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Your ref: PMcC/JW/1727

4 November 2014

Dear Peter

CRED / SHARING CATEGORISATION

Your correspondence of 24 October refers.

Officials would be happy to provide the Committee with a briefing on the Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy.

As the Committee will be aware, the Department launched its CRED policy in March 2011. The policy is supported by the CRED Enhancement Scheme which provides funding support for the policy and is available to schools and youth organisations. The 2014/15 budget for the Scheme is £1.2 million.

Until 2010, DE provided annual funding of approximately £3.6m for a range of Community Relations schemes. At this time a total of twenty six external organisations were provided with funding. The new CRED policy was designed to move away from the dependency on external organisations in delivering community relations, equality and diversity by seeking to embed this work firmly within educational settings by providing a strong skills base for educators and the teaching resources required.

As the Committee is aware, there is currently no legal definition of Shared Education. It is the Minister's intention to bring forward a stand-alone Bill which will provide a legislative definition and define the role of the Department and its arm's length bodies. This will be supported by a Shared Education Policy, which will set out the rationale, vision and objectives for Shared Education.

The Committee will wish to note that the Terms of Reference for the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project explicitly state that Shared Education means the provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together. Detailed Terms of Reference for the Shared Education Peace IV Programme have not yet been developed.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer



Northern Ireland
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Committee for Education

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24 October 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/JW/1727

Dear Veronica

CRED / Sharing Categorisation

At its meeting on Wednesday 22 October 2014, the Committee noted correspondence (appended) from the Speedway Trust to the COFMDFM inquiry into T:BUC.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a briefing on the Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy as part of the Committee's inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education. The Committee also agreed to request confirmation regarding reported reductions in funding for CRED and clarification in respect of the categorisation of Shared Education projects. In particular, clarity is sought regarding the question raised by the Speedwell Trust as to whether a Catholic Maintained school sharing with a Catholic Voluntary Grammar would be deemed an example of

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Shared Education which would attract support from the Peace IV or Signature Shared Education Programmes.

A response by 7 November 2014 would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

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**Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Office of the
First Minister and the deputy First Minister**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

Submission from the Speedwell Trust October 2014

Executive Summary

We believe that schools have a central role to play in improving community relations and in building a united community in Northern Ireland. The need for all schools to facilitate cross-community contact for their pupils on a regular basis is clear. The evidence suggests that nearly a quarter (24%) of young people in Northern Ireland who consider themselves either 'Protestant' or 'Catholic' have no friends from the 'other' main religious community. Moreover, 45% of 16 year olds report having nowhere in their area where they could meet young people from a different religious background. There is also robust evidence that cross-community friendships and social activity are more likely among young people who have been given opportunities at school or in youth groups to mix with their counterparts on a cross-community basis.

The current level of participation by schools in cross-community shared education and community relations programmes is disappointing; of the 568 schools which responded to a recent survey on 'shared education' by the Department of Education, only 306 (54%) had been involved in shared education on a cross-community basis.

In our view, there are three principal barriers to participation in cross-community collaboration by schools. The first and most important is undoubtedly that schools are not required to facilitate cross-community engagement for their pupils. Related to this is the lack of any statutory definition of shared education which defines it as cross-community activity. The third barrier is a lack of funding.

Our recommendations to the Committee are as follows:

- OFMdFM should produce an annual progress report, published in a timely fashion, with regard to the good relations indicators which it monitors.

- OFMdFM's 'Good Relations Indicators' reports should provide more analysis and should present recommendations for policy changes which might enhance progress towards improved community relations.
- OFMdFM should clarify the term 'community relations participation' by schools in its good relations indicators reports, and should introduce the following additional indicators:
 - The extent to which schools are providing opportunities for meaningful and sustained cross-community contact for pupils
 - The extent of cross-community friendships among children and young people
 - Whether children and young people have anywhere to meet their counterparts from the other main community
- The Committee should investigate the extent of and reasons for any delays by OFMdFM in making and communicating decisions on applications to its Central Good Relations Fund 2014/2015.
- The Education Minister should bring forward, at the earliest possible opportunity, a statutory definition of shared education which makes explicit that it must involve meaningful cross-community interaction by pupils on a sustained basis.
- Using this definition, the Department of Education must make it a statutory obligation for schools to ensure that all their pupils are provided with the opportunity to participate in shared education on a regular basis.
- The Department must also make available sufficient funding to ensure that all schools can ensure that their pupils have the opportunity to participate in meaningful cross-community shared education and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) programmes on a regular basis.
- The Department must institute a robust system of monitoring which enables it to evaluate, on a regular basis, whether and how each individual school is implementing shared education and CRED, including the extent and quality of cross-community engagement which is offered by each school.
- The Department should introduce an award scheme for schools which provide outstanding examples of good practice in shared education and CRED.

