

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS  
MÄNNYSTRIE O LEAR**

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**John O'Dowd, Minister/Ón Aire**  
Rathgael House, Balloo Road  
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Teach Ráth Giall, Bóthar Bhaile Aodha  
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**David McNarry**  
**Parliament Buildings**  
**Ballymiscaw**  
**Stormont**

14 April 2014

AQW 32481/11-15

David McNarry has asked:

To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of Motions debated in the Assembly that he has responded to in the last two years; and (ii) the action that he has taken following any Motion that was passed.

ANSWER

I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John O'Dowd', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

John O'Dowd MLA

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<b>Date of Motion</b>	<b>Title of Motion</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
23 April 2012	Pre-School Nursery Provision	<p>The Pre-School Education in Schools (Admissions Criteria) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2012 came into operation on 6 July 2012, removing the criteria relating to children with a July or August birthday commencing with admissions for the school year 2013/14.</p> <p>For both 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years, 99.8% of children whose parents engaged with the admissions process to the end obtained the offer of a funded pre-school place.</p>
1 October 2012	GCSE Changes in England	<p>I launched a Fundamental Review of GCSEs and A levels following my statement to the Assembly on 1 October 2012. That review was concluded by CCEA on 30 June 2013.</p> <p>After consideration, I launched a 3 month consultation on the 49 recommendations which concluded on 20 Dec 2013.</p> <p>On 11 March 2014, I announced my acceptance of all 49 recommendations and those recommendations are now being taken forward.</p>

2 October 2012	Levels of Absenteeism	<p>A Working Group has been established, which includes Education Welfare Service, school principals and my officials to produce good practice guidance. This guidance was issued in June 2013 (DE Circular 2013/13).</p> <p>A further Working Group was established, which included Education Welfare Service and DE officials to design the “School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide” leaflet of which over 73,000 were issued to schools.</p>
13 November 2012	Inspection Report into Schools	<p><b>Supporting Effective Teaching and leadership in Schools</b></p> <p>My Department issued two circulars in 2013 - TNC 2013/3 Procedure for Supporting Effective Leadership in Schools and TNC 2013/4 Procedure for Supporting Effective Teaching in Schools.</p> <p>The procedures were agreed in June 2013 to assist Principals, Board of Governors and Employing Authorities in adopting a consistent approach in instances where the performance of a teacher or school Principal is giving cause for concern and all informal measures have been exhausted.</p>

**Performance Review and Staff Development Scheme (PRSD)**

The PRSD Scheme has recently been reviewed and updated to reflect the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) procedures for effective teaching and leadership (reference TNC 2013/3 and 2013/4 above). The Scheme applies to all qualified teachers, other than Beginning Teachers or those participating in Induction and Early Professional Development.

It is the responsibility of each Board of Governors (the Reviewing Body) to ensure that training and development needs, which are identified through the PRSD Scheme, are reflected in the School Development Plan and that corresponding opportunities for development are made.

**Efficient Discharge**

Discussions have been ongoing with employers and trade

		<p>unions regarding the re-introduction of an Efficient Discharge Scheme to allow the early release of a limited number of teachers in the interest of the efficient discharge of the employer's function. The procedures for Efficient Discharge are currently being finalised and it is intended that the scheme will be launched in 2014/15.</p> <p><b>Support for Boards of Governors</b></p> <p>I have set aside additional funding for a new programme of regional governor support. This new programme will include new methods of delivering training to all governors, such as online training modules and a range of sustained, evidence based interventions to help break the cycle of deprivation and low underachievement.</p> <p>Work on the development of the new programme has commenced with a view to implementation during the 2014/15 school year to coincide with the reconstitution of school Boards of Governors.</p>
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		<p><b>OECD Review</b></p> <p>The OECD conducted a country visit in spring 2013, during which its team of international experts had the opportunity to visit a range of schools and to meet with education professionals and with parents and pupils. The final report was published in December 2013.</p> <p>The review provided an independent analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement in our education system and the evidence it presented will be an important element in shaping strategies to improve our education system.</p>
19 November 2012	Concern about the Consultation on Cross Border Education	The consultation on cross-border education was undertaken through the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council and was completed in February 2013. Area planning and educational inequality, among others, remain high priorities which are receiving appropriate attention.
4 February 2013	Feasibility of Free School Transport for all Pupils	A Review of Home to School transport was initiated in December 2013. The terms of reference for the Independent

