

Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing



December 2006

Report of the
**Independent Strategic
Review of Education**

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Chairman's Foreword

1. The education of children and young people is one of the most important aspects of any society, especially a society such as Northern Ireland, which is experiencing rapid social, economic, and political change. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the past few years schools and schooling here have received a great deal of attention and been the subject of several reviews and reports that have dealt, among other things, with the selective system of secondary education, post-primary arrangements (including the curriculum entitlement), pre-school education, and special educational needs and inclusion.
2. In March of this year, the Government announced the present review and asked it to examine education funding, and the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate, taking particular account of curriculum changes and demographic trends. One of the Review's first tasks was to issue a consultation paper. It then invited written submissions from a wide range of education stakeholders, and subsequently held meetings with most of the respondents. These submissions and meetings, and the constructive dialogue that emerged from them, were most valuable in helping the Review to consider the major issues facing it and to decide on its conclusions and recommendations. I am most grateful to all those who responded.
3. Although this Review was independent of government, it needed to rely upon the Department of Education to supply information on a wide range of issues, particularly statistical data on the funding, planning, and organisation of the schools' estate. I am indebted to all those officials who interrupted their normal work to help, and to those in the Department's Desk-Top Publishing Unit who produced the report with great speed and accuracy. With one exception, they are too numerous to mention individually here – the exception being Paul Price, who skilfully co-ordinated the compilation and description of most of the statistical data that underpin the analysis contained in this Report.
4. I am particularly grateful to the other members of the Review Team. Michael O'Neill and Vivian Thomas, who acted as consultants to the Review, provided useful insights and observations based on their Scottish and Welsh experience. The general rule that the Secretary to a Review of this kind is at least

as important as the Chairman is well illustrated by Matthew Murray. The knowledge he acquired during a distinguished career as a school teacher and an inspector was invaluable to the Review, as were his organisational skills and his ability to draft quickly and elegantly.

5. At the beginning of the Review's work, I thought it would be mainly concerned with the issue of "surplus places" and the economic case – cost-effective provision that gives good value for money – for rationalising the schools' estate. As the work advanced, the economic case for rationalisation remained important, but two other arguments for rationalisation became even more important: first, the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities – and second, the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding, and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning.
6. In short, the argument for rationalising the schools' estate is not primarily about saving money – the savings, in any case, being difficult to quantify and, whatever their amount, being required for reinvestment in Northern Ireland's schools – but about giving the children of Northern Ireland an excellent education that will benefit both them and the society in which they live. That is what the Review's sixty-one recommendations are intended to achieve, and I commend them strongly to the Government and to the citizens of Northern Ireland.



Professor Sir George Bain

Executive Summary

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. The Review was announced in March 2006 with the following terms of reference: "To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14-19 year olds, and also demographic trends." The full terms of reference are grouped under three headings: Financial Issues, Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate, and Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration.
2. Through written submissions and a series of meetings we have consulted with a wide range of educational interests. This vital part of our approach proved to be extremely valuable in developing our understanding of substantive issues and appreciation of different perspectives. The Department of Education (DE) provided the Review with information, analyses and perspectives on a wide range of matters in relation both to funding education and to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate. The Review acknowledges the positive and constructive engagement with all those who contributed to its work.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3. The Review has undertaken its work concurrently with the planning of major reforms in education in Northern Ireland and in the knowledge of other drivers for change. From the perspective of the Review, these key reforms and drivers are demographic change, education policy, *A Shared Future*, the Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme, and the Review of Public Administration.
4. The downward trend in the pupil population, the effects of which are already clear, is expected to continue well into the future. Strategic planning needs to address the issue of over-provision and the much lower demand for school places.
5. There are significant policy developments underway in relation to post-primary arrangements, in particular the Curriculum Entitlement Framework for 14-19 year-olds, Extended Schools, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, and policy responsibility for early years' functions.

6. The Government's policy and strategy framework for good relations in Northern Ireland, presented in *A Shared Future* (March 2005) calls, in particular, for promoting sharing in all levels of education and encouraging integrated education in its widest sense, and the First Triennial Action Plan for implementing *A Shared Future* sets out specific commitments for DE in relation to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate.
7. Some £3 billion is to be invested over a period of ten years to achieve a "fit for purpose schools' estate, efficiently delivered and managed". The objective of the estate planning process is to provide a sufficiency of school places through the appropriate mix of schools of the right size in the right locations.
8. In formulating its recommendations and in considering their implementation, the Review has taken account of the proposed functions of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA), particularly its role in the strategic planning of the schools' estate, and the future role of DE focused on developing policy and strategy, monitoring standards, allocating resources, and maintaining accountability.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN IRELAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