In addition, we believe that consideration should be given to synthesising the Department's shared education and CRED policies as there is clearly a considerable degree of overlap between them. However, if this is done, it is vital that the definition of shared education remains one which gives a central role to the importance of cross-community contact between Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren. Clearly, religious division is only one form of division in Northern Ireland, and we welcome the fact that CRED is also designed to address other divisions and stereotypes. At the same time, Northern Ireland will be unable to move forward into a truly harmonious and peaceful society if its most fundamental division is not addressed in schools.

Introduction

The Trust greatly welcomes the decision by the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to hold an inquiry into an issue which is of fundamental importance to the future stability and prosperity of Northern Ireland, and to the quality of life of its people. The Trust's own experience lies in its work in assisting schools to collaborate together in shared education and other cross-community programmes. The Trust is dedicated, in particular, to bringing together children from the two main religious communities in Northern Ireland.

For this reason, our submission focuses on the role of schools in facilitating cross-community interaction. We also consider the role of parents in this regard. However, we have not looked at the many other elements and issues involved in building greater cross-community activity and understanding, as these lie outside our direct experience. Although we believe that there are many very important ways in which we can develop a more peaceful and united community, we do believe that schools have a central role to play in progressing such work.

The Speedwell Trust

The Speedwell Trust is a charity which has 23 years' experience of delivering educational programmes designed to facilitate constructive contact and greater understanding between children from different religious and cultural backgrounds. It is based near Dungannon, but works with schools and youth groups across Northern Ireland and, on occasion, in border areas in the Republic of Ireland. To date, the Trust has provided services to more than 200 schools. Within the last financial year alone (2013/14), Speedwell delivered programmes in partnership with more than 100 schools.

Perspectives on sectarianism, division and good relations

Theory and practice with regard to good relations, shared space and shared services

The benefit of cross-community programmes for young people

One of the main reasons that cross-community contact between children and young people is so crucial is that the evidence suggests that a significant minority – just under a quarter – of young people in Northern Ireland who would consider themselves either 'Protestant' or 'Catholic' have no friends from the main religious community in which they did not grow up. In 2012, the annual Northern Ireland Young Life and Times (YLT) survey found that 24% of 16 year olds from the Protestant or Catholic religious community reported having no friends in the other main religious community.¹ Moreover, a previous YLT survey, carried out in 2011, found that such friendships were more likely among those who had previously participated in a cross-community scheme, or who had attended a planned integrated school.² Those who fall into these categories were also more likely to socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community.³

Furthermore, 45% of respondents to the 2012 YLT survey said that there were no facilities in their area where they could meet young people of a different religion, and 77% thought that cross-community relations would improve if there were more cross-community projects.⁴

Thus, there is a clear need for all children and young people who regard themselves as belonging to either the Protestant or Catholic community to be provided with opportunities to participate in cross-community programmes – both because these facilitate cross-community friendships and social activity, and because such a high proportion of young people cannot easily meet their counterparts from the ‘other’ community.

In addition, there is specific evidence that children and young people benefit from experiencing such contact on a sustained basis within an educational setting. A research team at Queens University, Belfast, found that children at schools which had participated in a shared education programme run by the University were less worried and more positive about the ‘other’ community than children at schools which did not participate in such a scheme.⁵ This finding applied even when the team confined its comparison to schools which were located in areas viewed as having greater divisions.