		Panel conducting the Review include consideration of the feasibility of free school transport for all pupils.
26 February 2013	Entitlement Framework	<p>Prior to the Motion taking place I had already announced my decision to provide additional Entitlement Framework funding in the 2013/14 financial year, and extend the budget to the 2014/15 financial year; providing an additional £6.9m that year to support schools in working towards the full Entitlement Framework requirements.</p> <p>I work closely with Minister Farry on the range of issues that affect the education and training of young people in the 14-19 age group and will continue to do so. The priority remains on putting pupils first, and in that context we will work towards the articulation of our policy in respect of 14-19 year-olds over the coming months.</p>
15 April 2013	Integrated Education	In relation to the first part of the motion, no new actions were deemed necessary as a general principle of education here already is that, so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the

		<p>avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. This principle is reflected in my Department's open enrolment policy. In relation to integrated settings, I take very seriously my Department's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education. My Department thus funds integrated schools that are robust, do not involve unreasonable expenditure and meet the specified criteria.</p> <p>In relation to the remaining parts of the motion relating to sectoral bodies. The Heads of Agreement published on 16 November 2011 established that there should be new sectoral bodies for both Catholic and Controlled Schools. The subsequent submission put to the Executive in December 2011, in order to agree the scope of the Education Bill, provided that these two new bodies should be in addition to those already in existence for Integrated and Irish-Medium Schools (NICIE and CnaG respectively). This</p>
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		<p>is reflected in Clause 63 of the Education Bill as introduced in October 2012. Consistent with the principle of parental choice, my Department does not favour or promote one education sector over another.</p>
<p>7 May 2013</p>	<p>New Primary School for Inner South Belfast</p>	<p>The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) is the planning authority responsible, in the first instance, for the Belfast controlled schools estate. Capital investment in a new school building for inner South Belfast cannot be considered until BELB progresses and publishes a statutory development proposal to amalgamate the three existing primary schools involved and secures my approval to that proposal. To date, no such proposal has yet been published by BELB.</p> <p>Policies to raise standards and tackle underachievement continue to be implemented.</p> <p>Additional funding has been allocated to specific programmes to target educational underachievement in socially deprived areas. These include the Delivering Social</p>

		<p>Change Programme to employ additional teachers, a Community Education Initiatives Programme, a Literacy and Numeracy CPD Key Stage 2/3 Project and two projects in the Greater West Belfast area.</p> <p>In addition, substantial resources are dedicated to provide a range of assistance programmes in support of disadvantaged children and families. These include the provision of free school meals and clothing allowances, Sure Start, extended schools, full service provision, provision of nurture units and the Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry-Bright Futures programmes.</p>
14 May 2013	Future of Rural Schools	<p>I recognise the importance of viable rural schools and aim to ensure that all children have access to a high quality education and are not disadvantaged because of where they live.</p> <p>My Departments Sustainable Schools' policy recognises the particular needs of rural communities. In developing this policy my Department consulted with the Department of</p>

		<p>Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and also assessed the policy against the Rural Development Council's <i>Striking the Balance</i> report checklist. No adverse impact was identified.</p> <p>The staff in the Area Planning team attended a rural proofing training course in December 2013.</p>
16 September 2013	Free School Meal Entitlement	<p>A number of actions are being taken forward by my Department, working with the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the School Catering Service to ensure that all those entitled to receive free school meals receive this important benefit. For example, the Resource Allocation Plans for each of the ELBs include targets to maintain or increase the uptake of all school meals and of free school meals.</p> <p>Each year the ELBs issue press releases, send out renewal applications and issue letters and posters to schools, the Social Security Agency, the Citizens Advice Bureau and libraries. The School Catering Service continuously seeks to</p>

		<p>increase uptake of school meals undertaking a range of activities including, for example, the installation of cashless catering systems in a number of post-primary schools to reduce any stigma associated with free school meals, sending menus home and placing these on school websites, providing meal deals, arranging theme days and taster sessions for parents and pupils.</p> <p>In addition, the ELB's are working to put in place the necessary arrangements for the extension of the Working Tax Credit eligibility criterion to post-primary pupils in September 2014.</p> <p>My Department is also working with the Department for Social Development (DSD) to take forward a joint project to encourage the uptake of free school meals as part of the work of the Inter-Departmental Group on Benefit Uptake (IDGBU).</p>
24 September 2013	Common Funding Formula	The consultation on the changes to the Common Funding Scheme ended on 25 October 2013. I carefully considered

