

FROM THE MINISTER/ÓN AIRE

SUB 5/2015

Michelle McIlveen MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Education
Room 310
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Tel: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]
Dialling codes: 028 from north of Ireland
048 from south of Ireland

8 January 2015

Michelle a chara

As you know, the Education Bill to establish the new Education Authority (EA) that will replace the five Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission received Royal Assent on 11 December (Education Act (NI) 2014) with the intention that the EA will be established by 1 April 2015, when Local Government Reform will be implemented.

The Education Act provides for an EA Board that will be made up of a Chair and 20 members. Eight of those members will be “political members” nominated by the relevant political parties. The other 12 members and the Chair will be appointed by me as Minister for Education.

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of progress towards the appointment of the EA Board in advance of 1 April 2015.

Non-political members of the EA Board

In accordance with the Education Act, the 12 non-political members of the EA Board will be:

- four persons appearing to the Department of Education (DE) to represent the interests of Transferors of Controlled Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests;
- four persons appearing to DE to represent the interests of Trustees of Maintained Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests;
- one person appearing to DE to represent the interests of Integrated Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests;

- one person appearing to DE to represent the interests of Voluntary Grammar Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests;
- one person appearing to DE to represent the interests of Controlled Grammar Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests; and
- one person appearing to DE to represent the interests of Irish-Medium Schools, appointed after consultation with persons or bodies appearing to DE to represent such interests.

The process to appoint the 12 non-political members is currently ongoing and I would expect those members to be identified in March 2015 for appointment by 1 April 2015.

Political Membership

The eight political members will be nominated by the nominating officer of the relevant political parties in accordance with the D'Hondt formula as applied to the number of Assembly seats that were held by members of the party on the day the Assembly first met following the May 2011 election. The outcome of this (set out in detail in the enclosed Annex) is that Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party will each nominate three members to political membership of the EA Board. The Ulster Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party will each nominate one member.

I have also written to the nominating officers of these parties to alert them to their pending nominations so they can begin their consideration of the matter. I will write to them again during week commencing 2 February 2015 to formally request their nominations which, in accordance with the Education Act, are required to be made within seven days of the DE's request. The timeframe for these nominations has been drawn up to correspond with the appointment of the other EA members to ensure that the full membership of the Board is in place by 1 April 2015.

Responsibilities and remuneration

Regardless of the method by which they are nominated or appointed, all members of the EA Board will be expected to act corporately in fully discharging the responsibilities that come with the position. They will also be expected to sign up to and adhere to the *Principles of Public Life* and a Code of Conduct. All members, political and non-political, must be ready and able to play their full part as Board members of the EA, giving the necessary time commitment of five days per month.

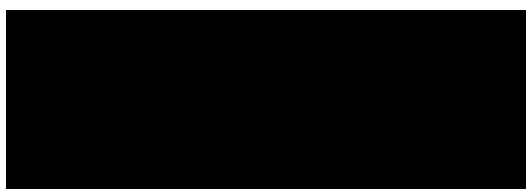
In keeping with this and because of the demanding nature of the role, I have decided that all members of the EA Board should be remunerated at a rate of £8,800 pa. However, any member who already works in the public sector cannot be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. Therefore, to avoid double payment of remuneration or travelling expenses, if any member is employed within the public sector, DE will agree with the appointee and the other employer the arrangements for the retention of such costs.

The term of office for non-political members will be for four years from the formal establishment of the EA. For political members, the Education Act does not provide for a term of a specified length but does provide that political members will cease to be appointed (and new nominations will be sought) in the event of certain changes in the Executive and Assembly as defined under the 1998 Act (eg an Assembly Election). Otherwise, the Education Act provides that a political member may resign and that, in this event, the original nominating party may nominate a new member.

Conclusion

I hope that the information I have provided in this letter will prove helpful. If you have any queries on the content of this letter, please speak to DE officials [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED] who will be happy to provide clarification or further information.



JOHN O'DOWD MLA
Minister for Education