

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions Friday 23rd May 2014

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Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Together: Building a United Community

Mr Ross asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on Together: Building a United Community.
(AQO 6076/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work is progressing across all 7 headline actions that were announced alongside the publication of Together: Building a United Community.

The Minister of Education announced on 10 April that 15 expressions of interest have been lodged with his Department under the Shared Education Campuses Programme. The proposals submitted will be assessed with a view to successful projects being announced before the summer break.

In respect of the United Youth Programme, significant stakeholder engagement has taken place culminating with the United Youth Programme Design Day in January of this year, which involved over 250 stakeholders. A Project Board has been established and work is progressing across a broad range of issues. A pilot programme has already been established to test elements of the design.

With regard to summer schools, we have agreed a pilot year Interventions Programme which will be run in Belfast City Council area from summer 2014 with other Council areas following as soon as possible.

The locations of the first 2 Urban Villages were announced on 20 March 2014 as Colin and Lower Newtownards Road. Each area will be recognised as a zone for development, and the Department for Social Development will convene Project Boards to co-ordinate and oversee the planning, design and delivery of all aspects of the urban villages.

The 10 Shared Neighbourhood Developments will be delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme. The projected project plan has been developed which outlines key milestones and targets for the 3 strands of this programme.

In relation to the Cross Community Sports Programme, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is taking the lead in respect of this headline action and has developed proposals on a Programme.

With regard to the removal of Interface Barriers, a model has been developed to create an Interface Action Team to support project delivery and a list of pilot proposals and plans has been identified with anticipated delivery over the next 12-18 months.

Phase one of the Review of Good Relations Funding was completed in April and phase two is now underway. Work is also continuing with departments to take forward responsibilities in relation to the commitments that fall outside the 7 headline actions.

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Department for Agriculture and Rural Development

EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme.

(AQO 6182/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I fully support the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme as it provides positive health benefits for children who drink milk at an early age. Milk and dairy products are an excellent source of nutrients and it is good for children to develop sound eating habits at this early stage of life. That is why, in addition to the EU subsidy, we also provide a national “top-up” subsidy from the Executive’s budget to help reduce the cost for participating children. I am pleased that this Scheme is available to all school children in the north and that all of our Education and Library Boards participate in delivery of the Scheme. As a result delivery arrangements are efficient and economical and costs are kept to a minimum.

Whilst overall there is a good level of uptake by nursery, primary and special schools I consider that there is room for improvement. I would therefore encourage every school and every parent of a child at school to avail of the benefits of the Scheme. Taking account of the fact that the benefits of the Scheme are available to all school children in the north and that there are excellent cost effective delivery arrangements in place, I believe that the Scheme is meeting its objectives within the modest budget available.

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Department of Education

Language Support Arrangements in Primary Schools

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education what language support arrangements are in place across primary schools to teach children who do not speak English or Irish as their first language; and to detail the costs of these services in each of the last two years. (AQW 33216/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd (The Minister of Education): My Department funds the regional Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), which is based in the North Eastern Education and Library Board, to provide advice and support to schools for their newcomer pupils. Further information on the work of IDS support available can be accessed at <http://www.education-support.org.uk/teachers/ids/>.

Funding provided to IDS cannot be disaggregated by school sector; in the 2012/13 financial year IDS received funding of £816k from my Department and, in 2013/14 the funding was £735k. Schools also receive an additional element of funding for each Newcomer pupil on their register through the Common Funding Scheme (CFS). As outlined in paragraphs 3.60 to 3.65 of the 2013/14 Common Funding Scheme; newcomer pupils often require extra support, particularly in their first few years of education. For the purposes of designation and subsequent qualification for additional funding under the newcomer factor, schools should use the ‘Newcomer, Guidelines for schools’ which sets out the criteria for designation and the procedures and best practice to be used. Funding provided to primary schools in each of the last two financial years is outlined below:

Primary Newcomer pupils and funding CFF 2012/13 and 2013/14

	CFF 2012/13		CFF 2013/14	
	Newcomer Pupils	Funding	Newcomer Pupils	Funding
Primary schools	5,624.5	£5,695,704	6,384.0	£6,402,989

Figures include nursery class pupils where applicable

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Integrated Education

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how he plans to develop integrated education over the next two years.

(AQW 33276/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: Under Article 64 (1) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, my Department has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education (i.e. the education together, at school, of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils). I take this duty very seriously, and will continue to do so.

