



**BRAIDSIDE INTEGRATED PRIMARY
AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

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Principal: Mr R Scott

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18-1-2013

Education Minister
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Cc: Mervyn Storey, Chair of the Education Committee
Helen McHugh, NICIE

Dear Minister

I write on behalf of the Board of Governors of Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School. We note that the Education Bill to establish ESA is at present in committee stage in the Assembly. We wish to bring to your attention the following significant concerns which we have with this Bill in its present form.

Both the Education Reform Order (1989) and the Belfast Agreement (1998) place an obligation on the Department of Education to "encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education that is the education together of Catholic and Protestant children". Under clause 2(5) of the Education Bill, there is a duty on ESA to encourage and facilitate the development of education in an Irish speaking school but no corresponding duty on ESA regarding integrated education.

Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School argues that the Education Bill should be amended to reference the statutory obligation to encourage and facilitate integrated education.

There is an absence of representation for integrated education on the board of ESA as constituted at the moment. The board therefore reflects the segregated nature of

our educational system and divided society. It is essential that there is representation from the integrated movement on the board in order to help meet the statutory obligation referred to above

Where is the representation on ESA for the staff, children and families who are part of an integrated school and the much greater number of the wider public who support this type of education? It is inequitable and unjust that those choosing Integrated Education should be denied representation on the Board of ESA.

Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School requests representation for the integrated sector, as of right, on the board of ESA

The Education Bill outlines responsibilities under Area Based Planning for the establishment of new controlled and new Catholic Maintained schools but there appears to be no mechanism for the establishment of new integrated schools either controlled or grant maintained. It is not clear how a new integrated school might open under ESA or how parental demand for integration might be supported under ESA.

Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School argues that a mechanism for opening new integrated schools should be written into the Education Bill.

This school, along with the wider integrated movement, has grave concerns about the limitations of ABP in its present form, based as it is on a sectarian headcount of children within the straitjacket of the existing sectors.

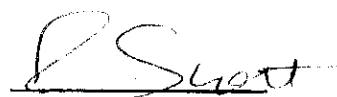
Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School argues there should be a duty on ESA to maximize opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools

Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School understands that the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education has submitted a number of amendments which would write into the bill an acknowledgement of the statutory obligation to facilitate and encourage Integrated Education and which would ensure representation for Integrated Education on the board. Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School registers their support of these amendments.

Finally, we see an opportunity in ESA to shape a new educational landscape, one which does not reflect or further embed the divisions of the past. We hope that steps will be taken to ensure that ESA can play a positive role in working towards a shared future,

The omission of this commitment from the Bill and the almost total failure to mention Integrated Education in any parts of the Bill is striking and concerning. We trust our concerns will be acted on and that this situation will be rectified.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. S. Scott', written in a cursive style.

Principal, on behalf of the Board of Governors.