Shared education and Lisanelly

1 Introduction

Approaches to shared education or inter-school collaboration vary widely, and can include informal sharing of resources or facilities between schools, or a more formal approach such as a federation where two or more schools share a principal and governing body. Models tend to vary on a case-by-case basis, and may evolve over time. The proposed Lisanelly site is a shared educational campus.
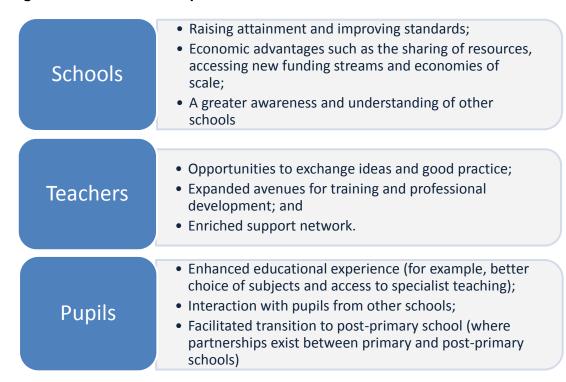
This briefing paper provides a summary of some of the key benefits and challenges of shared education; gives examples of practice elsewhere; and provides information on the proposed Lisanelly shared campus. More detailed information on shared education can be found in Research Paper 165/11: Sharing and collaborating in education.

2 Benefits and challenges of collaboration

Potential benefits

The literature highlights a range of benefits that may be realised from inter-school collaboration. These are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 1: Overview of the potential benefits of inter-school collaboration

Schools
- Raising attainment and improving standards;
- Economic advantages such as the sharing of resources, accessing new funding streams and economies of scale;
- A greater awareness and understanding of other schools

Teachers
- Opportunities to exchange ideas and good practice;
- Expanded avenues for training and professional development; and
- Enriched support network.

Pupils
- Enhanced educational experience (for example, better choice of subjects and access to specialist teaching);
- Interaction with pupils from other schools;
- Facilitated transition to post-primary school (where partnerships exist between primary and post-primary schools)

Source: Adapted from Atkinson, M. et al. (2007) *Inter-school collaboration: a literature review* Slough: NFER

In Northern Ireland, research suggests that shared education could correct excess capacity in the longer-term; deliver 'more for less' by sharing resources; and provide students with access to a wider choice of subjects.[1] Deloitte has suggested that greater collaboration across the schools sectors and consolidation of the schools estate could lead to savings of between £15.9m and £79.6m.[2]

Challenges for sharing and collaboration

The literature highlights a number of challenges schools and the wider system may face in regard to sharing and collaboration, including the following:

- **Collaboration between school types:** Research with school leaders and teachers here has identified reticence to collaborate across school management types and even greater reluctance to collaborate with schools that have a different approach to academic selection;

- **Competitive environment:** Research has found that many principals and teachers here believe that there is a tension between competition with other schools and collaboration, noting that a culture whereby individual schools are assessed against certain targets is at odds with sharing and collaborating;[3]

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[1] Oxford Economics (2010) *Developing the case for shared education* Integrated Education Fund

[2] Deloitte (2007) *Research into the financial cost of the Northern Ireland divide* Belfast: Deloitte

[3] School of Education (2008) *School Collaboration in Northern Ireland: Opportunities for Reconciliation?* School of Education, Queen's University Belfast

- **Legislation:** The current legislation - the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 - permits school federations only between two or more controlled primary schools or two or more maintained primaries;

- **Logistical and financial factors:** Issues such as timetabling, distance between schools, transport costs and funding can have an impact on a school's ability and willingness to collaborate.[4]

Research suggests that a number of factors can help to facilitate shared education, including the availability of funding, existing good relationships with partnering schools, a facilitative policy environment and good relations within the area.[5]

3 Lisanelly

The Lisanelly site at Omagh is proposed as a shared educational campus where controlled and maintained, grammar and non-grammar schools may be co-located and can collaborate together while still protecting their chosen ethos. The project is planned for the site of a former military barracks and is expected to cost £100m.

Background

In April 2009 the then Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, announced that funding had been allocated by the Department and Strategic Investment Board Ltd to develop exemplar designs for a shared educational campus in Omagh. In April 2011 the Lisanelly site transferred into the ownership of the Department of Education.

The Programme for Government 2011-15 included a specific commitment to take forward work on the Lisanelly project, with a commitment that construction would initially begin in 2014/15.

Figure 2: Programme for Government commitment on Lisanelly

Priority	Commitment	Milestones/ outputs		
		2012/13	**2013/14**	**2014/15**
4: Building a strong and shared community	Significantly progress work on the plan for the Lisanelly Shared Education campus as a key regeneration project	Develop a business case and plan for the new campus	Secure funding and initiate the development programme	Substantial construction on the first phase

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[4] Atkinson, M. et al. (2007) *Inter-school collaboration: a literature review* Slough: NFER and School of Education (2008) *School Collaboration in Northern Ireland: Opportunities for Reconciliation?* School of Education, Queen's University Belfast

[5] Hughes, J. et al. (2010) *School partnerships and reconciliation: an evaluation of school collaboration in Northern Ireland*

Aims

Up to six post-primary schools could locate to the Lisanelly site with the capacity for up to 3,700 pupils.[6] The project's key aims include supporting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, ensuring value for money for capital funding and to provide modern educational facilities.[7]

The plans aim to allow for inter-school collaboration, while schools may retain their individual ethos and identity. It is also anticipated that the buildings on the campus may be used by the wider community.

