

Are You In?

Integrated
Education:
FAQs

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Are You In?



Integrate My School

Frequently Asked Questions

The process of transformation can raise a lot of questions. We have written these FAQs following conversations with schools and parents who are interested in, or have gone through the process of transformation. Hopefully in these FAQs, along with the accompanying information leaflets, we have covered the questions that you may have about the process and the changes it might mean for your school. If we haven't, please visit our website for more information, or get in touch using the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Frequently Asked Questions:

About the transformation process

How does the process start?

The consultation process can be started by any group involved in the school. You can help to start the process by going to the website www.integratemyschool.com to register your support for your child's school to become integrated. To move on to the ballot phase, at least 20% of parents must request the ballot or the Board of Governors must pass a resolution to hold a ballot. The Board of Governors will then write to the managing authority, for example the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and/or the Education Authority, to notify them of this decision. The ballot must be held between 1-3 months of this happening.

How long does the process take?

The process of transformation can take less than a year or it can take three years or more. Each school moves forward at its own pace but in each case the process includes the same stages:

- The consultation stage involves information being provided to the Board of Governors, school staff, parents and local community.
- The formal process can be initiated in two ways. Either the Board of Governors can decide to hold a parental ballot for transformation, or parents can sign a petition requesting the Board of Governors to hold a ballot. The DE Transformation Information Pack states that the process will begin if the Board of Governors receive a signed request by a number of parents of registered pupils at the school equal to at least 20% of the number of registered pupils at the school on the date on which the request is received.

- If the parents vote in favour of transformation, the school submits a development proposal to the Education Authority and the Department of Education for consideration.
- There will be a two month consultation period during which time relevant supporting data from the school (including an Action Plan for Integration) will be lodged with the Department of Education.
- If the proposal is approved by the Department, the school will begin taking steps towards integration. This is a continuing journey for the school.

Can any school transform, including Grammar Schools and Catholic Schools?

Yes. All schools except Special Schools and Hospital Schools can transform. Their admissions policy will then be changed as transforming schools have to recruit 10% of their next year's intake from whichever is their minority community.

What is the parental ballot, and who is eligible to vote?

The parental ballot is the opportunity for parents to vote on whether they want the school to transform. The ballot is postal and organised by an independent organisation known as the Electoral Reform Service (ERS), therefore all responses remain confidential. Every adult registered as a parent of a child at the school will get a vote. (One vote per registered parent).

What happens after a ballot in favour of transformation?

For the result to be considered, at least 50% of parents must vote. If there is a turn-out of less than 50% then a second ballot will automatically take place. If 51% or more of those who have voted, vote in favour of transformation, then a development proposal for transformation must be submitted to the Education Authority (EA). The EA will then publish an advertisement in the press and there will be a two month

consultation period during which time relevant supporting data from the school (including an Action Plan for Integration) will be lodged with the Department of Education.

Who writes the Development Proposal and Action Plan, and what needs to be included?

The Development Proposal will be submitted to the Education Authority by the Board of Governors. It will be written by the principal with input from the senior staff and other support bodies such as the Education Authority itself and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). Teachers and parents are likely to have some involvement at a consultative level. The development proposal and action plan must outline how the school will remain viable in future years, how and when changes will be made to ensure there is an integrated ethos and the school is open to all, and also how the school will ensure that the appropriate religious balance is achieved.

Who decides if the school will be allowed to transform?

The final decision regarding the transformation rests with the Minister for Education who will base their judgement on the information available to them. This will include data relating to long term viability, educational standards and the ability of the school to achieve and maintain religious balance. Schools must be able to demonstrate that they can achieve a minimum of 10% of their Year1/Year8 intake from the minority population within the school's enrolment and also the potential to achieve a minimum of 30% in the longer term.

How many Integrated Schools are there?

There are currently 65 integrated schools across Northern Ireland; 45 primary schools and 20 post-primary schools

How many schools have become integrated through the process of transformation?

As of September 2016, 25 schools have already transformed into integrated schools thanks to the support of their parents. Principals, staff and parents of these schools are happy to share their experience with other interested schools - schools should contact NICIE to arrange this.

About how transformation may affect your school

Will the school receive more money if it becomes integrated?

No. Integrated schools receive the same funding as other schools though the Department of Education has undertaken to provide some financial assistance to transforming schools to help them during the first years of the process.

Will my child be asked to play sports associated with specific cultural traditions as part of PE?

Your school will try to cater for the cultural interests, including games, of both the main traditions of Northern Ireland. All pupils will be able to participate or not, as they wish.