The importance of parental attitudes

However, the evidence also suggests that parents have a major influence on the attitudes and friendship patterns of their children. A study which was published in 2010, involving 1,700 children in Northern Ireland and 880 of their parents, found that parental social attitudes were the most powerful factor influencing the social and political attitudes of their children.⁶ This certainly suggests that, if we are to encourage children to have open and positive attitudes towards those from different cultural and religious traditions, it is vital to engage with parents as well.

Schools’ participation in shared education and community relations programmes

The current level of participation by schools in cross-community shared education and community relations programmes is disappointing; of the 568 schools which responded to a recent survey on ‘shared education’ by the Department of Education, only 306 (54%) had been involved in shared education on a cross-community basis. In other words, nearly half (262 or 46%) had not participated in cross-community shared education.⁷

Moreover, the survey also found that only 15% of schools which had participated in shared education had done so in a way which involved the whole school.⁸ We believe it is essential that all children from either the Protestant or Catholic tradition in Northern Ireland are given the opportunity to engage in a sustained and meaningful way with children from the other main community on a regular basis. This can only happen if each class in every relevant school is provided with such an opportunity. It is also the only way in which the Programme for Government target, referred to previously, can be achieved.

Furthermore, the 2012 Northern Ireland Kids’ Life and Times Survey, which surveyed children in P7, found that only 58% reported having taken part in an activity with a child from another school.⁹

Although the YLT survey in the same year found that a much larger proportion - 82% - of 16 year olds reported having taken part in such activity, only 72% of those who had participated in shared education (i.e. 59% of the whole sample) said that some of the pupils from other schools had been from a different religious background.¹⁰ It would seem, therefore, that substantial proportions of both primary and post-primary pupils are not being given any opportunity by their own school for cross-community engagement with children from another school.

In addition to shared education, a further route through which schools can facilitate cross-community engagement by their pupils is provided by the Department of Education. In 2011, the Department of Education published *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education* (CRED), a new policy which was designed to encourage all schools to foster mutual understanding and good community relations.¹¹ The Department now provides some funding on an annual basis to schools and youth groups to help implement CRED.

The 2011 YLT survey found that 70% of their 16-year old respondents reported having engaged, at some stage, in activity which would fall under the umbrella of the CRED policy, either in school, in a youth group, or in both types of setting. Most of these respondents (60% of the whole sample) had taken part in such activity at school. Conversely, 30% of respondents said they had not participated in such activity.¹² However, this survey did not examine how many of these young people met members of the other main religious community as part of this activity.

We are also very concerned about the level of funding which is made available to schools and youth groups for the implementation of CRED. The Department of Education has significantly reduced the resources which it allocates for the support of community relations in schools. Up to March 2010, it allocated some £3.6m annually for such support in both formal and informal educational settings. It now allocates only £1.2m approx. annually.¹³

Only 15% of schools (181) took part in projects which were allocated funding by the Department through this programme in 2013/14.¹⁴

We further note, from data in OFMdfM's most recent 'Good Relations Indicators' report, that the proportion of schools engaging in community relations activity fell drastically between 2006/07, when it stood at 43%, to 2011/12, when it stood at 21%.¹⁵ It is not clear, from the report, how the OFMdfM data is compiled. It may refer only to schools which have been allocated funding for community relations programmes. Obviously, some schools may participate in community relations activities without recourse to external funding. However, the figures are undoubtedly a cause for concern. Moreover, they mirror informal feedback which we have received from schools which suggests that far fewer schools are now participating in such activity than was the case previously.

Barriers to cross-community collaboration by schools

In our view, there are three principal barriers to participation in cross-community collaboration by schools. The first and most important is undoubtedly that schools are not required to facilitate cross-community engagement for their pupils. Related to this is the lack of any statutory definition of shared education which defines it as cross-community activity. The third barrier is a lack of funding.

As the Committee will be aware, the Northern Ireland Executive's current *Programme for Government 2011–2015* contains a commitment to ensure that all children have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes by 2015.¹⁶ In addition, the OFMdfM policy document, *Together: Building a United Community* (TBUC), contains a commitment to deliver ten 'shared education' campuses.¹⁷ The Education Minister subsequently made a pledge, in January 2014, to deliver on this promise.