To help encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education, the Department of Education will continue to provide annual funding to help schools with the process of transformation to integrated status. This supports schools in the initial stages of the transformation process and with the employment of a teacher, from the minority community in the school, to assist with religious education. The budget available for 2014/15 is £191k. In addition, Article 64 (2) of the 1989 Order allows the Department to pay grants to a body which has as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education. In fulfilment of this legislation, my Department provides funding annually to the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). Funding of £665k has been allocated for 2014/15.

I have met with officials from NICIE twice recently, to discuss proposals to further promote and facilitate the development and growth of integrated education. I remain willing to consider further innovative approaches which will facilitate the development of the sector. I recognise the vital and valuable contribution that integrated education, together with all other types of education, makes to building a peaceful and stable future for our children. Going forward, the Department of Education will ensure that it continues to have a rigorous approach to its duty to integrated education.

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Funded Pre-School Places

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education, in relation to meeting the Programme for Government 2011/15 target to provide a funded pre-school place for all children, whether he intends to build overcapacity into the pre-school system; and if so, how this can be achieved.

(AQW 33387/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) of each Education and Library Board is responsible for ensuring there is sufficient pre-school provision in their local area. Sufficient funding has been provided by the Department to meet the projected need for pre-school places for the 2014/15 academic year and this will be kept under review as the admissions process progresses.

In 2012/13 and 2013/14, 99.8% of children whose parents remained with the pre-school application process to the end received the offer of a funded pre-school place. At the end of stage one of the process this year, 95% of children had received the offer of a funded place; 1064 children were unplaced at that stage but there were still more than 1900 places available to meet demand at stage two. During stage two the PEAGs have secured further places where this was necessary to meet demand. The Department has also approved temporary flexibility for 86 additional places in statutory pre-school settings, where the setting requested it and the PEAG recommended it to meet demand.

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Home Education

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what laws are extant to regulate home education.

(AQW 33473/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: The legislation which applies to the education of pupils of compulsory school age, including pupils who are receiving elective home education, confers specific powers on both the Education and Library Boards (the Boards) and on parents.

Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 requires that the Boards have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

Article 45 (1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 places a duty on parents of children of compulsory school age to ensure that the education provided to their child, whether by regular attendance at school or otherwise – which can include elective home education - is suited to the child’s age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. Schedule 13 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, which makes provision for the enforcement of Article 45 (1), places a duty on the Boards to ensure that children in their area are receiving a suitable education and that parents fulfil their duty in this regard.

Where it appears to a Board that a parent of a child of compulsory school age in its area is failing to perform the duty imposed by Article 45(1), the Board can serve on the parent a notice requiring him/her, within a set period, to satisfy the Board that the child is, by regular attendance at school or otherwise, receiving efficient and appropriate full-time education.

In cases where a parent fails to demonstrate that the education provided meets the child’s specific needs the Board may, in accordance with Schedule 13 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, serve a School Attendance Order (SAO) on the parent to require that the child becomes a registered pupil at the school named in the order. Where a parent applies for the order to be revoked the Board may do so if the parent has demonstrated that suitable arrangements have been made for the education of the child.

If considered necessary, a Board may make application for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) to the Family Proceedings Court. Legal provisions for ESOs and Care Orders are contained in the Children (NI) Order 1995. The effect of an ESO is that the responsibility for securing the child's education is removed from the parents and transferred to the Board named in the order.

The Boards may also provide support to parents who chose to home educate including advice and guidance on suitable learning materials, on training or examination options. The level of training and advisory support will relate to the age and developmental profile of the child.

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Home Education

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether primary legislation will result from the current public consultation process being carried out by Education and Library Boards on home education.

(AQW 33475/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards are seeking to engage in consultation with key stakeholders who have an interest in elective home education for children and young people. The Boards commenced an open consultation process on the draft elective home education policy on 27th April 2014 which will end on 27th June 2014.

The response to the consultation process will be given due and careful consideration and will help inform future consideration as to the adequacy and appropriateness of existing legislation as it applies to elective home education. It is too early in the process at the present time to determine if legislative changes may be required.

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Free School Transport

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education for an update on the review into the eligibility criteria for free school transport, including when the review commenced.
(AQW 33491/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I launched the Review of Home to School Transport on 2nd December 2013. The Review is being taken forward by an Independent Panel which, to date, has gathered views and opinions from interested individuals and groups, and collected evidence through a Call for Evidence questionnaire that was available between 13th February and 4th April 2014. The Independent panel is now considering the evidence it has collected and will report its recommendations to me at the end of August 2014.

