



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Peter McCallion
Clerk
Education Committee
Room 430, Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont,
Belfast, BT4 3XX

3 December 2015

Peter

Dear Mr McCallion

Shared Education Bill

The Commission welcomes the opportunity to respond to questions arising from the Committee's evidence session on 2 December 2015.

The Commission was asked how it monitors compliance by the Department of Education in respect of the provision of the cultural rights of school children in line with the relevant international rights conventions. The Commission has not undertaken monitoring work specifically in relation to the provision of the cultural rights of school children. However, the Commission draws attention to its recent submissions to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These reports are in advance of the 2016 examination processes in Geneva and are accessible on the Commission's website.

The Commission has recommended that both UN Committees request further information from the Northern Ireland Executive on a number of cultural issues relating to education. These include questions on:

- monitoring the impact of the Traveller Education Action Framework;
- actions to be taken to review schools planning policy in Northern Ireland;
- access to integrated schools;
- mechanisms to be put in place to measure the effectiveness of developments in relation to shared education;
- proposals for an Irish Language Act; and
- the implementation of key areas for action contained in the Ulster Scots Strategy.

In respect of the Committee's second question on 'reasonable numbers', the Commission advises that human rights standards are not prescriptive. The principal concern is that relevant treaty obligations are fulfilled in terms of educational outcomes through the proposed shared education programmes; namely the promotion of tolerance, respect, understanding, valuing diversity and friendship, and specifically among different racial, ethnic and religious groups. This must be delivered, however, whilst respecting and protecting the principle on of non-discrimination. In this regard, effective measures in education must combat discrimination in relation to specific groups, including race, gender, persons with disabilities, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

We hope this is helpful in the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Allamby', written in a cursive style.

Les Allamby
Chief Commissioner



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Les Allamby
Chief Commissioner
NI Human Rights Commission
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2 December 2015

Our Ref:2403

Dear Mr Allamby

Shared Education Bill

On behalf of the Committee for Education, I would like to thank your colleagues, David Russell and Fiona McConnell for the very useful and informative briefing on 2 December 2015 as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

As indicated during the meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission seeking information as to how it monitors compliance by the Department of Education in respect of the provision of the cultural rights of school children in line with the relevant international rights conventions.

The Committee also sought information as to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's views on the 'reasonable numbers' provisions within the Shared Education Bill and the extent to which these provisions comply with the requirements of human rights legislation.

I would be most grateful, for a response at your earliest convenience.

Committee for Education

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The Committee expects to publish its report on the Bill in early January 2016.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

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