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Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education launch report

Fermanagh's schools have led the way on the development of Shared Education policy in Northern Ireland. This was acknowledged at the launch of the Ministerial Advisory Group's report on Shared Education in April. The Group's visit to Fermanagh was of tremendous value in informing their recommendations in relation to future education policy.

"Shared Education is not a one off project but an approach to improving both educational standards and building relationships in local communities. We are delighted the schools and communities across Fermanagh have shown that Shared Education works and the County has been at the forefront of this development" explained Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust at the launch of the report.

"Many of the recommendations from the Fermanagh Trust in relation to building relationships across our education system have been taken on board by the Ministerial Advisory Group. The Fermanagh Trust has played a leadership role here and that is something we are very proud of" emphasised Mr McCusker

The group was appointed by John O'Dowd, the Minister for Education, with the support of the Executive to advise him on how best to advance shared education in the context of overall education policy, the aim of which is to improve educational outcomes for learners.



Professor Paul Connolly, Chairman of Ministerial Advisory Group, Fergal McCann, Principal of St Mary's PS Tempo, Ruth Wildon, Principal of Tempo CPS and PJ O'Grady, member of Ministerial Advisory Group

The Ministerial Advisory Group on the Advancement of Shared Education under the Chairmanship of Professor Paul Connolly, Professor of Education at Queen's University, visited County Fermanagh in January to hear from principals, teachers, boards of governors, Fermanagh District Council and the Fermanagh Trust to learn about the shared education work taking place in school communities across the County.



The visit started at St Mary's Primary School, Tempo where the Group met with representatives from the Tempo Shared Education Partnership including Ruth Wilson the principal of Tempo Primary School and Fergal McCann principal of St Mary's Primary School. The principals and teachers outlined the educational impact and the broader community impact of the shared education work which has developed in Tempo since 2009.

Following their time in Tempo, the Ministerial Advisory Group visited Fermanagh District Council to discuss the council's submission on the advancement of shared education. The Group met with principals from Shared Education partnership schools in Brookeborough, Belleek, Newtownbutler and Enniskillen. The principals shared their experiences in relation to the implementation of shared education in their school communities and offered guidance on a range of issues.

The Ministerial Advisory Group recognises that shared education encourages all schools to critically evaluate their resources and needs. In the smaller rural primary schools, this sharing of expertise can be invaluable. The groups report highlighted the importance of future investment in education demonstrating a positive contribution to good relations and the need for Shared Education to be mainstreamed as an integral part of the education policy process.

Respecting Difference Workshops

During Years 2 and 3 (2010-2012) of the Shared Education Programme a total of 399 parents attended 'Respecting Difference' workshops. A further series of parent workshops have taken place this year.

The aim of the workshops is to provide opportunities for parents to explore their own attitudes, values and first memories of difference as well as developing skills for supporting their young children to respect difference.

Family involvement is crucial to the success of young children's learning. It is acknowledged that parents are the first educators of their children, but to carry out this important role they need ongoing support and meaningful engagement in children's care and development. It is really important to respect the values and culture that parents bring to the work with young children. The Respecting Difference programme states that in order to grow this culture of respecting difference, they must work together and involve parents in developing and implementing the programme.



Parents attending Respecting Difference Workshop

Education Minister's visit – 'Fermanagh has led the way on Shared Education'

Education Minister John O'Dowd acknowledged the good work taking place on Shared Education in Fermanagh and he outlined to Fermanagh primary school principals how he plans to progress Shared Education in the future. The comments were made during a meeting with primary school principals in April, which was facilitated by the Fermanagh Trust.



John O'Dowd and Lauri McCusker

The Minister heard from the school partnerships that they wish to continue their cross-community linkages which are reaping educational benefits for the pupils involved. The Minister explained what the Department of Education is doing to advance shared education, including the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Group, which published its report on Monday. Following a public debate, this report will help guide shared education going forward in the future.

John O'Dowd said that he is committed to delivering the objectives on shared education in the Programme for Government, including that every child will have an opportunity to participate in shared education by 2015.

The Minister told the principals, "I have asked the members of the advisory group to be bold and imaginative in their advice and to put the needs of children and society before those of sectors or institutions. I am committed to providing all children with an opportunity to experience shared education which I believe has the potential to deliver real educational benefits, to ensure best use of resources and to further community cohesion". Mr O'Dowd added that he supports the role of shared education in the classroom and within communities and he acknowledged the fact that Fermanagh had led the way on it. He said there was a lot of good work going on involving this.

Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust, said that the Minister was asked for guidance and support to help develop sustainable shared models of primary school education. The Department of Education will respond to this need and the Minister also replied that there needs to be a "bottom up" approach and he wants to hear from communities on this and that his department would be supportive of shared proposals coming forward in the area plan for schools. The minister said that he would welcome proposals for the development of new shared schools, which would be given special consideration when it comes to funding.



John O'Dowd meeting primary school principals at Fermanagh House

Brookeborough Shared Education

Success for Brookeborough Shared Education at Feis

The two schools taking part in Brookeborough's Shared Education Partnership were delighted to win first prize at Enniskillen Feis. The P6 and 7 children from St Mary's Primary School and Brookeborough Controlled Primary School performed 'The Farmer and the Queen' for the Choral Verse Section. Together they beat off stiff competition from much larger schools demonstrating the benefits of collaboration in action.

The children really enjoyed taking part and are so proud of their achievements. Oonagh, a pupil from St Mary's said "I thought going up on stage was fun. It was really exciting waiting for the results". Patrick from St Mary's added "It was great to get my own medal and make new friends". Kyle from Brookeborough CPS said "I really liked performing on the stage and saying my own lines". Keeley from St Mary's stated "I liked when we put movement to the words... and of course getting First place!"

Alison Breen the class teacher in Brookeborough PS and Dermot Finlay Principal of St Mary's were delighted for the children and expressed their thanks to tutors Breda McNulty and Stephanie Kenny Quinn from Class Act Drama for all their hard work in preparing the pupils. Dermot Finlay said "Our pupils are really enjoying the overall Shared Education Programme this year, working as a team and getting to know each other in this context".

The Brookeborough schools paid a special thanks to the Fermanagh Trust's Shared Education Programme for providing the funding which has enabled the children to make new friends and enhanced their educational experience.

Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust said that "the success of Shared Education in Brookeborough highlights how two schools in one village can achieve so much by working together. The educational benefits are evident. And it means that children from different community backgrounds get a chance to meet, interact and develop friendships. It is hoped that the Shared Education partnership in Brookeborough will continue to flourish".



Brookeborough schools win first prize

Brookeborough Pupils Write and Perform their own Drama

There was no stopping the Brookeborough pupils, following their success at the Feis. They then set about penning their own drama script on racism, which they performed in May to a packed audience.

Parents, families and friends attended the performance along with representatives from the International Fund for Ireland and The Fermanagh Trust.

The play called 'Racism ruins Lives', was scripted by the pupils themselves, facilitated by tutors Bernie McNulty and Stephanie Kelly Quinn, under the support and guidance of Dermot Finlay, principal at St Mary's Primary School, and Alison Breen, teacher at Brookeborough Controlled PS.

In addition the children also performed their Fermanagh Feis award winning choral verse to the delight of the audience. Mr Finlay was pleased with the entire occasion and proud of the aptitude, confidence and skills shown by all the children and thanked all the staff at both schools for their hard work and endeavours and the guidance of the tutors who helped pull the performance together.

Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust was delighted to attend the event. "It's a privilege to have attended today's drama and dance performance, the children were fantastic. The performance had a very strong and challenging message about the impact of racism on people's lives, and I'm sure the children will have learned a great deal and also unearthed some new skills in terms of dance and drama."

Lauri further emphasised "It was fantastic that John Carson from the International Fund for Ireland was able to attend the performance and see what a difference the Funds support is making in Shared Education partnerships like Brookeborough".



Lauri McCusker and John Carson from IFI attend the Brookeborough performance

St Paul's Primary School and Irvinestown Primary School

Rhonda Cathcart, teacher at Irvinestown Primary School said “as part of the Shared Education Programme, our schools have built up a close relationship over the last four years. Many activities are teacher led which helps us, as teachers, to develop and share a range of skills. The children have had many opportunities to learn new skills and also to make new friends or build upon already existing friendships”.

Miss Cathcart explained that children enjoy Shared Education because it means that they;

- Have the opportunity to visit a different school on a regular basis
- Are taught new skills
- Are experiencing a broad and balanced curriculum
- Get to go on trips within the local area
- Can work together with different children
- Are made aware of cultural differences
- Learn that we are all different but share many similar qualities

“This year our classes have come together to take part in ICT, rugby, art and a local study. They felt very proud and loved showing off their hard work to their peers”.

