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Principal: Mrs Fiona Kane, BA (Hons), PGCE, Dip.Ed, PQH (NI)

24<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Mr Peter McCallion  
Clerk to the Committee  
Committee for Education  
Room 375, Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCallion

Please find below the response to your inquiry on Shared and Integrated Education on behalf of Lismore Comprehensive School.

- ***Review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education as it applies across all educational phases – including consideration of the need for a formal statutory definition and an obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education;***
  - In the interests of clarity, we think there needs to be clearly defined descriptors of both Shared and Integrated Education as we believe these educational terms have increasingly become more coupled together despite being, in our opinion very different educational concepts and practices. We would therefore recommend clearer definition and description and would also welcome an obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education.
  - Shared Education may be defined as schools and other educational establishments working in partnership to meet the needs of learners. It helps schools to manage their budget more effectively by sharing resources across schools; meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework; protect and promote minority subjects and curriculum areas and promote professional dialogue between schools across different sectors and school types.
  - Integrated Education may be defined as a type of school outside the Maintained, Controlled and Irish Medium sectors. As defined by NICIE, “Integrated Education brings children and staff from Catholic and Protestant traditions, as well as those of other faiths, or none, together in one school.” In Lismore, we are very proud of our Catholic ethos which is an open welcoming ethos developed in school to children of all faiths. We are concerned at a perceived political agenda which may suggest that Integrated Education is ‘better than’ other educational types or a ‘solution to’ the historic political and religious divisions in Northern Ireland. We believe that parental choice must continue to be a protected freedom

and in that context, we believe in the right of faith-based schools to exist and co-exist with other sectors.

- ***Identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education;***

- **Barriers and enablers: Shared Education**

Physical distance between school campuses, individual school self-interest and timetabling constraints can create potential barriers to the facilitation of Shared Education. However, many schools, including Lismore Comprehensive have worked with other schools and educational providers to overcome these barriers. With the establishment and development of Area Learning Communities with access to additional funding shared across the ALC, Shared Education is now a positive reality in many geographical areas with schools sharing their resources effectively to meet the needs of learners in their communities. Shared Education may also have a positive effect on community relations. Much work still needs to be done in some areas between the grammar sector sharing with their non-selective neighbouring schools where sharing has not yet been established or developed.

- **Barriers and enablers: Integrated Education**

Decreasing demand for school places, particularly in post primary education may be a barrier to developing integrated education further. We believe that without integrated housing, integrated education may well be a non-starter. Pupil outcomes in public examinations in some integrated schools are well below the NI average and therefore parent/pupil confidence in this system of education could also be perceived as a barrier. We believe that there exists positive discrimination for Integrated Education from a number of external and additional funding bodies that schools may access. Being able to demonstrate that planned work will involve working in or with integrated education providers certainly is a criteria box ticking exercise to enable successful draw down of some funding. As this appears to be the case, we believe it is an unfair practice to positively discriminate in favour of this sector over another sector to support a somewhat hidden agenda – this practice certainly does not appear to support a wider educational agenda.

- ***Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes;***

- First of all, the uncoupling of Shared and Integrated Education as concepts needs to take place soon and each definition and concept developed separately. Many schools do not have any issues in theory as to benefits and practise of Shared Education – it makes sense economically and helps protect many areas of a wider curriculum menu and indeed delivery. Secondly, as educationalists, we would be very interested in any research that identifies good practice in Integrated Education as an educational approach to learning, particularly research which may suggest or conclude that Integrated Education as an ethos, pedagogy and identity, outperforms other educational approaches including that of a Catholic Maintained School.

- ***Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve sharing and integration – including the effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy; the need to engage more effectively with parents/carers; and the role of Special Schools;***

Recommended actions to be taken:

- The voice of parents, primary school partners, CCMS, ELBs, Youth Service and Churches should be part of this consultative process.
- Concepts should be more clearly defined in laymen's terms: 'Shared' and 'Integrated'.
- The political agenda that appears to be promoting and/or 'pushing' integrated education in Northern Ireland, needs to be defined and made open and transparent for educationalists and the wider electorate. We believe if this perceived political agenda is indeed the reality, then this manifesto should be supported by independent worldwide academic and educational research.

Should you wish for further clarity or discussion on any of these points noted above, please do not hesitate to contact me. As communicated previously, we are also happy to facilitate discussion with our Student Council should you wish to garner Pupil opinion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Kane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs Fiona Kane  
Principal