9. DE is responsible for the central administration of education and related services in Northern Ireland, with the exception of the Further and Higher Education sectors, which are the responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning. DE's main areas of responsibility are pre-school, primary, post-primary, and special education; the youth service; the promotion of community relations within and between schools; and teacher education.
10. Inspection and monitoring of all education and training establishments is the direct responsibility of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). In keeping with key government principles for inspection, ETI provides an independent professional assessment of the effectiveness of existing or proposed policy.
11. Responsibility for the delivery of day-to-day education services within the policy, strategy and procedures set by DE currently lies with: the five Education and Library Boards, including the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards; the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; the Youth Council for Northern

Ireland; other grant-aided bodies, including the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; and schools.

12. The system of schools in Northern Ireland comprises five main sectors: Controlled Schools – including Controlled Integrated Schools – Catholic Maintained Schools, Voluntary Grammar Schools, Grant-maintained Integrated Schools, and Irish-medium Schools.
13. The diversity of school type, the selective system of education, the existence of single sex schools, and the substantially rural nature of Northern Ireland largely explain both the relatively large number of schools that exist and the sizeable proportion of small schools. Although the range of provision is explained, and indeed justified, by the principle of parental choice, the inefficiencies manifest in the system need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

14. To examine funding and to consider planning of the schools' estate without reference to their ultimate function would, in our opinion, be futile. We considered it essential, therefore, to devote a special chapter to quality in education, the importance of good schools, and the priority of school improvement.
15. Submissions to the Review, together with material from other sources, reflect a large measure of agreement on such fundamental matters as purpose, aims, principles and values in education, central to which is the paramount importance of the pupil as learner and as a unique human being living in a community with others.
16. Consultation endorsed two broad aims for education focused on: quality of individual opportunities and experiences in terms of curriculum, learning and teaching, standards in relation to attainment, personal growth and social development; and social, community and economic well-being.
17. Consultation articulated views that education should be in the service of both the individual and society, should be concerned with all aspects of the human person, and contribute to personal fulfilment, civic well-being and economic prosperity. Within a framework of shared core values and principles, we acknowledge

perspectives that make for distinctiveness in the educational experience provided by schools, manifest in their ethos, but with scope for each school to develop and maintain its own particular character.

18. The relationship between school and community was a recurring theme in the responses to the Review. Good schools both benefit from, and contribute to, social cohesion through their relationship with healthy communities, which in turn play a major role in educating young people and make a real contribution to education and to social stability.
19. We found a high level of support for the determinants of quality and standards in schools set out in the consultation paper. As well as reflecting the key indicators on standards, pedagogy, curriculum, pastoral care, and effective partnerships, a good school or learning organisation also ensures that the resources and facilities it provides, and its structures and management arrangements, are suited to the age, maturity and range of learning styles of its learners.

CHAPTER 5: DETERMINING THE EDUCATION BUDGET

20. The Northern Ireland education budget (£1838m in 2006/07) is determined within the context of the overall level of resource allocated to Northern Ireland by the United Kingdom government during biennial national Spending Reviews. Changes to the overall level of funding are determined using the Barnett Formula. Under this formula, Northern Ireland receives its population-based proportion of changes according to planned spending on comparable United Kingdom government services in England, England and Wales, or Great Britain. Although changes under this formula are calculated by reference to specific services, changes to the Northern Ireland departmental budgets for these services, including that of education, are determined by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (the Executive under devolution) in the context of the Government's priorities for Northern Ireland. In 2006/07 the education budget (i.e. for the areas of education for which the Department of Education is responsible) represents just over a fifth of the overall level of resource allocated to Northern Ireland. Almost all of it is spent on schools and over half of it is spent by schools.
21. It is difficult to establish to what extent the Northern Ireland education budget, so determined, represents a "fair share". The countries of the United Kingdom collect and publish data on education expenditure in ways that reflect the

manifold differences across the four administrations and that resist straightforward comparison. What can be said is that Northern Ireland's budget for current expenditure in education has grown in recent years (27.2 per cent between 2001/02 and 2005/06). On the face of it, this relative increase appears less than that experienced in England (41.2 per cent over the same period), but Northern Ireland's pupil numbers have dropped by a greater margin during these years (3.8 per cent compared to 1.8 per cent in England). To the extent that pupil-level investment comparisons can be relied upon, these suggest that, in 2004/05, Northern Ireland spent slightly more per post-primary pupil than Wales, but considerably less per primary pupil. In terms of capital investment, Northern Ireland's planned capital investment in schools of £207m for 2006/07 is part of a pattern of rising investment in recent years, and is planned to continue in 2007/08 when investment in schools will increase to £406.9m.