However, if shared education is to form a central element of the Executive's approach to cross-community relations, as we believe it most certainly should, it is essential that all involved are using the same clear definition of 'shared education', and that any 'shared education' will facilitate sustained and meaningful contact between children from the two main religious traditions in Northern Ireland.

We have been disappointed, therefore, to discover that there is no clear statutory definition of 'shared education', and that the Executive seems to be using a definition which appears to allow collaboration between Catholic grammar and non-grammar schools, on the one hand, and between predominantly Protestant controlled or voluntary grammar and non-grammar schools, on the other, to be viewed as 'shared education'. It also appears to allow for collaboration between a Catholic primary and Catholic post-primary school, or a predominantly Protestant controlled primary school and a predominantly Protestant controlled or voluntary post-primary school.

The definition in question was drawn up by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education. This Group was tasked by the Executive with providing a set of recommendations on how best to take forward shared education. It reported in March 2013. It defined shared education as follows:

Shared education involves two or more schools or other educational institutions from different sectors working in collaboration with the aim of delivering educational benefits to learners, promoting the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.¹⁸

Crucially, however, the report further clarifies that: "By 'different sectors', the definition refers to schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance."¹⁹ Such a definition seems to allow the 'single community' interpretations referred to above.

Moreover, the impression that something close to the Group's definition is being used by the Department of Education and by schools is reinforced by the fact that, in the "shared education" section of the schools' survey carried out by the Department of Education, referred to earlier, the Department lists a number of types of 'shared education' collaboration in which each school might have participated and includes, as an option, collaboration with a school "from the same sector (e.g. controlled, maintained, integrated, Irish medium)". Thus, although the Department has a different definition of the term 'sector' from the Ministerial Advisory Group, it appears to share the view that 'shared education' does not have to involve cross-community collaboration.²⁰

Any such 'single community' collaboration, while it may bring many other benefits, is not going to facilitate the type of cross-community contact which the evidence shows is so important in helping

to increase cross-community understanding and foster good cross-community relationships in Northern Ireland.

We appreciate that the Education Minister has since committed to bringing forward a definition of shared education and appreciate that the final statutory definition may differ from the above.²¹ However, we are concerned that, in the absence of any official definition, the broad definition recommended by the Working Group will be used, in the meantime, by the Department of Education, education boards and schools in working towards the Executive's current policy objectives concerning shared education. Moreover, until a firm statutory definition is produced, it will be impossible for either OFMdfM or the Department of Education to monitor robustly the degree and quality of shared education which is taking place, as it will not be clear what it is monitoring.

In addition, the Department of Education's CRED policy document stipulates only that schools should provide opportunities for their pupils to interact with others from different backgrounds "within the resources available"; in other words, where a school feels it cannot afford to initiate such cross-community engagement, that engagement does not have to take place.²²

Moreover, at present, there is no dedicated funding stream to assist schools in collaborating on a shared education basis. As noted above, there has also been a significant reduction in the amount of funding which the Department of Education provides for schools' community relations programmes. Perhaps not surprisingly, survey evidence suggests that lack of funding is the major barrier which schools face when it comes to initiating shared education and cross-community schemes.

Lack of resources was the obstacle cited most commonly by the schools which took part in a survey on shared education carried out by a team from Queen's University; 83% of schools which responded selected this factor as a barrier to delivering shared education.²³ The issue was also identified by 53% of respondents to a survey which the Speedwell Trust carried out with schools with which it has worked (See Table 1). This survey asked schools to identify which factors they felt created potential obstacles for schools in participating in cross-community programmes.²⁴ Moreover, the barrier most commonly identified by the respondents to our survey was transport costs, cited by 85% of respondents.

Accessing Central Good Relations funding: the Trust's experience

In this regard, we wish to highlight our disappointing experience with regard to the fund established by OFMdfM to help achieve the Executive's good relations targets and to deliver its TBUC strategy. OFMdfM published an invitation to apply for the 2014-15 Central Good Relations fund in November 2013. The deadline for applications was 10th February 2014, and the Department's guidance note for applications specifically stated that projects which received funding must be delivered during the 2014-15 financial year.²⁵ However, the Department did not provide any information on the total amount of funding which would be available under this scheme.