Schools in Omagh

Omagh has eight post-primary schools. The Western Education and Library Board's recent area plan considered the future of these schools.

Table 1: Post-primary schools in Omagh District Council area and area plan findings[8]

School	Type	Area plan findings
Omagh High School	Controlled	• Requires a new build, however the school's enrolment numbers fall below the threshold required • Partner in Lisanelly • Unlikely to secure approval as a standalone school within Lisanelly – this requires further exploration
Omagh Academy GS	Controlled	• Received a new building in 1991 but is in need of further improvement works • Partner in Lisanelly • Future of controlled provision will be facilitated within Lisanelly
Dean Maguirc College	Maintained	• Trustees will develop and publish a Position Paper by November 2012 containing a number of alternative models of post-primary provision in Omagh, taking into account the proposal for an Educational Campus
Sacred Heart College	Maintained	
St John's Business and	Maintained	

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[6] Omagh District Council: *Council Minutes Development Committee - 20/03/2012* [online] Available at: http://www.omagh.gov.uk/the_council/council_minutes/index.php?id=864&sr=30&month=&year=&search_keyword=&freshform=no

[7] Strategic Investment Board: *Lisanelly Shared Education Campus* [online] Available at: http://www.sibni.org/investment-strategy/investment-framework/skills/lisanelly_shared_education_campus_.htm

[8] Western Education and Library Board (2012) *Strategic area plan: post-primary schools*

School	Type	Area plan findings
Enterprise College		in Lisanelly
Christian Brothers GS	Voluntary Grammar	
Loreto GS	Voluntary Grammar	
Drumragh College	Integrated	• Received a new build in 2009 • College has submitted a Development Proposal proposing to increase the capacity of the College from 580 to 750 over a five year period

Arvalee Special School's premises were destroyed in a fire on 1st September 2012. In a recent response to an Assembly Question the Minister for Education stated that departmental officials are considering the potential for new school buildings for the school to be constructed on the Lisanelly site *"as a matter of urgency."* He stated that the project must be fully developed and carried out in line with procurement practice, and would take around 18 months to build.[9]

Loreto Grammar School legal challenge

Loreto Grammar School had been promised £14.6m for a new building on its existing site by Northern Ireland Office Minister Barry Gardiner MP in 2004. However, this decision was overturned by the then education Minister Caitríona Ruane in 2010, who stated that the school should be rebuilt as part of the Lisanelly Campus.

Loreto challenged the Minister's decision in judicial review proceedings in 2011. It also challenged a decision by the Minister and her officials that the school was "non-compliant" with the *Sustainable Schools* policy in its economic assessment for the building project (this was on the grounds that it did not include an adequate economic assessment of the Lisanelly option).[10]

A High Court ruling on 25th March 2011 found that the school's governors *'had a legitimate expectation enforceable by the court that a new school would be built on the existing site.'* Mr Justice McCloskey stated that an *'unjustifiable breach of trust'* had occurred, highlighting the conduct, delay and inactivity of the Minister and officials.[11]

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[9] Minister for Education response to an Assembly Question by Mr Ross Hussey, 5th September 2012
[10] Courts NI (2012) *Court gives judgement in Loreto Grammar School Appeal* [online] Available at:
http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Judicial%20Decisions/SummaryJudgments/Documents/Summary%20of%20judgment%20-%20In%20re%20Loreto%20Grammar%20School,%20Omagh/s_sj_In-re-Loreto-Grammar-School-Omagh_100112.html
[11] As above

Appeal

The Department appealed the decision, arguing that that the Minister's statement in 2004 was implicitly qualified by the need for the school to satisfy the requirements of an economic assessment and plan. Lord Justice Girvan rejected the original judgement on 10th January 2012, stating that no legitimate expectation could arise until the final approval of a funding application (not reached in the Loreto case).[12]

With regard to the Department's decision that the school had not complied with the Sustainable Schools policy, the Court of Appeal found that the Department's decision was 'flawed'. It noted that the Department did not take into account that it had not clearly indicated to the school what it expected of it, and as such, the decision that the school was non-compliant must be quashed.[13]

4 Shared education in other jurisdictions

This section of the paper provides examples of approaches to inter-school collaboration or shared education in other jurisdictions.

