



Shimna Integrated College

The Lawnfield, King Street, Newcastle, BT33 0HD

T: (028) 4372 6107 F: (028) 4372 6109

E: info@shimna.newcastle.ni.sch.uk

W: www.shimnacollege.org.uk

Principal: Kevin Lambe B.A. (Hons) M. Ed., Dip. Ed.

John O'Dowd MLA
Minister of Education
NI Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

18 January 2013

Dear Minister

I write on behalf of the Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College. 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 grave concerns 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.

The Board of Governors at Shimna Integrated College believes that the Education Bill must be amended to enshrine this statutory obligation to encourage and facilitate integrated education in the bill.

There is no representation for integrated education on ESA, as constituted at the moment. ESA therefore perpetuates the segregated nature of our educational system and divided society. In order to meet the statutory obligation referred to above there must be representation from the integrated movement on the board.

Shimna Integrated College will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in the 2013/2014 year. Should ESA be established without representation for Integrated Education, twenty generations of Shimna students, all the parents and staff who have been involved over twenty years, will be without representation.

So many polls have shown that the majority of parents want to see further integration on offer. So many politicians have cited segregation in all its manifestations in relation to the rise in dissident activity and also in loyalist protests. It is inequitable and unjust, and

"Learning from each other"

also counterproductive, that those choosing Integrated Education should be denied representation on the Board of ESA.

The Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College 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.

The Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College argues that the mechanism for opening new integrated schools must be written into the Education Bill

This school, along with the wider integrated movement, has grave concerns about the limitations of ABP as the model used to date to frame the area based planning process, based as it is on a sectarian headcount of children within the straitjacket of the existing sectors.

The Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College argues there should be a duty on ESA to maximize opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools

The Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College 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. The Board of Governors of Shimna Integrated College registers its support for 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 seek assurance that every step will be taken to ensure that ESA can play a positive role in shaping such a future,

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

Yours sincerely



Jennifer Temple
Chair of Governors - Shimna Integrated College

Cc: Mervyn Storey, Chair of the Education Committee
Members of the Education Committee