The Trust duly applied for funding for a proposed project which would contribute towards the first of the four Ministerial priorities outlined in TBUC - 'our children and young people'. TBUC states that

the shared aim of Ministers is “to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations”²⁶.

Our proposed project would also have assisted in delivering two of the key actions outlined in TBUC under this Ministerial priority, namely:

- Roll out a “buddy scheme” in publicly run nursery and primary schools
- Develop, in partnership with the relevant agencies and Departments, age-appropriate primary and post-primary anti-sectarianism resources, and ensure that teachers are trained, equipped and supported to deliver an effective anti-sectarianism module²⁷

To date, seven months on from submitting our application, we have not received a decision with regard to funding from OFMdFM, despite following up with the Department on a number of occasions. We have received just two emails during this time, one in March and one in May, both of which stated that staff were assessing the applications, that demand for funding had been very high, and that OFMdFM would let applicants know the outcome of their application as soon as possible. Our last contact with the Department was in August when we were given the same message verbally. We believe the delay in reaching and communicating to us a decision on our application is unacceptable.

It would now be impossible for us to deliver the whole of our proposed project within the 2014-15 financial year. We assume many other organisations which applied for funding are in the same position as ourselves. We would urge the Committee to investigate what proportion of applicants have received funding to date and how much of the funding originally allocated for the Central Good Relations Fund 2014-15 has been awarded and distributed. Where funding has not been allocated and where there have been lengthy delays in notifying applications of the outcome of their application, we would urge the Committee to examine the reasons for this to try to ensure that the situation is not repeated again in future years.

Parental concerns

It might well be assumed that one of the factors which might deter many schools from engaging in cross-community initiatives would be the possibility that parents might object. In general, however, we have not found parental attitudes to present any barrier to the work that we carry out. At the same time, we appreciate that some schools may be reticent about engaging in cross-community programmes because they fear the reaction which they may receive from some parents. Indeed, while most of the schools which responded to our survey did not see lack of support from parents as a barrier to shared education, 11% of respondents did feel it was an obstacle (see Table 1). Thus, the risk of upsetting some parents clearly is a deterrent factor for some schools.

Best practice in bringing together divided communities, and in developing shared space and shared services

We are not providing any comment on international best practice in the field of cross-community work in schools, as we have no direct experience of such work. However, we do have considerable relevant experience in Northern Ireland and, on occasion, in border areas of the Republic of Ireland. Below we highlight two of our most successful cross-community schools' programmes which we believe provide models of good practice which could be rolled out more widely.

Diversity and Drums

The success of our Diversity and Drums programme illustrates the value of facilitating children in directly addressing cultural difference and potentially contentious issues, and encouraging them to understand, respect and appreciate cultural diversity. For the children, the highlight of the programme is generally the opportunity which it provides them to have a go at playing a variety of different types of drum, including both the bodhran and the Lambeg drum. Participating in an activity which most children find hugely enjoyable is a great means of breaking down barriers and reducing any anxieties which the children may feel. However, the programme, through an educational thematic unit, also enables children to find out how drums have been used in different periods of history and in different parts of the world. As part of the programme, children also discuss sensitive issues such as bullying, sectarianism and racism, including the ways in which discriminatory and aggressive behaviour and attitudes impact on people, and on what can be done to address these issues.

The Diversity and Drums thematic unit, which is aimed at children in Key Stage 2, consists of 12 inter-related activities which are designed for use across one or two school terms by two schools whose pupils are each from predominantly different religious traditions. Schools are encouraged to deliver this module to joint groups of pupils from each of the partner schools. To date 30 schools have taken part in this programme and the feedback from them has been overwhelmingly positive.

Connecting Communities

The Connecting Communities programme is also aimed at children in Key Stage 2 and has been very successful. As with Diversity and Drums, Connecting Communities does not shy away from contentious issues, but rather encourages children to think about cultural difference. In this instance, the module explores how our concept of community is formed, the differences within a community, and how we come to think of some people as being 'inside' or 'outside' our community. Participants are also asked to imagine what it would be like to be a newcomer to their own community and how they might feel.

The Connecting Communities thematic unit consists of 14 inter-related activities which are designed for use across one or two school terms by two schools whose pupils are each from predominantly different religious traditions. To date, 15 schools have taken part in the practical workshops and, once more, feedback has been very positive.