“This term we are learning about our local area; Irvinestown. Local historian Breege McCusker came in to talk to the children about how Irvinestown has changed over the years and shared many stories about her own childhood growing up here. They loved looking at old photographs of the town and how it used to look”. The pupils also took part in a joint ‘World Around Us’ topic of Enniskillen. The year 6 pupils visited Enniskillen Castle museum and took part in a walking history tour of the town where they heard about the history of important buildings and how these have changed over the years.



Pupils exploring the ‘World Around Us’ in Enniskillen

Miss Cathcart added “As a teacher I really enjoy meeting up with colleagues from the other school. We have built up a sound relationship over the years and I would consider us to be close friends now. We share ideas, plans and work such as booklets, workshops and so on”.

Nuala Nolan, teacher at St Paul's Primary School said “Shared Education has provided the children with specific learning focuses and enabled them to make new friends, renew old friendships (from nursery) and developed their confidence and social skills”.

Shadow Secretary of State - Others need to 'catch up' with progressive Fermanagh

Shadow Secretary of State, Vernon Coaker MP, visited the Fermanagh Trust to learn about the success of Shared Education in the County. The Labour MP, accompanied by local MP Michelle Gildernew, was given an insight into the Fermanagh Trust's Shared Education Programme by local principals, Board of Governors members and the Shared Education Programme Manager, Catherine Ward.

A former teacher himself, Mr Coaker was given an extensive briefing on the achievements and challenges encountered by participating schools and how the programme was working at grassroots level. The MP said he was impressed by the local desire to see the programme continue to flourish and how, by working co-operatively on a cross-community basis, schools have been able to strengthen curriculum delivery and enhance educational opportunities for pupils.

The MPs were impressed with the success of the Programme. Mr Coaker relished the opportunity to see how schools were sharing together "to build a better future for everyone". "It is good to see people making a real difference" he said, "This is one of the things that will contribute to a better future with everyone working together. Shared Education for me is something that is really important. It offers a way forward for others to learn from. From my perspective it is a tremendous initiative".

Ms Gildernew agreed, saying "Fermanagh has really led the way on this one. We have got to change the way we do things in education. And Shared Education is just one example".

After the visit Conor McGinn, advisor to the Shadow Secretary of State said "Hugely impressed by the brilliant and important Shared Education Project at Fermanagh Trust. An example of hard and determined work paying off".



Some of the representatives who met with Vernon Coaker MP and Michelle Gildernew MP

Shared Teachers and Shared School Models Discussed at Seminar

In November the Fermanagh Trust held a Shared Education seminar in the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen. The keynote speakers were Gerry Lundy from the Catholic Maintained Sector and Rosemary Watterson from the Western Education and Library Board. The seminar was attended by principals, teachers and representatives from school boards of governors, with many shared teachers presenting their experiences. The CCMS and WELB outlined the different types of shared models that school partnerships could adopt to sustain Shared Education going forward in the future. The development of joint faith schools was one suggestion, which the Department of Education is in the process of producing guidance notes.

Lauri McCusker said during the seminar “Once again Fermanagh is playing a leadership role in Shared Education. The idea behind supporting this project between schools is really to widen the teaching expertise available to individual schools. It enhances educational opportunities for pupils. Due to our work, the Northern Ireland Executive has prioritised Shared Education within the programme for government”. Sharing staff between schools can widen the portfolio and repertoire of teaching expertise available to individual schools, thereby enhancing the educational opportunities for pupils and potentially creating economies for schools in the medium to long term.

From the beginning of September, Belleek Controlled Primary School and St John the Baptist Primary School, Roscor began a shared teacher project with St Martin’s Primary School, Garrison and St Davog’s Primary School, Belleek. Donna McAuley, a special needs teacher, now spends a day in each of the schools throughout the week, offering numeracy and literacy support to children. The principal of Belleek Primary School, Esdille Lappin said “Having Donna here one day a week provides the kind of support to children that in a two teacher school we just would not be able to give otherwise. We are very grateful to the Shared Education Programme for funding this as I know individual school budgets just could not afford this”.

Mrs Lappin added that Belleek Controlled Primary is also involved in sharing teacher expertise among schools in the area, explaining, “We are already exchanging music and ICT skills between schools. So there is a lot more ease of movement between teachers and schools now. We are breaking down barriers. We now have better and stronger links between all the schools and of course, there is the possibility to build on that as well”.