CHAPTER 6: ALLOCATING THE EDUCATION BUDGET

22. In 2006/07, £207m is planned for expenditure on the buildings in the schools' estate and £1595m is being spent on the day-to-day costs involved in the delivery of provision. Under the Local Management of Schools Scheme, two-thirds of this money is delegated to schools to spend according to their own assessment of priorities. The mechanism through which schools receive their level of delegation, the Common Funding Formula, seeks to be responsive to the large array of factors that create any school's particular resource needs: the number and age of their pupils, the needs of their pupils, and the costs of their staff and buildings, for example.
23. The Common Funding Formula was only recently introduced, in April 2005, and there is potential to improve the way in which it distributes resources to schools. Smaller schools, despite features of the formula designed to cater for their needs, seem to have particular pressures, chief of which is that the funding of staff costs from the delegated budget can account for most of a small school's delegation and leave little scope for significant management decisions. One possible solution to this is for schools to collaborate, to share and gain access to each other's resources – key themes for this Review. A funding mechanism based largely on enrolment, however, encourages schools to maximise their pupil numbers and, hence, will not necessarily facilitate partnership and collaboration.

24. The principles behind the Local Management of Schools Scheme and the Common Funding Formula – devolution to the front line, the centrality of the pupil, and equity of distribution – are sound and, in the face of the particular characteristics of the Northern Ireland school system (e.g. small schools, over-provision) should not be weakened but developed further. In the interests of devolved decision making, the level of delegation within schools' budgets should maximise their ability to determine and manage their own priorities. Northern Ireland's level of delegation within individual schools' budgets, currently roughly 69 per cent, is lower than that in England, where it typically exceeds 80 per cent. This suggests that there is scope to increase the Northern Ireland level of delegation. Increasing it requires that schools' staff costs continue to be part of delegated budgets, but it also gives them greater ability to manage this dominant pressure. Similarly, funding should continue to follow pupils but, in their interest, the Common Funding Formula should be complemented by incentives that encourage schools to work together to improve the range of educational experiences they can offer their children. In the interests of equity, there is a need to review at regular intervals the formula's methods of calculation to ensure that they continue to distribute available resources fairly and accurately across all schools. Equity also requires a review of the funding for fee-charging preparatory departments in grammar schools, admission to which is determined by parents' ability to pay.

CHAPTER 7: EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

25. Northern Ireland's schools perform well in educating its young people and preparing them for adult life and the world of work. At most stages of their education the attainment levels of pupils in Northern Ireland compare favourably with those in the other countries of the United Kingdom. But there is evidence that the resources of the education system are not being used as effectively as they might be. There are opportunities for improvement, and the incidence of low attainment and the legacy of underachievement within Northern Ireland's overall performance levels require that these opportunities are taken.
26. Our analysis shows that, because of falling pupil numbers and Northern Ireland's many school sectors, there are too many schools in Northern Ireland. As a result, there are too many schools with small pupil numbers, some to the extent that they are, or soon will be, unsustainable. Related to this, as a further indication of a schools' estate that is not fit for purpose, is the large number of empty places

(53,000 in 2005/06, 15 per cent of total capacity) in a school system designed to cater for a much larger number of pupils than are provided by current enrolment levels.

27. A clear policy on school sustainability needs to be developed. School sustainability means a number of things but its governing principle should be educational sustainability. Children need schools that have the ability to provide them with a high quality educational experience. There is a point, and it can vary across schools and locations, when the enrolment of a school and its budget (determined largely by the number of pupils) limits its ability to provide a broad and balanced curriculum (particularly in anticipation of the new Entitlement Framework). Minimum school sizes are, therefore, central to school sustainability and the recommendations of this Review include minimum enrolment thresholds for primary and post-primary schools. Schools with enrolments below the relevant thresholds should be reviewed and schools that are found to be not educationally sustainable should close, regardless of their economic position or the non-educational services they provide. The Review adopts a similar approach to sixth-form enrolments.
28. The schools' estate needs to consist of fewer and larger schools, all of them educationally sustainable and all of them maximising the potential of their resources. As a baseline of effectiveness, therefore, and in conjunction with enrolment thresholds, the level of surplus capacity distributed across the schools' estate should not when aggregated exceed 10 per cent so as to cater for a degree of uncertainty in planning and to accommodate choice. The thresholds proposed are minima, not optima, and they must be complemented, across the system, by an effort to harness the potential of resources collectively with the aim of improving the quality and breadth of provision through collaboration between schools and between them and colleges of further education.