Shared campus: Scotland

In Scotland over 200 schools are situated on a shared campus.[14] Glasgow and seven other councils are currently in talks to build further shared campus schools.[15]

An evaluation of shared campus schools in North Lanarkshire endorsed the model, highlighting the maintenance of individual schools' ethos, the benefits of the partnerships between adjoining schools and noting largely supportive views from parents. This was despite initial concerns that denominational schools may find it more difficult to maintain their ethos within a shared campus arrangement.[16]

Federations: England and Wales

One approach to formal collaboration between schools which is becoming more common in England is that of school federations – where two or more schools share leadership and governance arrangements. There are a range of types of federation, such as academy federations, faith federations and special schools federating with

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[12] Courts NI (2012) *Court gives judgement in Loreto Grammar School Appeal* [online] Available at: http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Judicial%20Decisions/SummaryJudgments/Documents/Summary%20of%20judgment%20-%20In%20re%20Loreto%20Grammar%20School,%20Omagh/s_sj_In-re-Loreto-Grammar-School-Omagh_100112.html

[13] As above

[14] Scottish Government: *School estate statistics 2011* [online] Available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/schestate2011

[15] Herald Scotland: *Catholic Church hits out at shared campus schools call* [online] Available at: http://www.heraldscotland.com/mobile/news/education/catholic-church-hits-out-at-shared-campus-schools-call.16173439?_=ca3512f4dfa95a03169c5a670a4c91a19b3077b4

[16] North Lanarkshire Council Report (2008) *Final Evaluation Report on Shared Campus Schools*

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mainstream schools. The following table considers other key federation types and the outcomes associated with them.[17]

Table 2: Key types of federation and their outcomes (identified by Ofsted)

Federation type	Details	Outcomes identified
Size federations	Small schools in danger of closure federate with another school to increase capacity and protect educational quality	• Schools successful in broadening the curriculum and enriching guidance and support for pupils • Better achievement for some groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs • Greater pool of resources and expertise
Performance federations	High performing schools partner with low performing schools in an effort to improve standards	• Improved student attainment for both the higher and lower performing schools • Key areas of improvement were teaching and learning, pupil behaviour and achievement
Cross-phase federations	Schools across different phases federate to strengthen the overall education of pupils in the community	• Stronger academic transition procedures between schools • Less disruption to progress made by pupils

The literature notes that while federations require a larger budget in comparison to an individual school, economies of scale may be realised, and that increased costs are offset by greater resources. Other advantages include joint professional development opportunities, particularly within performance federations.

The Ofsted report found that in all federations visited both educational provision and outcomes had shown improvement, with the federated model as a contributory factor to the improvement.[18]

Communities of Schools: Belgium

In the Flemish region of Belgium communities of schools were first established in 1999. Communities of schools cover over 95% of post-primary schools and 97% of primary schools, and involve voluntary collaborative partnerships between schools. The initial

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[17] Chapman, C. et al. (2011) *A study of the impact of school federation on student outcomes* Nottingham: National College for School Leadership and Ofsted (2011) *Leadership of more than one school* Manchester: Ofsted
[18] As above

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aims were to share resources between schools (resources are allocated collectively), rationalise the supply of courses and promote cost savings.[19]

Evaluations of the communities have highlighted positive views from stakeholders. The perceived benefits include reduced workload for principals, opportunities for improved guidance systems for students and reduced competition between individual schools. However, constraints were also identified, including disagreements around vision and strategy. In addition, the communities do not appear to have had an impact on students. OECD made a series of recommendations for communities of schools:[20]

- Such initiatives need to be managed and led, and there must be a collective and distinctive vision;

- Schools leader and boards must give away some power over decision-making to allow community-orientated identities to develop;

- Training and support should be provided to principals.

School clusters: New Zealand

School clusters in New Zealand are facilitated by the Ministry of Education, and may also occur between schools on a voluntary basis. Clusters have been found to be beneficial for students. Examples of the sharing between schools within clusters include:[21]

- Schools meeting as part of a formal network for support and sharing information;

- A number of services, for example Resource Teachers for Learning and Behaviour, are provided on a cluster basis;

- Schools are clustered for initiatives, for example ICT professional development programmes for teachers;

- Clusters establish to improve standards within schools;

- Clustering of small schools for administrative purposes (to save money and improve efficiency).

A further government initiative is Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS), which aims to improve student outcomes through the sharing of good practice between schools. High performing schools are provided with funding to deepen their understanding of practices that lead to improved attainment and work in collaboration with partner schools to share their knowledge and experience.[22]

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[19] Pont, B. et al. (2008) *Improving School Leadership Volume 2: Case Studies on System Leadership* Paris: OECD Publications
[20] Pont, B. et al. (2008) *Improving School Leadership Volume 2: Case Studies on System Leadership* Paris: OECD Publications
[21] OECD (2007) *Improving school leadership: Country background report for New Zealand* Paris: OECD
[22] As above

5 Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the potential benefits and challenges of shared education and discussed a range of models in other jurisdictions. A number of areas could be given further consideration, for example:

- What is the expected timescale for the first school to open on the Lisanelly site?

- Which schools in Omagh (other than Omagh High School, Omagh Academy and Arvalee Special School) have expressed an interest or committed to moving to the campus?

- The planned provision in terms of the number of standalone school buildings on the site for particular sectors;

- The extent to which it is envisaged that schools on the campus will collaborate with each other and how this might be facilitated;

- The possibility for accelerated development of new buildings for Arvalee Special School on the Lisanelly site; and

- The extent to which the ELB area plans include other models of shared provision, such as school federations.