

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions Friday 9th May 2014

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Childcare: Financial Support

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the proposed financial support for 8,000 registered childcare places is sufficient to meet the need. (AQO 5999/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):

The Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme aims to create or sustain up to 7,000 school age childcare places in low cost social economy settings. These will begin to address current unmet need for school age childcare services. We estimate that creating or sustaining 7,000 childcare places could require up to £15 million in grant payments over the next three and half years. However, the actual amount paid will depend on the number and quality of applications received over the three and half years that the Grant Scheme will operate. The School Age Childcare Grant Scheme will be kept under review and its performance will inform future initiatives in this area.

A second Grant Scheme, to create up to 1,000 new rural childminder places, is currently in development. The development process will establish the level of financial support required to deliver the proposed number of childminder places.

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Pupils Who do Not Have English or Irish as a First Language

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many primary school pupils do not have English or Irish as their first language. (AQW 33153/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Figures collated from the 2013/14 school census indicated that there are 9,730 pupils in primary schools and preparatory departments (including nursery units and reception) that do not have English or Irish as their first language. This represents 5.7% of the overall primary school population.

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Primary Schools: Foreign National Immigrant Families

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education how many primary schools have

- (i) between 20 and 30 per cent; and
- (ii) more than 30 per cent of their total pupil numbers drawn from foreign national immigrant families.

(AQW 33156/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not hold data specifically on pupils from foreign national immigrant families. The data used instead to answer this question relates to pupils that do not have English or Irish as their first language.

Figures collated from the 2013/14 school census indicated that there are 25 primary schools (including nursery units and reception) with between 20 and 30 percent of pupils that do not have English or Irish as their first language, and 14 schools with more than 30 percent. There are 839 primary schools and preparatory departments in total.

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Underachievement within the Controlled Schools Sector

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education what investment he has made, or intends to make, to address the levels of underachievement within the controlled schools sector highlighted in the recent Community Relations Council Report (Nolan Report) 3rd Peace Monitoring Report.

(AQW 33164/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I welcomed the recent report of the Community Relations Council, which features the educational underachievement of working class Protestant boys, and the debate it has generated. I have said many times that our education system continues to fail too many young people. The attainment gaps are simply unacceptable and I am working hard to tackle this inequality wherever it exists.

In March, I announced changes to the way schools are funded by redistributing funding to target schools with high numbers of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and I have injected a further £10 million specifically targeting social deprivation into school budgets from April 2014.

Additional funding is being made available to specific programmes to address educational underachievement in schools. These include £15.56million over three years on the Delivering Social Change programme to provide additional teaching support to pupils at risk of underachievement; £2million over the next two academic years for a literacy and numeracy Continuing Professional Development Key Stage 2/3 project; and an additional £500,000 per annum over three years to further support Area Learning Communities develop effective approaches to improving literacy and numeracy levels amongst disadvantaged pupils.

I have also targeted substantial resources towards disadvantaged communities through a number of programmes. These include the Sure Start programme, the Community Education Initiatives Programme and the Extended Schools and Full Service programmes. I am also funding the Greater Shankill Partnership Board through the West Belfast (Shankill) Community Project and the Community Education Initiatives Programme to provide educationally focused support to children resident in the area, this funding is approximately £120,000 per year for two years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015.

International reports tell us that we need to have a socially balanced school system to enable all pupils to perform better. However, while some schools persist in the use of academic selection, we will be unable to achieve this. There are also wider societal issues to be addressed that education authorities and schools cannot tackle on their own.

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Schools: Shared Designation

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to outline the minimum criteria which must be met before a school can be designated as shared.

(AQW 33186/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no plans to designate a school as 'shared'. The Programme for Government 2011-15 includes commitments to substantially increase the number of schools sharing facilities and to ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes by 2015. Consequently all schools should be engaged in shared education.

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Day Care Provision

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the transitions inter-departmental working group, which was established to address gaps in day care provision, will meet parents and carers in East Antrim.

(AQW 33044/11-15)

Dr Farry: The transitions interdepartmental working group is considering gaps in the provision of post school services for young people with a severe learning disability. The group, which my Department is chairing, plan to meet with stakeholders, including parents and carers, as part of its work within the next 4 weeks.

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Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been

- (i) sought;and
- (ii) granted at Dungannon Court in each of the last two years to date, broken down by ;
 - (a) Crown Court;
 - (b) Magistrates Court; and
 - (c) Youth Court.

(AQW 33010/11-15)

Mr Ford: The most up-to-date statistics from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service show that there have been no applications for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order and no Anti-Social Behaviour Orders made at the Crown Court, Adult Magistrates' Court or Youth Magistrates' Court in Dungannon during either 2012 or 2013.

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Legal Aid Bill

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will give further consideration to percentage costs being built into cases where Legal Aid has been granted in an effort to off-set the overall Legal Aid bill, similar to the case as detailed in the Northern Echo on 8 April 2014 in which following conviction a youth was sentenced to a nine month referral order, as well as paying £85 costs plus a £15 victim surcharge.

(AQW 33103/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not propose at this stage to give further consideration to percentage costs being built into cases where legal aid has been granted, but I will keep the position under review.

In my response to your earlier question, AQW/28637/11-15, I indicated that enforcing the payment of further costs would come at a cost to the fund which is currently unknown. The High Court has ruled recently that, where a defendant defaults in the payment of a monetary penalty he must be given the opportunity to attend a hearing to make whatever representation he considers appropriate when imprisonment is being considered. Where a defendant has insufficient funds to pay for his own representation at this hearing he would be entitled to legal aid. In many cases the cost of representation at the hearing could significantly outweigh the amount to be recovered.

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