

Dear Assembly Department of Education Committee

Firstly apologies for the lateness of this response.

The Co-operative Party Northern Ireland which is part of the wider Co-operative Party (Which has elected members in Westminster , The Scottish Parliament , The Welsh Parliament , The London Assembly , Metro Mayors & almost 1,000 Councillors in England , Scotland & Wales) welcomes the chance to comment on the current Integrated Education Bill.

Our Party , as the Political wing of the Co-operative Movement , has at its very core the need to work collaboratively for the greater good. We see the philosophy of co-operation in everything we believe in.

To that end we fundamentally believe in the need for everyone in society to live , work , socialise together for the greater good.

It is a tenant of our beliefs that children should not be segregated at an early age. In an increasingly secular society but which retains many for whom their faith is very important we believe that protective structures can be built into an education system that allows for children to be taught together for Core Curriculum subjects such as Maths , English , History , Geography etc but with built in time where pupils , together , can learn the principles of the main religions & to be taught separately in their own specific faith that they aspire to.

Many of us have lived through segregated schooling , housing , employment etc. It is a scandal that for many their first time to meet someone of another religion is when they go to Further or Higher Education.

We owe it to the young people of Northern Ireland to leave them something better than we had.

Therefore the Party Council of the Co-operative Party Northern Ireland welcomes the current Integrated Education Bill as a start in breaking down barriers between young people & is a step towards building a more shared , inclusive future. We are happy to endorse the Bill.

Yours Sincerely

Tony McMullan
Chair
Co-operative Party Northern Ireland