Other schools that have been sharing teachers include St Mary’s Teemore, Fairgreen National School, Belturbet, Killyhommon PS, Derrygonnelly PS, Holy Trinity PS, Lisbellaw PS, Jones Memorial, Enniskillen Integrated, St Mary’s Newtownbutler, St Joseph’s Donagh, Newtownbutler PS, Aghadrumssee PS and St McCartan’s PS.



Attendees at the seminar

'A' Level French Shared Education Celebration Evening

In April Enniskillen's 'A' level French Shared Education cluster held a celebration event in the Westville Hotel, with teachers and pupils showcasing their success. Mount Lourdes Grammar School, Collegiate Grammar School, Portora Royal School and St Michael's College 'A' level French pupils share a range of classes and activities. The success of the programme is demonstrated by the fact that this year 70 students are taking part. That is a 100% increase from last year. The number of shared hours has increased by 50%.

Students and teachers from the four schools have been involved in a number of activities including French workshops, French debates, films, plays, guest speakers, a 2 day residential at Gortatole and after-school French clubs.

During a presentation at the event, Isabelle Leonard, French teacher at St Michael's College said the aim of the programme is to strengthen contacts between students, teachers and schools to allow and encourage students from different communities to meet and share experience with French as the medium. The programme has also facilitated closer cooperation between French departments enabling teachers to pool resources, share ideas and techniques and improve delivery of the curriculum. Isabelle added "It is great to share techniques and resources. That experience has been invaluable".

The evening included a video presentation of all the events that the group had taken part in including a French play by Onatti Theatre Cie. Some students were also interviewed about their experiences of the programme. Answering in French, one student from Portora said they really enjoyed the experiences such as the trips, workshops etc. One student from Mount Lourdes said they really enjoyed working with others and it has helped improve skills.

Students and teachers agree that this Shared Education partnership has really encouraged the development of the subject. It has exposed students to different learning experiences via different teaching styles from native French teachers. The range of activities has enabled students to make new friends, develop self-confidence in speaking French in public and in unfamiliar surroundings as well as developing communication skills, debating skills and knowledge of the French culture. To help prepare for their oral examination students were encouraged to use French at all times through the immersion course.



Principals and French teachers along with Catherine Ward from the Fermanagh Trust

Teachers paid thanks to the Fermanagh Trust for funding and to the support and cooperation of schools and students and the dedicated team of teachers and language assistants. Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust said "This event highlighted how schools can achieve so much by working together. What this programme has shown is that it is not just the students, but the teachers and schools that benefit. This is one clear example where closer contact and sharing has proven to be a great help with the development of a subject and improvement of skills."

Shared Education in South East Fermanagh

Reading Intervention Programme and Photography Programme

Lisnaskea High School, St Aidan's High School, Derrylin and St Eugene's College, Rosslea have again linked up through the Shared Education Programme to build on the very successful Reading Intervention Programme.

Collin O'Callaghan, English teacher at Lisnaskea High School says the benefits of Shared Education are obvious. After the 8 week programme of shared reading Mr O'Callaghan says the difference is phenomenal, citing the confidence and skills the pupils have picked up. Shared Education has opened more doors and allowed greater access.

Dr Martin Knox, Principal of St Eugene's College, Rosslea says not only have the pupils' reading skills improved but they have also developed an awareness that has made them more socially interactive. In terms of teaching input, teachers are very much aware of the value of Shared Education and more in tune with the practice of bringing pupils together.

Nick Hambly, Principal of Lisnaskea High School says schools, pupils and parents have been very supportive of these partnerships and the real benefit they bring. According to Mr Hambly the impact on the children has been invaluable in terms of the learning opportunities and the opportunity to work with pupils from other schools where they can begin to understand their backgrounds and their culture. Students have cited the benefits of being able to work together and even making new friends.

Brenda Davis, Coordinator of the Shared Education Programme agrees that this has been very rewarding for pupils not only in terms of literacy skills but also social skills. Mr O'Callaghan adds that we are at a point where parents from both communities are keen to see the children working together and have these initiatives taking place within schools. Pupils coming together from the same year group have a lot in common and are learning the same skills.

