



Shimna Integrated College

Specialist School

The Lawnfield, King Street, Newcastle, BT33 0HD

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

Submission to the Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education

Shimna Integrated College was founded by local parents who wanted an education for their children, which is Integrated, academically excellent, all-ability, child centred and parent friendly. Many of those involved in founding Shimna were parents of children at All Children's Integrated Primary School, the first Integrated school in Northern Ireland outside Belfast. Shimna grew as an Integrated school from its community, and Shimna has since 2006 run the Sharing Languages, Sharing Cultures programme for sixteen of our local primaries. The SLSC programme serves sixteen primaries which are, all but two, single identity school, and provides a regular, weekly element of Shared Education throughout the school year to a whole year group of children. Integrated schools are founded by parents who choose to do so. Integrated school respect absolutely the wishes of other parents for other kinds of schools. Our SLSC was founded in response to the desire across all educational sectors for an element of sharing as a normal part of the experience of all children in all schools. We are very proud to be able to offer the service. Shared Education should never be seen in opposition to Integrated Education. Shimna's roots in in Integration inspired our long-running Shared Education programme.

Of course, those of us who believe that the best system for Northern Ireland is Integration would prefer to see a fully Integrated system. We would prefer not to see resources go into further institutionalising separation, even within a campus. However, we have the greatest respect for thoroughgoing, purposeful, community led Shared Education projects, such as the Fermanagh Trust project. We respect the fact that the Fermanagh project is at the point on the spectrum of Integrated and Shared Education which the community has chosen. We recognise that in such a mature and complex Shared Education programme, the processes of Integration we value are strongly present. We also note the steady increase in contact, joint planning and holistic approach which has been apparent in the Fermanagh. We have found exactly the same dynamic within the communities served by our SLSC, and believe that that dynamic should be facilitated in bringing communities as close together as they continue to choose. Of course, as an Integrated school, we would love to see full Integration as the outcome. However, we repeat, our school is founded on the principle of parental choice, and we respect that choice for all parents.

We would regret a situation where students' opportunity to share education or to integrated would depend merely on joint projects, on occasions, on events. This is simply not enough.

Integrated Education is a commitment to living and learning together, and to addressing difference. We integrated because we disagree, not because we agree or imagine we have found a solution. It is a privilege we wish for every student, and we believe that the integrative effect on a local community is a powerful force towards social cohesion.



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The effect in our small community has been substantially stabilising. A strong demographic swing has been stemmed, and our community remains mixed. Among our staff are members of our local minority community, who have now settled in the area, married and started families.

Our request to the inquiry team is for continued investment in Integrated Education. We would also request access for deeply rooted, sustained Shared Education programmes, so that they can be staffed appropriately with teachers who are subject/sector specialists and who have ongoing access to training in developing cross community work.

Our SLSC is in its eighth year, and has had to, temporarily we trust, downsize due to the end of funding. We have worked hard to establish our infrastructure and staffing expertise and we believe that we have a replicable, cost effective model of Sharing, which gives children in single identity schools access to regular, content and process rich, normal learning together. The main cost is staffing, and the only other essential cost is for transport, though we have designed our project to bring nearby schools together, both to minimise cost and to have the maximum community impact.

Shimna Integrated College is in its twenty first year. The evidence of our success is now to be seen in the generations of successful OldScholars now bringing Integration into every aspect of their adult lives. Integration has never been a quick fix, but makes a sustained and long term contribution to a cohesive society. The Integrated sector is small if measured in school and student numbers, but the impact of the injection of Integrated values into our education system has been massive.

We would draw the inquiry's attention to two current disappointments: that the Integrated sector has not been given full representation in proposed new structures; that the current CCMS submission to this inquiry has focused so much on abolishing the Integrated sector. We will not ever be campaigning against any other sector, nor against its full recognition.

Principal and Governors of Shimna Integrated College
22nd October 2014



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"Learning from each other"