How will RE be taught if the school becomes integrated?

All schools, including integrated schools, are required to follow a core RE curriculum agreed by the four main churches. The Board of Governors will ensure that provision is made for Catholic children whose parents wish them to be prepared for the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Financial support may be available from the Department of Education to help school's access specialist teaching for sacramental preparation.

At the moment my school is under the authority of the Education Authority. Will this still be the case if the school becomes integrated?

Transforming schools can choose to be either Grant Maintained Integrated or Controlled Integrated, but all transforming schools to date have been controlled schools which have decided to remain with their Education and Library Board (now the Education Authority) and have taken on Controlled Integrated Status.

How will the management of the school be affected if it becomes integrated?

The Board of Governors will increase in size to reflect the interests of the minority community. Additional places will also be made available for 'parent governors' to allow greater parental involvement in the running of the school.

What support will be available for the school if it decides to become integrated?

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and the Education Authority (EA) will be available to offer guidance and support at all stages of the transformation process. The services and support offered by these organisations will continue even after integrated status has been achieved.

How will the quality of education be affected?

Integrated status will not diminish the quality of education provided at your school. In fact it will enhance it by providing new educational, social and cultural experiences. Many schools in Northern Ireland recognise the positive value of this and have engaged in cross community initiatives. Moving to integrated status will make these benefits permanent and at no extra cost.

Will the school change its name or uniform?

Not necessarily. Some schools do decide, with the support of the school community, to introduce the term 'integrated' into their title or choose a new logo or even a completely new name to reflect their new status.

Does transformation guarantee an increase in pupil numbers?

No. There is no guarantee that becoming integrated will result in an increase in pupil numbers, however it is possible that there will be an increase, as the school will be providing for, and open to, children from all backgrounds.

What is Area Planning and how does Transformation contribute to the Area Planning process?

Area Planning is the process through which the Department of Education's Sustainable Schools Policy is implemented. It aims to identify the need for all types of education provision in an area and to plan to meet that need. The Education Authority working in conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the other sectoral support bodies, including representatives of the integrated sector, are involved in the planning process. Transformation is a process through which a sustainable school changes its management type and ethos to become integrated. This presents a valuable opportunity to increase the level of integrated education in an area to meet parental demand.

Can my school be closed during the period when we are looking at integration?

If the managing authority for the school has confirmed it will close, or has already closed it, it is not possible for the school to transform or re-open.

About you

If I want my school to become integrated, what should I do, or who should I talk to?

The first person to ask about transformation should be your school principal, or your Board of Governors. If you would like more information about what transformation is before contacting your school, you can contact the IEF, NICIE, or the Education Authority, who should all be able to provide you with some more information. If you decide that you do want your school to transform, you can use the Integrate My School website to register your support.

How will my information be used? Who will see my information?

The information you provide when you register your support on the Integrate My School website will be stored confidentially and securely by the Integrated Education Fund, a registered charity in Northern Ireland.

Your support will remain completely anonymous until 20% of parents at the same school register their support. Then and only then will your school be informed of your preference. This will take the form of a private petition to the school on behalf of all the parents of your school who have registered on this website.

You will be provided with regular updates and further information only if you have given your permission.

Take the next step

Transformation works - by September 2016, 25 schools had already transformed into integrated schools. Principals, staff and parents of these schools are happy to share their experience with other interested schools - schools should contact NICIE to arrange this.

Find out more about how your school can become an integrated school

If your school wishes to begin the journey towards integration then the following organisations can provide information and support to guide you on the way, including what the steps in the process are and how long it takes:

Integrated Education Fund

Forestview
Purdy's Lane
Belfast BT8 7AR
Telephone: 028 9069 4099
www.ief.org.uk

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

25 College Gardens
Belfast BT9 6BS
Telephone: 028 9097 2910
www.nicie.org.uk

Department of Education

Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor BT19 7PR
Telephone: 028 9127 9279
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Information being provided to parents

A school can only transform if that is what the majority of parents want. The IEF has developed a website – **www.integratemy school.com** – to provide parents with information about the transformation process and give them the opportunity to register that they want their school to transform.

We hope this website will also become a useful resource for schools and we would plan to keep schools updated should the website indicate levels of support for transformation at a particular school.

**integrate
my School.com**

More Information

If you would like more information about this leaflet or the transformation process, please contact Tina Merron by phoning 028 9069 4099 or emailing tina@ief.org.uk

Integrate My School is an initiative of the Integrated Education Fund



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