

## **Shared Education Bill - CCMS written submission to the Committee for Education**

CCMS notes the introduction of the Shared Education Bill to the Assembly on Monday 2 November 2015 and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Shared Education Bill.

### **Background**

CCMS and the schools for which it is the managing authority have been involved in what can be identified as Shared Education Developments from around 2006 onward. This began with a series of pilot initiatives in 'shared education'. Among these could be noted the Queen's University Sharing in Education project, Fermanagh Sharing in Education (SELF) project, the PEE Project in the former NEELB and between 2011 and 2013 through which over twenty projects funded through the International Fund for Ireland Sharing in Education Programme.

Currently this area of work is showing exponential growth and activity, including through the OFMDFM / EA Delivering Social Change programme in Shared Education funded partly through Atlantic Philanthropies, the DE Shared Campuses Programme, the issuing of a DE circular on Jointly Managed Church Schools in June of 2015 and work which has been independently undertaken by partnerships of pro-active schools. The Catholic sector has many examples of schools proactively engaged in shared learning and collaborative delivery of the curriculum between sectors, particularly as a result of active participation within Area Learning Communities in the post-primary phase.

CCMS schools have been involved in all of those initiatives and much has been learned. Appendix One below gives some high level statistical information on the level of involvement of CCMS schools.

One of the key pieces of learning common to this wide variety of approaches has been that the best quality and most meaningful work has come about from being initiated at local level.

Work has also been guided in recent years by the establishment of a Ministerial Working Group on 'Shared Education' and most recently the release by DE in September 2015 of "Sharing Works A policy for Shared Education". This policy also recognizes the origins of Shared Education as arising from the realities and challenges of conflict and a divided society.

It would be fair to say at this stage, that this legislation is being brought forward at a time when 'Shared Education' has become an established aspect of the overall profile of local education and indeed is likely to both remain so and to grow significantly.

This has implications for CCMS as a statutory educational body and indeed for Catholic Maintained schools individually which are likely to be involved to varying degrees.

CCMS notes within the Bill, Shared Education 1 (2) the duty of the Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. While the duty to promote is aligned to the policy referred to above, CCMS notes that the duty is not qualified in any way. At a time of restricted resources it may be necessary to consider some qualification of the duty to promote in alignment with a) the effective and efficient use of resources and b) the impact on other schools who due to location or community circumstances are less well placed to develop the delivery of Shared Educational initiatives. For example a significant percentage of CCMS schools are not in a position to bid into the Shared Educational Campuses programme due to their geographical location. The priority at all times should be on raising standards and the provision of high quality, sustainable and viable opportunities for young people that lead to better educational and societal outcomes.

CCMS notes the definition within the bill of the meaning of Shared Education and welcomes the move to provide such a definition. For some time CCMS has been proposing that there is a need for discussions about concepts such as integrating and sharing in education so that a shared understanding can be developed on the precise meaning of those terms. The inclusion within the Bill of such a definition now provides a firm framework within which Managing Authorities and schools can further develop the delivery of Shared Education.

While supporting the definition as set out in 1.(2) (a) CCMS also supports the widening of the definition to include the educating together of “those who are experiencing significant socio-economic deprivation and those who are not”. There are occasions when schools will not have the opportunity to share with a school from another sector because of location and the definition as set out in 1. (2) (b) will allow for opportunities for schools, either across sectors or within sectors, to share so that they can provide better opportunities for children. A further category might over time have to be considered for specific reference and that is those people coming to live in Northern Ireland from other countries and cultures.

CCMS also notes and welcomes that Shared Education is “secured by the working together of two or more relevant providers”. This ensures that schools can participate fully in Shared Education without any risk or concern to their current status as a school and this will facilitate a greater level of participation in this area.

CCMS also welcomes the definition of providers as set out in 3 (a) and (b) as this ensures that all schools across all phases and sectors can participate and engage in shared education.

**Power to encourage and facilitate shared education:**

CCMS note this part of the bill and welcomes the inclusion of CCMS as one of the bodies for whom this power is to be assigned.

While CCMS holds the view that Shared Education initiatives should arise in the first instance from a local level and should not be a top-down driven initiative, the naming of CCMS as one of the bodies with the power to encourage and facilitate Shared Education ensures that the Council can play a pro-active leadership role in the development of Shared Education from a statutory basis in legislation.

However it is essential that CCMS as a named body under the proposed legislation is given the parity of authority and recognition to exercise this power.

**Conclusion:**

The progression of Shared Education thus far has been a healthy organic growth which will, with support, continue to develop in a sustainable way. Shared Education is quickly becoming a key feature of our education system built on local partnerships.

While the proposed Bill can provide a firm legislative basis for the further development and embedding of Shared Education in our education system and within schools at a local level it will be important to ensure that the existence of legislation to facilitate and encourage Shared Education does not compromise the natural embedding of Shared Education through grass roots ownership.

**Appendix One: Examples of Involvement of CCMS and CCMS schools in Shared Education Initiatives to date.**

<p>Phase one of DE supported Shared Education Projects i.e. Queen’s University Shared Education Project, Fermanagh SELF Project, NEELB Primary Educating and Enriching (PIEE) Project (c. 2006-2013)</p>	<p>50% of schools involved were CCMS schools</p>
<p>Phase two of DE supported Shared Education Projects i.e. 19 Projects Funded through the International Fund for Ireland Sharing in Education Programme (c.2011-2013)</p>	<p>50% of schools involved were CCMS schools</p>
<p>DE Shared Campuses Programme i.e. Phase one involving Lisanelly, Moy, Ballycastle and Limavady Phase two pending and expressions of interest received (c. 2013-present)</p>	<p>50% of schools involved are CCMS schools</p>
<p>OFMDFM Delivering Social Change Sharing in Education Programme, managed by EA i.e. Cohorts One and two in situ while a third cohort is presently being facilitated (c. 2014-present)</p>	<p>50% of schools involved are CCMS schools (EA can provide definitive detailed list of schools involved; initial target was 700 schools to be involved by the end of 2015)</p>
<p>Jointly managed Church Schools (as of DE Circular 2015)</p>	<p>CCMS are already active in identifying where potentialities may lie and are keen to play a role in facilitating this very recent development</p>