CHAPTER 8: CURRENT APPROACH TO PLANNING

29. The main concerns about the current planning process are lack of integration, co-ordination and consistency between the planning activities of the education authorities. There is a lack of strategic planning in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors, where planning is essentially in response to actual, rather than predicted, demand.

30. The existing planning arrangements, generally focused on individual schools, rather than taking a broader view, tend to over-estimate demand, and they are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that investment is directed at those schools with the greatest need. There is a lack of robust and consistent information on the condition and suitability of the schools' estate.

CHAPTER 9: PLANNING: A STRATEGIC APPROACH

31. We specify guiding principles, overwhelmingly endorsed in consultation, underpinning the planning of the schools' estate. Communities need schools that provide high quality educational experiences and outcomes for all pupils; reflect the pluralist nature of Northern Ireland; ensure equality, accessibility, diversity and parental choice; are educationally and financially viable and operate cost-effectively, maximising expenditure on the pupils' education; share and collaborate to optimise the use of their facilities for the benefit of all; are affordable and sustainable in the long-term; and represent good value for money in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure.
32. Area-based planning, within a strategic framework of vision, policy, principles and guidelines provided by DE, is the central feature of the new and strategic approach to planning the schools' estate recommended by the Review. ESA should have overall operational responsibility for the strategic planning of the schools' estate, within the framework established by DE. In recognition of the urgency with which the new approach should be implemented, we are recommending that DE should proceed with area-based planning from early in the year 2007 until ESA is established, and that it should draw up a timetable for the key actions and outcomes in establishing and implementing the new strategic approach. In view of the new approach to planning, future school building projects should be approved only after area-based planning is established, and previously announced capital projects that are currently underway should be reviewed for their consistency with the area-based approach according to their stage of development.
33. Local areas should comprise coherent sets of nursery, primary and post-primary schools, and, as appropriate, special schools, as well as accessible further education provision, and as far as possible should lie within a single local council's boundaries. Areas based on these features should facilitate planning of curricular

provision at local level, and also allow for co-ordination of educational planning with provision of other services, including local government services. Extending school provision into new areas of service has major implications for the types of buildings, for the range of accommodation needed, and for funding.

34. To establish a baseline for planning, and to monitor future provision, DE and ESA should establish quality indicators and other criteria and use them consistently, in conjunction with a sustainable schools policy, to assess the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of the educational provision in an area; the sufficiency, suitability and condition of the schools' accommodation and facilities; the nature and quality of the connection between the schools and the community; and the extent to which the provision reflects value for money. ESA and DE should establish and maintain, as a service to all the education partners, a comprehensive data collection and analysis capability, availing of modern data-gathering technology.
35. To ensure effective, efficient and participative procedures for area-based planning, ESA should establish, lead and co-ordinate planning groups that are representative of all the educational interests and that can bring informed knowledge of local communities and circumstances to the planning process. The process should aim to achieve maximum agreement at local level on the proposals that are submitted for consideration centrally. ESA should have responsibility for finalising proposals, but it will be essential to ensure fairness, consistency and accountability.
36. It is appreciated that rationalisation of provision can be a highly emotive community issue, accompanied by a sense of loss. Nonetheless, it is essential that there should be early intervention and investigation when there are signs that a school's enrolment is falling and there is a budgetary difficulty, and a long-term appropriate strategy should be put in place. The focus should be on the real benefits that alternative and better provision can bring for the children, and indeed for the community. In the light of submissions to the Review, DE should review existing procedures, with the aim of accelerating the rationalisation and procurement process.

CHAPTER 10: COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION

37. Current curricular provision in most post-primary schools in Northern Ireland falls well short of the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, established in response to the wide variation in schools' provision at Key Stage 4 and at post-16. Although the shortfall is most evident in smaller schools, and at post-16 in schools with small sixth forms, there is a surprising variation in the provision of schools of comparable enrolments.
38. Given this picture of provision, the implementation of the Entitlement Framework will require co-operation and collaboration between schools, and between schools, colleges of further education and approved training organisations. Collaborative arrangements, however, cannot be regarded as an alternative to re-organising Northern Ireland's post-primary schools into a system of sustainable schools, and the benefits of collaboration must be weighed against the costs and the manageability of the arrangements.
39. The development of local collaborative arrangements should be within a framework of operational and strategic planning and development, to ensure consistency and coherence in provision and equality of opportunity across the education system. To ensure that all learners have access to an appropriate curriculum and that organisations optimise the use of their resources, there should also be a strategic dimension to planning at local level, in respect of both curriculum provision and institutional roles. The planning of provision should ensure the optimal use of the expertise, experience and facilities available in schools and in colleges of further education, and ensure that there is no wasteful duplication in schools of professional, technical and vocational facilities.
40. Although progress is being made in developing collaboration between schools and colleges of further education through developing, evaluating and improving the Vocational Enhancement Programme, in the view of the ETI collaboration is at an early stage of development, with most of the existing partnerships considered to be characterised by forms of co-operation in a competitive environment, rather than demonstrating key features of co-ordination and collaboration. The absence of a common, cohesive and comprehensive 14-19 education and training policy and strategy – incorporating curriculum, funding, facilities and teacher education

