

IEF Report to the NICIE AGM

Riddell Hall, Belfast,

Friday, 13 November 2015

As delivered by Dorothee Wagner, IEF Trustee

Thank you for the opportunity this evening to present to you on behalf of the Integrated Education Fund.

As ever the past year proved to be a busy time for the Fund with plenty of activity across **grant making, advocacy and fundraising**.

As many of you will be aware, but it is always worth remembering, the IEF is entirely dependent on fundraising in order to function effectively as a charitable foundation that can support the growth and development of integrated schools. Regrettably, there is never enough money to support all the needs of integrated education and therefore unfortunately not every decision from the IEF can be a positive one. As Chair of the Grants Committee I know that only too well!

However, I am pleased to say that in the last year, the generosity and commitment of supporters and donors enabled the IEF to provide grants totalling over £551,000 which means that, since our establishment in 1992, we have now provided over £19 million in grants to integrated education. We take pride in working with you, NICIE, the schools and the parents of this Movement to ensure that ultimately our grants can also help you lever the government funding that is rightfully due to the providers of education to our children.

Let me provide an overview of **8 areas of 'IEF money at work'** over the past year:

1. In the continued absence of new build GMI school projects, it has been the expansion of **existing integrated schools** that has been a key focus. By way of example, IEF grants have been provided for additional teachers, additional classrooms and additional playgroups to support schools that were undertaking significant development proposals. Whilst we are delighted that many schools have had their proposals approved by the Department of Education, we are still deeply concerned at the lack of essential capital investment being made available by the Department at this time.
2. The second available route to having integrated education established – **the transformation process** – remains another key area for support. Grants totalling £177,000 have been awarded during 2014/15.

The IEF is delighted that successful parental ballots have occurred in Loughries, Mallusk and Killyleagh Primary Schools and the Fund looks forward to continuing its support for these schools in the future.

The IEF has also supported the efforts of parents at Clintyclay Primary School in their attempt to become the first Catholic Maintained School to successfully transform. We do hope sense will eventually prevail and that Clintyclay parents will be given every opportunity to pursue their chosen pathway of transformation to integrated status. It is very concerning that to date the Department has chosen to block their democratic wish rather than facilitate and encourage it.

3. This year, as well as providing grants of over £35,000 to existing PACT projects, we also launched a new grants programme – **The Trust Programme**. In May 2015 grants of over £70,000 were agreed for 13 projects in integrated schools. The Trust Programme supports three distinct areas – collaboration between schools at a local level, integration in practice within individual schools and also international projects led by an integrated school. We are indebted to the Pears Foundation and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs for supporting the Trust Programme and, if more funding is secured we hope to have another application round in the New Year.

4. **The Carson Awards Programme** continues to successfully support the creative talent of pupils at integrated schools. In June 2014 our Showcase Event for the awards made in the academic year 2013/14 was held at Cliftonville Integrated Primary School and it was fantastic that our friends in the worldwide Ireland Funds were able to join us for the occasion, together with the Carson Family and actor Dan Gordon. In the 2014/15 academic year **9 prizes of £500 plus trophy and certificate, and 12 bursaries of up to almost £1,000** each were awarded, with the Showcase Event taking place in September 2015 at Hazelwood Integrated College. Pupils use a wide range of mediums to express the theme of the Programme, ‘what integration means to me’. I encourage all our schools to avail of the fabulous opportunity and the enormous potential of the Carson Awards. Those pupils and schools who have benefited to date are testament to the positive impact of the programme. Information and application forms are available now from the IEF website.

5. Thanks to the support of the Open Society Foundations we also embarked on a new and exciting project entitled ‘**Strengthening and Deepening Integrated Education**’ with a focus on the growing cultural diversity within our society and the need to support newcomer and minority ethnic communities within schools. The project included the successful secondment of Paula McIlwaine from NICIE to project manage the programme which consisted of small grants to schools, training support for teachers, citizen engagement events at Malone College and Hazelwood Primary, the piloting of a Saturday school at Malone College, and many other elements.

6. **Advocacy** is a growing and increasingly essential part of the IEF’s work. What do we mean by advocacy? To put it simply, if we want a day when the IEF is no longer needed then we need to secure change in government policy. If the IEF is there to help bridge the gap between what the government provides and what is actually needed, then we have to ensure that gap is closed and ultimately removed.

That is why we have continued to work with the media and opinion formers, with business leaders and politicians, academic institutions and think-tanks both here and in London, Dublin, Washington and Brussels.

Our ‘Opening Minds’ Campaign not only set out a vision for the future but also ways in which policy makers and politicians could deliver sustainable change and a more integrated system.

In achieving this, the voice of young people in the debate is crucial and we have been proud to facilitate and fund a number of initiatives resulting in the recently published ‘Young People’s Voices Report’.

The collective voice of the Integrated Education Movement can be an incredibly powerful tool in shaping government policy and legislation. Over the next few months we have the opportunity to make important and meaningful contributions to both the Shared Education Bill and the forthcoming Review of Integrated Education. We would urge you to Make Your Voice Heard.

7. With our young people in mind, and some maybe not so young anymore, I encourage everyone to engage with the now well-established **Integrated Education Alumni Association**. The members are doing some tremendous work and the IEF is pleased to have supported the development of groups not only in Belfast, but also in London, Liverpool and now Edinburgh. We are all excited about the potential of the first 'Back to School' initiative taking place later this month across a number of schools. Together we can support the alumni as a really powerful, positive force for this Movement.

8. And finally, the Fund is proud to have supported the use of **strategic litigation** to challenge those unfair and indeed unlawful barriers to the growth of integrated education. We appreciate the courageous efforts of Drumragh Integrated College in its continued pursuit of justice for parents wanting access to integrated education in Omagh. We also want to record our thanks to Public Interest Litigation Services (PILS) for their vital pro-bono legal work with the Fund for Drumragh, and of course the work of NICIE as well. Together we all seek to challenge the unacceptable decision to yet again deny expansion of Drumragh.

Not only must we continue to work together to ensure full implementation of the original Judicial Review of the Drumragh case, but we must ensure that the Department will keep to its commitment to review all its policies in line with its duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education. Together we can continue to challenge policies that hinder progress towards the growth of places in integrated schools across Northern Ireland.

In finishing I really want to pay tribute to my fellow Trustees and most importantly, our IEF staff for their continued commitment and energy for the cause. I also want to make a special acknowledgement of our Campaign Council which is led wonderfully by the passionate Baroness May Blood. As I said at the beginning, fundraising continues to underpin all aspects of the Fund's work and without it we can do nothing. So thank you to anyone tonight who has helped us raise those vital pounds, no matter how few, to make it happen and I hope you can continue to support the Fund until one day we are no longer needed.

Thank you.

Dorothee Wagner
IEF Trustee