Bernadette Cargill, Art teacher at Lisnaskea High School focussed on photography and ICT during shared classes with the partner schools as it provided the potential for student discussion. Ms Cargill said this was an opportunity for the children and teachers to work together, support one another and learn new techniques. Rather than being protective over work or in competition, now it is all about helping each other



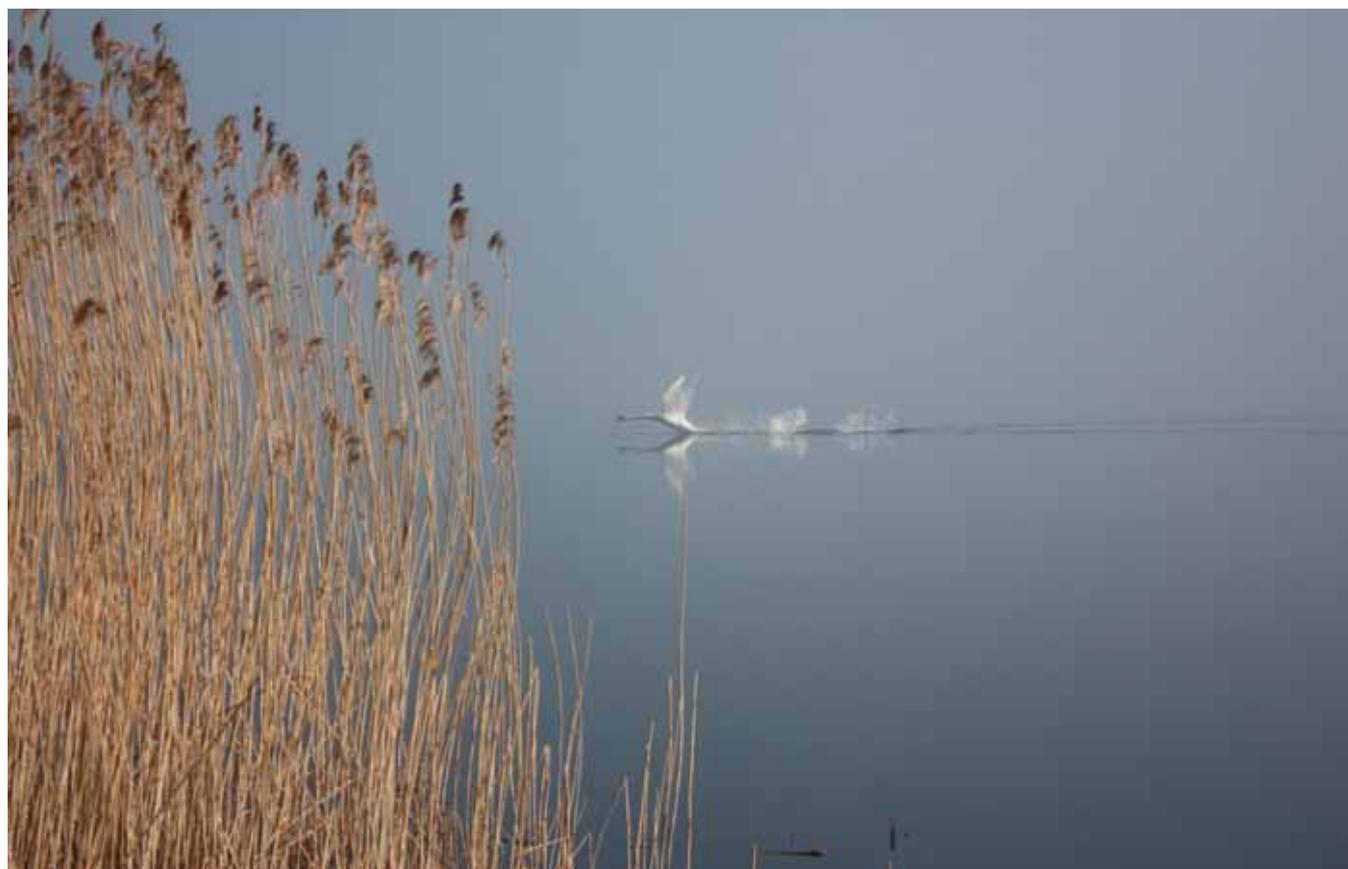
Pupils taking part in the Reading Intervention Programme

The Shared Education Programme helped lay the foundations, Ms Cargill said, but the actual focus of working together and consistently working together has been cemented along with professional development and friendship. Thanks to the Shared Education Programme “we work as a community, we do not work as individuals”.

