries (23.4%), but that a much higher proportion of grammar schools (47.0%) were oversubscribed. It also shows that a similar proportion of integrated (75%) and non-integrated non-grammar (75.7%) post-primaries were undersubscribed in 2020/21.

¹⁰ Department of Education (2018, 2019, 2020), Integrated Education in Primary and Post-Primary Schools – Key Statistics, Belfast: Department of Education.

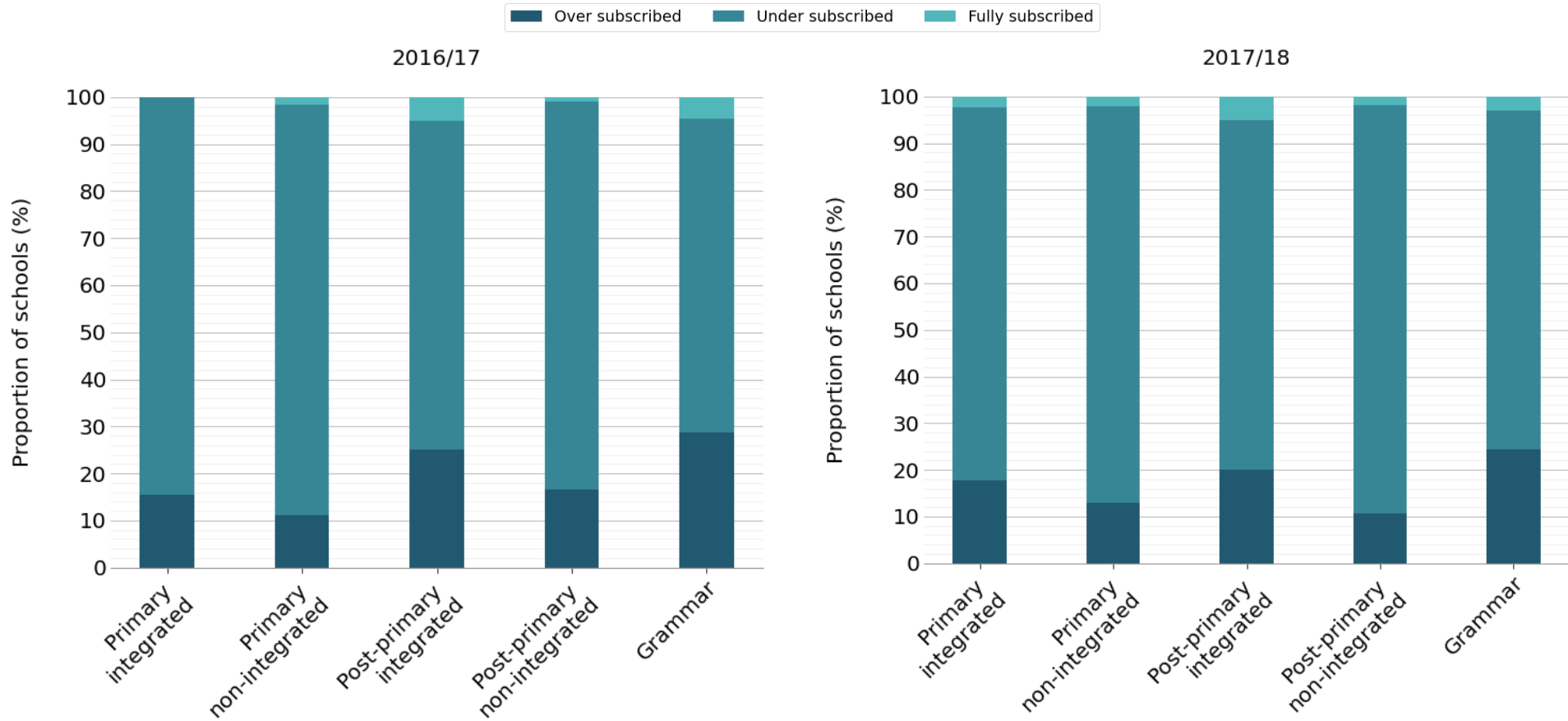
Figure 1. Proportion of schools over, under or fully subscribed in 2020/21¹¹



Further analysis of data reveals a similar pattern in levels of over and undersubscription in integrated and non-integrated settings between 2016/17 and 2019/20, as presented in the figures overleaf. Year-on-year, integrated primary and post-primaries had slightly higher levels of oversubscription than non-integrated schools, with the exception of grammar schools. However, in each year, a sizeable proportion of integrated schools were undersubscribed.

¹¹ Data provided by the Department of Education, October 2021, analysis by RaSe

Figure 2. Proportion of schools over, under or fully subscribed between 2016/17 and 2019/20¹².



¹² Data provided by the Department of Education, October 2021, analysis by RaiSe