What good relations means/how sectarianism and division can be addressed

Challenges at interface areas

We note that, in examining how sectarianism and division can be addressed, the Committee intends to investigate the specific challenges involved in tackling these issues in interface areas. However, we would caution against the assumption that the most entrenched divisions and negative attitudes exist only in interface areas. In our experience, profound distrust of the 'other' community can exist in areas which are not viewed as interface districts.

Nevertheless, the evidence clearly indicates that shared education can have a positive impact, even in sharply divided communities. We noted previously that the Queen's University research, to which we referred earlier, found that children at schools in more divided areas which had participated in a shared education programme were less worried and more positive about the 'other' community than children at schools in such areas which did not participate in such a scheme.²⁸

One potential challenge in bringing together children from different schools on a cross-community basis can be that parents and/or their children may view with apprehension the idea of travelling to a school located in an area associated with the 'other' community. In our own experience, there has only been one instance where a large number of parents objected to their children visiting such a school. This was almost certainly because the school was located in an area which they viewed as being associated with paramilitaries from the 'other' community. This particular instance is the only occasion in our 23 years of running such programmes in which a school has had to withdraw from the scheme, due to objections from a large number of parents.

Where such concerns do exist, however, it can be very helpful to deliver some or all of the programme activities at a neutral venue. Indeed, some rural schools don't have the space to accommodate large numbers of additional pupils, and so welcome the opportunity to use an external venue. Speedwell offers such a facility at our headquarters in Parkanaur Forest near Dungannon, where children have the opportunity to experience a range of outdoor activities in the forest setting, and to make use of indoor accommodation which is designed to accommodate large groups of children. The facility has proved very popular with schools.

Our own experience suggests that one of the most effective ways to engage with parents is to ensure that our cross-community programmes include a performance by the children involved to which parents are invited. Where this opportunity is offered, it is generally taken up by most parents who respond positively. Such opportunities enable parents to have a better understanding of our programmes and to engage with each other on a cross-community basis.

In addition, on those rare occasions where there is real opposition from parents, we have also found that it can be very helpful to engage directly with such parents in an open and constructive way prior to commencing a cross-community programme. Moreover, where there is any parental mistrust, it has never arisen from the cross-community contact per se, nor from the actual content of the programmes. Parental objections have only been raised on very infrequent occasions due to the location of a particular school, as mentioned above, or due to the involvement of an institution which has a negative symbolic significance for the parent(s) concerned e.g. a particular church or the PSNI.

Role of communities

We note that the Inquiry's terms of reference include an examination of "the role of communities in policy and decision making in relation to community integration and particularly, the removal of interface barriers". We would urge the Committee not to ignore the vital role of schools in this regard. Indeed, for nearly all children and young people of school age, their school is the community in which they spend most of their time. The evidence which we have already cited on the impact of shared education and cross-community schools' programmes demonstrates the compelling need for schools to play a central role in helping to integrate our communities.

Moreover, many children are being taught in schools which have a pupil composition which is almost entirely Protestant or Catholic. In 2012, The Detail website obtained data from the Department of Education which, according to The Detail's website, showed that nearly half of all schoolchildren in Northern Ireland were being educated in schools which were 95% or more Protestant or Catholic in pupil composition.²⁹ Of the 1,070 schools in Northern Ireland in 2011-12:

- 46% of schools (493) had a pupil composition which was 95% or more Protestant or Catholic
- 27% of schools (291) had either no Protestant or no Catholic children on their rolls

While we acknowledge that there are now significantly fewer schools than hitherto which are very largely Catholic or Protestant in pupil composition, it still remains the case that a very large minority of schoolchildren are being educated in a school which is largely or entirely Protestant or Catholic in its make-up. It is especially vital that children in these schools should be provided with the opportunity for sustained interaction on a regular basis with pupils from the main religious tradition other than their own.