		<p>almost 15,000 responses and amended a number of his initial proposals in light of concerns raised. My final decisions were announced on 13 March 2014.</p> <p>A Working Group to establish a Sectoral Support Body for controlled schools was set up in September 2012 and funded up until December 2013. Funding for the Working Group was discontinued pending progress on the Education Bill.</p>
4 November 2013	Oversubscribed Schools	Revised procedures for considering temporary variations to a school's enrolment and admissions number have been put in place with my agreement (CIRC2014/01).
3 December 2013	School Hours	My Department has taken steps to request that a European Annual Taught Time publication, is amended as the 2012/2013 version gave incorrect information regarding the north of Ireland.
10 December 2013	Special Education	Capacity building work with schools, undertaken within the Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion, continues to reinforce the importance of early identification, assessment and intervention to support children with special

		<p>educational needs.</p> <p>Work continues to prepare a draft SEN Bill to bring to the Executive for introduction to the Assembly.</p> <p>SEN Review pilots continue in early years settings, including in the non-statutory sector, and to promote competence in educational assessment for teachers. The early years pilots include an element of multi-disciplinary working.</p> <p>The SEN review proposes a duty on Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to always request the help of a Health and Social Services authority where it appears that the authority could help in the exercise of the ELBs' functions. This will promote collaboration between the education and health sectors.</p> <p>It is also proposed that the statutory time frame for completion by ELBs of a statement of SEN will be reduced from 26 weeks to 20 weeks in order to provide support more quickly to those pupils with the greatest need.</p>
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		<p>The role of SEN Co-ordinator in every school will be renamed as a Learning Support Co-ordinator to promote a collaborative approach to support every pupil with SEN.</p> <p>Multi-disciplinary Teams run by the Health and Social Care Trusts work in close collaboration with their respective ELBs. Initiatives such as the Multi-Agency Support Teams in schools continue to provide a holistic service to meet the needs of children with SEN.</p> <p>Under the SEN Code of Practice, an ELB is required to advise parents of the name of the designated Board officer who will be their contact point in matters relating to statutory assessment and statementing, and who will be familiar with each individual child's case and will link directly, as necessary, with colleagues in Health during a child's time in school.</p> <p>The Code also stipulates that each Health and Social Services Trust should designate an officer to act as a point of reference in dealing with parents, ELB officers and other</p>
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		<p>professionals who might be involved in providing services to children with SEN.</p> <p>In terms of early identification of needs, the Resource Allocation Plans for each ELB include specified timeframes around SEN assessments and commencement of ELB support/advisory services.</p>
17 February 2014	Shared Education	<p>Following my acceptance of the independent Ministerial Advisory Group's report on advancing shared education, a programme of work has been in place to implement the recommendations. A Shared Education Team has been established within my Department with responsibility for co-ordinating the work programme. Arrangements to establish a Shared Education funding programme and provide support for schools to encourage and facilitate shared education are at an advance stage. The Education &amp; Training Inspectorate will review delivery of the programme in line with the Advisory Group's recommendations including development of a self assessment model for use by schools designed to</p>

		<p>increase the level of shared education. Guidance on types of shared education models is under development to assist schools and their communities in determining the most appropriate model for their local situation. Applications for the Shared Campuses Programme closed on 31 March 2014 and applications are being assessed; it is anticipated that successful applicants will be announced in the summer 2014. In the absence of progress on the Education Bill, consideration is being given on the appropriateness of bringing forward separate legislation to define shared education.</p>
18 February 2014	Nourishment in Schools	<p>I indicated during the debate that I am willing to explore whether there may be merit in undertaking research to identify and evaluate the impact of breakfast/breakfast club provision on children’s nutritional and educational outcomes.</p> <p>I recognise, however, that there is a considerable body of research on this subject which presents a wide range of</p>

		<p>findings.</p> <p>My Department is carefully considering the existing research base, therefore, to ascertain whether there are gaps in existing knowledge/research in terms of the impact of breakfast consumption and provision in addressing child poverty, education and health outcomes. The outcome of this work will inform my decision on the need for further research on this subject.</p>
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