

# **FOYLE TRUST FOR INTEGRATED EDUCATION**

14 Crawford Square  
Derry~Londonderry  
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10 October 2014.

The Committee Clerk  
Committee of OFMDFM  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
BELFAST

**Re: "TOGETHER: Building a United Community": Public Consultation 2013-14.**

Dear Sir/Madam

We begin by thanking your Committee for carrying out this public consultation on this crucial issue.

**BROADENING CURRENT HE, FE AND SPECIAL SCHOOL INTEGRATED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND:**

Given the experience of this Trust for Integrated Education over the past 24 years, our submission will focus particularly our school system.

Currently Northern Ireland's universities, colleges of Further Education and Special Schools are integrated. We work to see this integration extended increasingly at primary and second level.

**OFMDFM:**

There is a widespread wish in Northern Ireland for a more united society. In the field of education, the Parties represented by the current First Minister and Deputy First Minister are both publicly committed to reconciliation. The Ministers have personally spoken publicly on this issue:

- Mr Peter Robinson MLA: First Minister: 16 October 2010:

*"We cannot hope to move beyond our present community divisions while our young people are educated separately ... The reality is that our education system is a benign form of apartheid, which is fundamentally damaging to our society. Who among us would think it acceptable that a state or nation would educate its young people by the criteria of race with white schools or black schools? Yet we are prepared to operate a system which separates our children almost entirely on the basis of their religion. As a society and administration we are not mere onlookers of this; we are participants and continue to fund schools on this basis. And then we are surprised that we continue to have a divided society..."*

*"I entirely accept that such fundamental change will not happen overnight but that is no excuse for further delay in making a start. I know that we will face difficulties in dislodging the vested interests that are so strong in this sector, but I am absolutely convinced that we must."*

- Mr Martin McGuinness, MP, MLA, Minister for Education: 16 November 2001.

*"As regards integrated education, people know where I stand. There is a duty and responsibility on me as Minister to both encourage and facilitate those parents who chose integrated education for their children. I intend to support those people the whole way down the line".*

**THE VIEW FROM OVERSEAS:**

The view of the wider world of Northern Ireland's divided school system is exemplified by American officials who have worked in Northern Ireland:

- Barbara Stephenson, US Consul General, Belfast: "The News Letter" 3 March 2004.  
*"the default is set on a Protestant school and a Catholic school rather than an integrated school ... It is mind-boggling from an American perspective".*
- Ambassador Mitchell B. Reiss, the US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, addressing The National Committee on US Foreign Policy in New York on 30 September 2004:  
*"Looking forward, the United States also has a role to play in supporting the Shared Future agenda, as our focus on integrated education shows. After taking on this assignment, I was astonished to learn that roughly 95% of Northern Ireland schoolchildren are educated in segregated schools. As Americans, we have first-hand experience with segregation, not so long ago. And we know it doesn't work. Segregation short-changes the students by denying them exposure to one half their society. And it weakens the country by embedding misunderstanding and distrust.  
"... As a matter of priority, the Northern Ireland government and civic and religious leaders should recognise that their society will be richer and stronger if their educational system encourages more integration, so children there grow up embracing the diversity of their own culture".*

**OFFER TO OFMDFM COMMITTEE:**

This Trust has long and personal experience in assisting parents to create integrated schools. We are pleased to offer this experience to the deliberations and policy-making of your Committee and to help you form your recommendations to the Office of First Minister Deputy First Minister.

We shall be pleased to hear from you and wish you well in your vitally important work.

Yours sincerely

Anne Montgomery and Colm Cavanagh  
Co-Chairs.