Effectiveness of Good Relations indicators in monitoring and measuring progress of government interventions

We welcome the fact that OFMdFM monitors, on a regular basis, a wide range of 'good relations' indicators. However, we are disappointed that the last progress report in this regard was published in 2012.³⁰ If progress is to be monitored effectively, it should be carried out and reported on in a timely fashion on an annual basis. Moreover, we are further disappointed that the most recent monitoring report is presented in a largely descriptive manner with little attempt at analysis and no recommendations for any policy changes which might enhance progress towards improved community relations. If the monitoring is to be of value, it is essential that it feeds into a regular process of policy analysis and review.

We have a specific concern regarding the report's lack of clarity as to how the 'community relations participation by schools' indicator was compiled. We believe that the quoted statistics may relate to schools which receive funding for such activity, but this is not clear. In addition, we believe there is an urgent need for indicators which help to measure the following:

- The extent to which schools are providing opportunities for meaningful and sustained cross-community contact for pupils
- The extent of cross-community friendships among children and young people
- Whether children and young people have anywhere to meet their counterparts from the other main community

The first of these proposed indicators is particularly important because, as already highlighted, neither shared education nor the Department of Education's current community relations policy, CRED, require schools to ensure that any such activity provides opportunities for meaningful and sustained cross-community contact for pupils. The other two proposed indicators have been selected because they are vital in helping to ascertain the degree to which children and young people develop friendships on a cross-community basis, and the extent to which children and young people are prevented from developing such friendships should they so wish.

Recommendations

In summary, our recommendations to the Committee are as follows:

- OFMdfM should produce an annual progress report, published in a timely fashion, with regard to the good relations indicators which it monitors.
- OFMdfM's 'Good Relations Indicators' reports should provide more analysis and should present recommendations for policy changes which might enhance progress towards improved community relations.
- OFMdfM should clarify the term 'community relations participation' by schools in its good relations indicators reports, and should introduce the following additional indicators:
 - The extent to which schools are providing opportunities for meaningful and sustained cross-community contact for pupils
 - The extent of cross-community friendships among children and young people
 - Whether children and young people have anywhere to meet their counterparts from the other main community
- The Committee should investigate the extent of and reasons for any delays by OFMdfM in making and communicating decisions on applications to its Central Good Relations Fund 2014/2015.
- The Education Minister should bring forward, at the earliest possible opportunity, a statutory definition of shared education which makes explicit that it must involve meaningful cross-community interaction by pupils on a sustained basis.

- Using this definition, the Department of Education must make it a statutory obligation for schools to ensure that all their pupils are provided with the opportunity to participate in shared education on a regular basis.
- The Department must also make available sufficient funding to ensure that all schools can ensure that their pupils have the opportunity to participate in meaningful cross-community shared education and CRED programmes on a regular basis.
- The Department must institute a robust system of monitoring which enables it to evaluate, on a regular basis, whether and how each individual school is implementing shared education and CRED, including the extent and quality of cross-community engagement which is offered by each school.
- The Department should introduce an award scheme for schools which provide outstanding examples of good practice in shared education and CRED.

In addition, we believe that consideration should be given to synthesising the Department's shared education and CRED policies as there is clearly a considerable degree of overlap between them. However, if this is done, it is vital that the definition of shared education remains one which gives a central role to the importance of cross-community contact between Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren. Clearly, religious division is only one form of division in Northern Ireland, and we welcome the fact that CRED is also designed to address other divisions and stereotypes. At the same time, Northern Ireland will be unable to move forward into a truly harmonious and peaceful society if its most fundamental division is not addressed in schools.

Table 1: Speedwell Trust survey responses to “What are the main obstacles to shared education activities with schools from a different education sector?” (N = 65. Respondents could tick more than one option.)

| | Agree– | Don't know– | Disagree– | Number of respondents responding to option |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| – cost of transport | 85.25% 52 | 1.64% 1 | 13.11% 8 | 61 |
| – lack of training for staff | 38.60% 22 | 19.30% 11 | 42.11% 24 | 57 |
| – lack of support from parents | 10.91% 6 | 9.09% 5 | 80.00% 44 | 55 |
| – local community tensions | 17.54% 10 | 19.30% 11 | 63.16% 36 | 57 |
| – no suitable facilities | 22.22% 12 | 11.11% 6 | 66.67% 36 | 54 |
| – lack of resources | 53.45% 31 | 15.52% 9 | 31.03% 18 | 58 |
| – curriculum pressures | 63.16% 36 | 5.26% 3 | 31.58% 18 | 57 |
| – lack of willingness from staff | 5.36% 3 | 16.07% 9 | 78.57% 44 | 56 |
| – poor relationship with partner school | 5.45% 3 | 7.27% 4 | 87.27% 48 | 55 |
| – lack of partner school | 16.36% 9 | 10.91% 6 | 72.73% 40 | 55 |

