

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education

Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education

Submission from The Student Council of Drumragh Integrated College

24th October 2014

1. *Factual Information*

- 1.1 Drumragh Integrate College has two Student Councils. The Junior Council is for KS3 and the Senior Council is for KS4 and KS5. The remit of both councils is to canvas the opinion of the student body on a range of issues and feed back to the Senior Leadership Team via regular Student Council meetings. The students can if they wish, ask members of staff to attend their meetings, and the council attend SLT meetings to present their opinions.
- 1.2 Each council consists of one representative from each form class.
- 1.3 Both councils met recently to consider their submission to the Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

2. *The Student Voice*

- 2.1 'I came to this school because it's the better type of school, because no matter what you believe or where you're from you can make friends with anyone... It is important to meet people from different backgrounds so you can learn about other people's point of view.'
- 2.2 '... my best friend is a different religion and I'm glad she is because I learn about her and she learns about me and we learn to accept each other.'

Rachael

- 2.3 'An integrated school is good because you have more of a community.'

- 2.4 'The friends I meet inside of school are now some of my best friends outside of school.'

Harry

- 2.5 'Stop worrying about the political side of this. Worry about the thousands of lives that depend on integrated education.'

Mark

2.6 'In today's society integrated education is fundamental to safe and settled students. The Belfast flag riots are in my opinion a direct result and a fantastic reminder of how people cannot get on... 20,000 people can make a dramatic difference... integrated education has never been more relevant in today's society. Take a look around you.'

Elliott

2.7 "Genuinely, I am all for Integrated Education. I find this school to be very calm in terms of everyone being together in the one building, mostly because it's widely understood by the students in this school that we are all individual people to be respected as you would anyone else. Every student is offered the same opportunities here and we are encouraged to do our best. There is no bias towards any certain ethnic or religious groups because we as students are all just children who come here to learn in a place we feel safe. It would be wrong to force a child into a situation where they feel insecure about their physical attributes or name, because they don't fit into a certain religious ethos. I really value Integrated Education because in a sense it teaches children to unlearn any personal grievances against groups of people, which mostly makes the difference as they grow older and are able to develop their own tolerance and understanding. School is about learning, becoming a more educated person and academic growth. To me it seems wrong to stunt that growth with the segregation of people."

Kellie

2.8 "I think Integration is the only way we as a country can move forward, away from the "troubles". It truly is the only way to move forward and personally I think the government should be doing more to support Integrated Education"....."Integration teaches that everyone's viewpoint and opinion matters and that everyone should be treated equally no matter what."

Lauren

2.9 "A shared education is when different schools come together and be with each other for like two hours, then go different ways and forget about it. Integrated Education is when we are all together like two streams meeting into one"

Courtney

2.10 "The difference between Shared Education and Integrated Education is that in Shared Education you still have the different schools with different uniforms only sharing some things for a while, but Integrated Education has the one uniform and the one school and your together all the time."

Morgan

2.11 "Integrated stay united together for work, play and education. Integrated are stronger together. Shared means retreat back to your own separate schools."

Jamie

- 2.12 “Attending a school that promotes an integrated ethos will help to benefit society as it will encourage everyone to embrace and accept people of all parts and religions of the world. Not only will it benefit the society of today, it will also help the future generations to come...being educated in an integrated atmosphere is helping to break the old traditions, helping to benefit the future of Northern Ireland..”
- 2.13 “Integration promotes equality and diversity which I feel is important because all members of the community should be accepted. In my friendship group we have different religious backgrounds and that doesn’t seem to be a problem because we are all human beings...Disagreeing with Integrated Education is promoting the conflict that has been inflicted upon people in earlier years...Integrated education provides a model of education fit for building a prosperous and peaceful 21st century.”

Racel

- 2.14 “Please take our views into consideration as we are the students in the school.”