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Home to School Transport

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, other than the Call for Evidence, how the views of stakeholders, including children and young people, have been taken into consideration in relation to the issue of home to school transport.
(AQW 33582/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In addition to the Call for Evidence, the Home to School Transport Review Panel has engaged extensively with stakeholders during the course of the Review. They have met with over 80 organisations, including the key stakeholders of Education and Library Boards, Translink, schools and sectoral bodies as well as receiving briefings and meeting with a number of government departments, including those in other jurisdictions. It has also consulted with many young people on a cross sector and cross community basis. The views from all these contacts will inform the Panel as they make their recommendations.

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

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33153/11-15, what are the first languages of these 9,730 children.

(AQW 33612/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The first language of the 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, and the numbers of pupils recorded for each, are detailed in the table below.

First Language	No. of Pupils
Polish	3198
Lithuanian	1371
Portuguese	593
Malayalam	472
Tagalog/Filipino	353
Latvian	305
Slovak	272
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	235
Chinese (Cantonese)	209
Arabic	199
Russian	199
Hungarian	172
Romanian	154
Tetum	143
Hindi	137
Spanish	110
Chinese (Any Other)	99
Urdu	99
Bengali/Bangla/Sylheti	91
Romany	83
Somali	80
Bulgarian	77
French	67
Czech	63

First Language	No. of Pupils
Tamil	63
German	59
Telugu	59
Panjabi	52
Thai	50
Malay/Indonesian	47
Italian	39
Albanian/Shqip	36
Pashto/Pakhto	32
Yoruba	32
Shona	31
Dutch/Flemish	29
Afrikaans	24
Nepali	24
Edo/Bini	23
Turkish	22
Gujarati	19
Marathi	19
Greek	18
Japanese	15
Fijian	13
Korean	13
Persian/Farsi	9
Ukrainian	9
Finnish	8
Igbo	8
Swedish	8
Kannada	7
Pahari/Himachali (India)	7
Xhosa	7
Swahili/Kiswahili	6
Slovenian	5
Akan/Twi-Fante	*
British Sign Language	*

First Language	No. of Pupils
Chinese (Hokkien/Fujianese)	*
Creole English	*
Creole French	*
Danish	*
Estonian	*
Icelandic	*
Kurdish	*
Luganda/Ganda	*
Macedonian	*
Maltese	*
Ndebele	*
Oriya	*
Rajasthani/Marwari	*
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian	*
Sinhala/Sinhalese	*
Tsonga	*
Tswana/Setswana	*
Vietnamese	*
Welsh/Cymraeg	*
Zulu	*
Other Language	109
Total	9730

Source: NI school census

* denotes fewer than 5 pupils

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Department of Health

Day Care Facilities for Children with Special Needs: Rathmoyle

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the day care facilities for children with special needs will remain on the Rathmoyle site after the construction of the 28 Supported Living Units.

(AQW 33431/11-15)

Mr Poots: To date nothing has been confirmed in relation to the supported living development on the Rathmoyle site. Northern HSC Trust staff are continuing to work with the stakeholder group for the supported living development and they will update users of the resource centre, and their relatives, as soon as plans for the site can be confirmed.

The Trust met with the families of people who attend the resource centre in September 2013. At that time, the families indicated that their preference was for the current day care facility at Rathmoyle to be retained and the Trust indicated that it would seek to facilitate this. The Trust advised the families that the time frame for any development on the site would be 2015/16.

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Department of Justice

Custodial Arrangements: Children

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice how he will address concerns about local custodial arrangements for children.

(AQO 6166/11-15)

Mr Ford: I recently consulted on the custodial arrangements for children in furtherance of the recommendations in the Youth Justice Review. The Summary of Responses to the consultation was published on 9 May. This document not only examines the views expressed by a range of respondents, including children and young people and their parents, but also sets out my proposals for changes to custodial arrangements and sentencing options for under-18s.

I have already publicly stated that children will no longer be held at Hydebank Wood YOC. I plan to underpin this policy position in legislation and ensure that all children committed to custody, regardless of their sentence, will be held at Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre, whose regime and ethos make it a more appropriate location for children.

The proposals set out our plans to simplify the current custodial sentencing options for children by replacing two existing orders with a single order that is informed by the international principles contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to “best interests” and “custody as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time”. I also intend to remove children aged 13 and under from the scope of the new order. The summary document gives more specific details of this new order, such as minimum and maximum durations and a compulsory community supervision period.

The changes being proposed as a result of the consultation affirm my commitment to ensuring that custody for children is not used lightly, but as a consideration of last resort. Where custody is necessary, children should be held in the most suitable surroundings and for the shortest appropriate period. The proposals will now be taken forward through the Fines and Enforcements Bill, which I am planning to introduce in the autumn.

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