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Evidence for Education Committee

Shared and Integrated Education

Introduction and Background

Cranmore Integrated Primary School was established in 1993 as an all-ability integrated primary school. The school initially opened with 37 pupils and 3 teaching staff in rented accommodation off the Lisburn Road, Belfast.

Demand, Growth and Expansion

In the last two decades the school has grown and developed beyond the imagination of the founding Principal staff, governors and parents. In September 2001 the school relocated to a new purpose built school on a site off Finaghy Road North. The school is a very popular choice both in the local community but also across south Belfast and beyond. The school has a current enrolment of 208 with a further 24 children attending the attached pre-school setting. Year on year we are oversubscribed for places in the school and pre-school.

Parental demand for integrated education has been growing steadily over the last two decades. In the transforming Northern Irish society many parents are opting to have their children educated together in an integrated context, in an effort to heal many of the sectarian divisions that have caused so much trauma in Northern Irish society. Indeed many of the pupils in our school come from areas where periodic inter community difficulties are a regular feature. However our parents have a great desire for their children to experience tolerance, respect and understanding of difference. They recognise that these aspirations are delivered by integrated schools like Cranmore. Indeed, many of our parents deliberately choose to drive past local schools and in many cases schools with excellent reputation so that their children can attend Cranmore.

...a creative education for the modern Belfast child.

Cranmore Integrated Primary School Ltd Company Registration No: NI027338



Shared Education vs Integrated Education

Shared Education and Integrated Education cannot be seen as one and the same. They are two different models, with different aspirations and with varying degrees of success. Integrated Education has at its core the desire to see young people from Protestant, Catholic, other or no religious background educated together. Opportunities for achieving this are presented to the staff and pupils on a daily basis, sometimes in a formal way and at other times informally.

In recent years it has become fashionable for other schools to market themselves as ‘integrated’. In doing so these schools hope to attract additional pupils based on claims they are ‘a naturally integrated school’. Integration is not about ‘mixed’ schools nor is it about children from different backgrounds sitting in the same classroom. Integrated education is about a much deeper commitment to providing our young people with a child-centred education in the context of a school where everyone is driven by the values of the promotion of equality and good community relations.

While there are good examples of collaboration between schools these projects are mostly ineffective as they focus on the issues at the time and provide nice encounter sessions between schools but they are rarely followed up when funding is no longer available. Any attempt to define shared education must not be an opportunity to propogate this model at the expense of integrated education.

Integrated education is a project for the long term stability of Northern Irish society. Attempts at shared education and providing funding for short term projects merely tinkers at the edge of the problems of sectarianism and division. Integrated schools have survived and prospered despite community tensions, a reluctance to challenge and change the status quo, issues with enrolment, accommodation and finance in the early days of existence.

Integrated education in many parts of Northern Ireland has shown that with tenacity we can overcome the barriers. However, integrated education is not as widespread an option as it should be nor could be due to those barriers.

Barriers and Enablers for Integrated Education

<u>Barriers</u>	<u>Enablers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of integrated education in Belfast is very small and yet 66% of parents want to see the percentage of pupils attending integrated school rise from 4% to 33%. (Belfast Telegraph survey)• DE cap on enrolment numbers for integrated schools. (Cranmore IPS is currently capped at 203 and all classes are full)• Integrated primary schools have never been able to open with nursery provision. This is the reason why many of our schools have voluntary playgroups. The Minister has resisted several attempts by integrated schools to change from playgroup to nursery status – the argument of displacement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parental demand for integration is strong as indicated by many surveys and opinion polls.• Demographic change has led many to see the importance of educating children together.• The number of newcomer families in Belfast has created a greater desire to see children educated together.• Changing mind-sets – parents no longer send their children to the school they attended.• Increasing number of parents have the experience of having attended an integrated school themselves.• Commitment between stakeholders to the school ethos.• Performance of many integrated schools

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Shared Education agenda could impact on Integrated Education. Parents and the wider community may think that provision for sharing is the same as integration. • Development proposals are considered on the basis of impact on nearby schools. This ignores parental demand and also that the ethos, philosophy and general character of schools is different depending on the sector. • Area based planning focusses on consolidating and a rationalising of the existing segregated system of education. • DE failure to fulfil the statutory duty to facilitate the development of integrated education as set out in article 64 of the 1989 Education Reform Order. • Pre-school settings seen as non-sectoral and non-denominational. This is not the case for the vast majority of these settings the children in attendance are predominantly from one religious background. • The decision to form a single Education and Library Board is a lost opportunity and a lost voice to promote integrated education. The new ELB will have no direct representation from the sector. 	<p>during ETI inspections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model of Integrated Education is help in high esteem across the world. • Cranmore IPS like many other integrated schools has hosted delegations of students, teachers and philanthropists from around the world who are keen to find out more about our good practice.
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- Please note the Board of Governors of Cranmore IPS have submitted two development proposals to change our PEAG funded playgroup to nursery status. Despite being oversubscribed year on year and with an established building which would require little capital spend from DE the Minister has refused the proposals. The Minister has cited his reason as displacement of existing PEAG placement. We dispute this and see a change to nursery status as a way of enhancing early years education in our area.
- Playgroup and Nursery provision is not a level playing field. A voluntary playgroup is funded differently, professional staff have no access to services provided by the local ELB such as psychology, Education Welfare and SEN support.
- A further inequality exists in that the early years curriculum is the same for both settings but a voluntary playgroup is inspected both by ETI and annually by Social Services. The restrictions on staff ratio and vetting procedures required by Social Services is a bureaucratic nightmare for the leader of a voluntary playgroup.

Conclusion

It is firmly our belief that planned integrated education offers the following benefits:

- Integrated education provides a united community wherein difference is celebrated, diversity and respect are at the core of the school ethos. Opportunities arise informally and formally on a daily basis to explore difference and celebrate our shared traditions and beliefs.

- Good examples of community cohesion is delivered without the difficulty of reaching agreement across different schools. There is no impact on timetabling, no need for the added expense of a neutral venue and additional transport.
- Financially integrated schools meet the needs of the whole school community without over duplication of resources.
- Educating our children together allows pupils to experience good practice in relation to conflict resolution, peer negotiation, CRED, PDMU and citizenship on a daily basis with their own peer/friendship groups.

Yours faithfully

Mr William Doherty
Principal