

Dear Education Committee,

As per request I write to provide feedback on the proposed Shared Education Bill.

As a Principal of a medium-sized Controlled Primary School (in what would stereotypically be regarded as a Protestant town) I have to confess that I really don't understand what Shared Education is, beyond what is specifically stated in the Bill i.e. The education of children in a non-segregated environment provided by two or more schools in partnership.

If my understanding is correct then I honestly do not know why we need this Bill. My school is an open door to all comers, no child is excluded or group segregated. In the current complement of 144 children I can account for the education of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish children. I also provide for two newcomer families- one from Portugal and another from Thailand. Indeed we are more integrated than many 'Integrated' schools.

These children play together, learn together, eat together and cry together. Aside from the colour of some of their skin there is no way of identifying their differences, neither they nor us care. In every sense we are engaging in Shared Education on a daily basis already as is our professional and moral vocation as teachers.

The politicians in Stormont may not be able to work together effectively due to hang-ups based on years of out-dated bigotry however the children and teachers in my school can- and they achieve it without the heavy hand of hypocritical legislation. It is my opinion that neither of our two ruling parties are in any position to be offering advice to schools on how they should be working together.

Here is my suggestion for a 'Shared' future in Northern Ireland: remove ALL current Ministers, close Stormont for 30 years then offer the current undamaged generation (currently in Primary School) a fresh opportunity to start over. We can but dream!

Harsh but fair I believe.

Best Regards,

Chris Currie
Principal
Kilbride Central P.S.