The success of offering camera skills as part of the curriculum has been clearly demonstrated by 5th year Art and Design pupil Vaisnavi Mansel from Lisnaskea High School when she was awarded overall winner in the first round of the Rotary International of Britain and Ireland (RIBI) Photograph of the Year. Vaisnavi received her award at a lunch organised by Enniskillen Rotary Club at the Killyhelvin Hotel in Enniskillen.



Pupils preparing for their arts event



The winning photo by Vaisnavi Mansel

Local Schools Share Experience at Conference

The Shared Education Learning Forum held its second annual conference at Riddel Hall at Queen's University. The event, entitled 'Supporting the Programme for Government Commitments on Shared Education' highlighted the need for greater cross-community school collaboration if the Department is to meet its targets. Organised by the Fermanagh Trust in Partnership with Queen's University and the North Eastern Education and Library Board's Primary Integrating/Enriching Education Project, the conference resulted in a very strong endorsement from the Minister of Education.

The event was supported by the International Fund for Ireland and the Atlantic Philanthropies as part of the Sharing Education Programme, which encourages schools to work together and provide the means for sustained contact among people from different communities to promote understanding and reconciliation.

The conference was attended by educationists, Church leaders, politicians and people from a range of community organisations from across Northern Ireland. Schools in Fermanagh were highlighted as models of excellence regarding Shared Education. Representatives from a number of schools attended including Marie O'Shea principal of St John the Baptist Primary School, Roscor and Esdille Lappin principal and Kevin Beattie, teacher at Belleek Controlled Primary School who participated in the Conference, delivering a workshop sharing their work and good practice in a rural primary school setting.

Speaking during the conference, Lauri McCusker Director of the Fermanagh Trust said "Shared Education offers huge opportunities for school communities to build collaborations between schools, sharing resources, teachers, planning etc for the benefit of our young people resulting in both enhanced educational outcomes and stronger community relationships. This has been clearly evidenced since 2009 in communities right across County Fermanagh". Lauri further emphasised that "clear evidence exists to suggest that Shared Education can assist in both improvements in teaching and learning; collaboration between staff, wider curriculum choice and education achievement can be gained, as well as the positive impact on community relationships".

Education minister John O'Dowd, who addressed attendees at the conference said "I am committed to encouraging schools to share facilities and resources across and between sectors, with the interest of pupils at the forefront. The Programme for Government sets out four key commitments on Shared Education which I and my Department are currently working towards. By taking steps towards more Shared Education, we will deliver real educational benefits, ensure the best use of resources available and, ultimately, bolster community cohesion".

Dr Adrian Johnston Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, speaking on behalf of the Fund and Atlantic Philanthropies said the economic benefits are clear and the partnerships who participated in the conference "have proven that effective models already exist which can advance education and promote reconciliation. We would like to see them adopted by the wider school community, supported by policy and incentivised by adequate resources so they become embedded in the life of all schools".



Lauri McCusker, Professor Tony Gallagher and Education Minister John O'Dowd

Professor Tony Gallagher, Professor of Education at Queen's University Belfast said the programme has demonstrated that by running shared classes, on a sustained and regular basis, schools can increase opportunities for pupils, improve standards, and promote better understanding and new friendships. "When schools work together there are benefits to be had for principals and teachers, pupils and young people, and the wider community. Resources are used more effectively and the quality of learning for all in the school community, teachers and pupils alike, is improved. Most important, young people learn together and they learn from each other and this will help them build a shared and better future, together".

Statistics Show Increasing Levels Participation in Shared Education

In this fourth year of the Programme, the total number of schools, primary and post-primary, involved in Shared Education is 58, an increase from 49 in the first year (2009). What this shows is that a greater number of schools wish to be involved in Shared Education and that interest is not waning.

The number of pupils involved in Shared Education has also grown, with nearly 5,000 pupils in the County, currently participating in regular joint classes this year (2012/13). That is almost a threefold increase from year 1 (2009/10), thereby demonstrating the high level of demand for Shared Education in County Fermanagh. In the region of 75% of primary pupils in Fermanagh are involved in Shared Education this year (2012/2013) and 47% of all pupils in the County enjoying the benefits of Shared Education this year.

The number of joint classes has also increased incrementally over the 4 year period. The total number of shared/combined classes taking place this year is 78, having grown from 47 in 2009/2010.