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- ¹ Devine, Paula (2013) *Research Update No. 83: Into the mix*. ARK Northern Ireland.
- ² Devine, Paula and Robinson, Gillian (2012) *Research Update No. 79: No more 'us and them' for 16 year olds*. ARK Northern Ireland.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Devine, Paula (2013), op. cit.
- ⁵ Hughes, Joanne et al. (2010) *School Partnerships and Reconciliation: An Evaluation of School Collaboration in Northern Ireland*. Queen's University, Belfast, p. 40.
- ⁶ Stringer, Maurice et al., 'Parental and school effects on children's political attitudes in Northern Ireland' in *British Journal of Educational Psychology* (2010), 80, 223–240.
- ⁷ Department of Education, *Omnibus Survey: Shared Education*, October 2013, Tables 5 and 10. Table 10 gives a percentage for involvement in cross-community shared education which excludes those schools which did not participate in any shared education. It is important, therefore, to read both these tables in conjunction with each other to discern the actual level of cross-community engagement.
- ⁸ Department of Education, op. cit., Table 8.
- ⁹ Kids' Life and Times 2012 Survey results. Available at: http://www.ark.ac.uk/klt/results/Shared_Education.html
- ¹⁰ Young Life and Times Survey 2012 Survey results. Available at: http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2012/Shared_Education/
- ¹¹ See Department of Education (2011) *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education*. Available at: <http://www.credni.org/contents/what-is-cred/>
- ¹² Devine, Paula (2013) *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED): Findings from the 2012 Young Life and Times Survey* ARK Northern Ireland
- ¹³ The previous figure is cited in Department of Education, 2011, op. cit., p.8, para. 2.4. In Assembly Written Answer AQW29095/11-15, the Education Minister stated that his Department provided £1.163m in 2012/13 to fund the delivery of CRED.
- ¹⁴ The figures quoted are drawn from statistics supplied by the Education Minister in Assembly Written Answer AQW 29626/11-15.
- ¹⁵ OFMdfM (2012) *Good Relations Indicators – 2012 Update*, 4.11. Available at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality-and-strategy/pfg-economics-statistics/equalityresearch/research-publications/gr-pubs.htm>
- ¹⁶ Northern Ireland Executive *Programme for Government 2011 – 15*, p. 51.
- ¹⁷ See: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community>
- ¹⁸ Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education (2013) *Advancing Shared Education*, p. xiii. Available at: http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation/MinisterialAdvisoryGroup/Filestore/Fileupload,382123_en.pdf
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Department of Education, October 2013, op. cit., Table 10.
- ²¹ Education Minister. *Advancing Shared Education*. Ministerial Statement to Assembly, 22nd October, 2013. Available at: http://www.deni.gov.uk/advancing_shared_education_-_22_october_2013_docx.pdf
- ²² Department of Education, 2011, op. cit., para. 6.5.
- ²³ Hughes, Joanne et al. (2010) *School Partnerships and Reconciliation: An Evaluation of School Collaboration in Northern Ireland*. Queen's University, Belfast, p. 23.
- ²⁴ The survey was carried out online in June 2014. An invitation to take part in the survey was issued by email to 130 schools. 65 (50%) responded.
- ²⁵ OFMdfM, *Guidance Notes. Central Good Relations Funding Programme 2014/2015*, November 2013.
- ²⁶ OFMdfM (2013) *Together: Building a United Community*, p.4.
- ²⁷ op. cit., p.5.
- ²⁸ Hughes, Joanne et al., op. cit., p. 40.
- ²⁹ See: <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/150/religioninschools/how-integrated-are-schools-where-you-live>
- ³⁰ OFMdfM, 2012, op. cit.