

Re: Shared Education Bill

Integrated education is the highest form of sharing. At an Integrated school children learn together very effectively in an inclusive environment in which difference is understood and celebrated. Integrated Education is the most cost effective and successful method of sharing in Northern Ireland. It is very disappointing that Integrated Education is not mentioned in the Bill.

Shared education, if it has the support of schools and communities, could give children and young people the opportunity to learn from and with those who come from different backgrounds. The Bill, however does not set out a vision or framework to show how shared education can develop a more shared and peaceful future.

Portadown Integrated School would like to see the inclusion of a new clause or amendment that would place greater responsibility on the Department of Education to support schools involved in effective and meaningful sharing who aspire to develop an integrated model of education. A lack of commitment is holding back schools from exploring integration and existing Integrated schools from growing to meet the needs of the community they serve.

Section 64 of the 1989 Education Order imposes a statutory duty on the Department of Education in Northern Ireland to “encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education” and this is underlined in the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

The Bill must ensure that Shared Education promotes a better way of working for all educational establishments and provides the best type of shared learning experience that will support all learners as effective, happy and well balanced contributors to society.

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Principal

Board of Governors

Portadown Integrated Nursery and Primary School

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