Statistics have also shown an increase in community relations training. This training was delivered to help schools in the implementation of Shared Education. Since 2009 a total of 279 members of staff have received this training, with further staff training having taken place this year.

Lessons of Shared Education Programme Must be Taken Seriously

Delegates from the Fermanagh Trust and teachers from the Primary Schools in Irvinestown, took part in a major Shared Education Conference in Lisburn, organised by the Department of Education in February. The conference called for the Education Minister to ensure all classrooms gain from the lessons of the Sharing in Education Programme.

Launched in 2008 and backed by the International Fund for Ireland and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Programme has piloted 22 projects that promote sharing and reconciliation and which span all levels of formal education from early years through to teacher training and development.

Speaking at the Conference, International Fund for Ireland Board Member, Billy Gamble said: “The Fund has made a massive investment in Shared Education projects sponsored by the Department of Education. Pupils, teachers and communities have all benefitted from the support. It is now time for the Department of Education to step up to the plate and support these types of interventions as part of their commitment to a genuine shared future”.

“If we have learned one thing from our troubled past it is that children who learn together grow together. The breadth, depth and texture of this programme needs to be part of the DNA of education delivery”.

The Sharing in Education Programme has received positive appraisals from the Education and Training Inspectorate and an Interim Evaluation Report in June 2012 said that “learners of all ages are benefitting from the programme”. The report also stated that “through significant funding of the IFI, the projects have been able to engage in more in-depth learning with sensitive and controversial issues around peace and reconciliation at a greater pace than could have been possible without that funding”.

The conference acknowledged that by supporting a variety of strategic projects which enable young people to participate in shared educational experiences, the Programme helps to facilitate reconciliation for a shared future.

Nuala Nolan, teacher at St Paul’s Primary School Irvinestown said “I found the Department of Education’s Conference very interesting, specifically hearing of the experiences of others, the difficulties which they have overcome and the interest and desire to continue delivering Shared Education. This was an encouraging and motivating experience”.



Catherine Ward and Colleen Maguire from the Fermanagh Trust with representative from IFI

Studies highlight children's support for Shared Education

The Kid's Life and Times Survey is a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster, and provides an independent source of information on what children think about the social issues of the day.

Regarding Shared Education and school collaboration, the 2012 survey had some interesting comments. When the children were to "pick the two worst things that you think would be bad" the options of having to be with children of a different religion and having to share sports facilities or computers were the least worried about.

Further research by Queen's University and the University of Oxford found that children in Shared Education had more friends from different backgrounds and are more likely to have positive attitudes towards other communities.

Their study looked at the experience of more than 3500 pupils in 51 Catholic, Protestant and Integrated secondary schools throughout Northern Ireland. Joanne Hughes, from Queen's University, was lead researcher. She said the study tested that positive contact with people from different backgrounds can reduce prejudiced attitudes.

"Our studies found that attitudes towards the 'other' communities were greatly improved as a result of participation in Shared Education and that levels of inter-community anxiety and prejudice were reduced."

She explained that "Many people in Northern Ireland value their own schools as they are important symbols of community identity, but this research shows the value of the Sharing Education Programme in recognising this concern for identity while also maximising contact and therefore improving community relations".

Ms Hughes believed the studies are a boost for schools currently sharing classes with pupils from different backgrounds and urged the Northern Ireland Executive to encourage schools to take on the practice.

Prize giving at St. Joseph's College demonstrates Shared Education in action



Mr Jimmy Jackson-Ware, Principal of St Joseph's, Peter Gilfedder, St Mary's College, Ms Kate Gallagher, Shared Teacher and Neill Millar, Devenish College

The Foundation Learning Programme has been fully immersed into school life at St. Joseph's College which includes the credit system for positive behaviour and achievement. As part of the system, nominations were invited from the Foundation Learning Programme Group for 'Student Of The Year'. Peter Gilfedder a student from St. Mary's College, Brollagh and Neil Millar a student from Devenish College both received the award.

Presenting awards to two different schools perfectly demonstrated Shared Education in action. Peter and Neil were both accompanied by their parents and teaching staff from their schools. Jimmy Jackson-Ware, Principal of St. Joseph's College said "this is another excellent example of the collaboration which exists among the schools in working together and sharing resources and facilities to enhance student experiences".




The Fermanagh Trust

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