– militates against collaboration and the most effective use of the schools' and further education estates.

41. Learners need well-informed curricular guidance, good tutorial support, and also impartial careers education, advice, information and guidance to help ensure that their learning is coherently anchored into a learning pathway and provides progression. Each learner should have a host learning organisation that takes responsibility for overseeing the coherence of the individual's learning programme, and his or her progression within it.
42. The provision in schools, colleges of further education and work-based learning should be more complementary and better co-ordinated, with provision by each type of organisation capitalising on its distinctive strengths and capabilities, in terms of its teaching expertise and facilities. Progression routes within each type of provision should be made accessible and clear to their respective users.

CHAPTER 11: PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

Integrated Education

43. The aims and spirit of *A Shared Future* are unmistakable features of the backcloth to this Review. We acknowledge that integrated schools make a highly significant and distinctive approach to educating children and young people together. We believe, nonetheless, that all schools, and all the educational interests, need to, and wish to, play their part in the journey towards the goal of *A Shared Future* – “a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust”. We advocate, therefore, not a single approach to integration, but a more pervasive and inclusive strategy, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system.
44. We believe that integration starts with individual schools educating their pupils to be enlightened, critical thinkers and well-balanced individuals, prepared for the responsibilities and obligations of life in a civilised and democratic society. The good school, as an inclusive, civilised and tolerant learning community, gives

witness to, and promotes, those values, attitudes, understandings and behaviours fundamental to the development of a healthy society.

45. Schools committed to integration reach out to other schools, build mutually beneficial relationships and develop understanding, respect, trust and tolerance through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning, both by pupils and teachers, supported by governors and parents. Such schools put learners' interests first, value and respect distinctiveness and diversity, and are convinced that productive links with other learners and other providers are desirable, indeed natural.
46. Our argument for this more inclusive and pervasive approach is three-fold: first, the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; second, the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money.
47. In light of our thinking on integrating education and improving collaboration, we believe the time is right for DE to make clear that, in discharging its duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging an inclusive strategy with a variety of meaningful approaches. We also advocate that in undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, there should be a duty on ESA to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools.

Irish-medium Education

48. The accommodation needs of the Irish-medium sector should be met within the area-based approach to planning advocated by the Review. Since Irish-medium schools are educational institutions, the nature and structuring of the accommodation and facilities for Irish-medium education must, first and foremost, support high quality teaching and learning.
49. Options for accommodating the development of Irish-medium education include: new builds; reassigning and modernising accommodation that is surplus to requirements; transformation of school status; and Irish-medium units in

English-medium schools. Multi-campus or shared-campus models seem to be potentially practicable at the primary school stage, but the untested satellite system appears to pose substantial difficulties and uncertainties in relation to curriculum, quality of learning, management and organisation. Post-primary Irish-medium education faces intrinsic difficulties, not just in terms of enrolments, but also in relation to the recruitment and deployment of specialist teachers and in meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

50. The Review has identified a number of important factors that warrant DE to review the current position and to develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium education. These factors are the pattern of growth in the sector, a lack of consensus on aspects of the educational process and on the suitability of the environment for education through Irish, and a radically changing planning context for education.

CHAPTER 12: MODELS OF COLLABORATION AND SHARING

51. Northern Ireland's educational structure – based almost entirely on institutional independence, and its preservation, within a competitive system – is also, to a greater or lesser extent, at a cost to learners' experiences and opportunities, to teachers and principals, to the efficient use of the schools' estate, and to economic well-being, and the integration and health of our society more generally.
52. The Review acknowledges the success of arrangements for joint work where sensitive, high level leadership has encouraged local initiatives in collaboration and has struck the right balance between realism and boldness. There are clear educational, community and financial benefits in self-reliant, and self-generated, arrangements, particularly when parents have been kept informed and made to feel involved. The Review would wish those initiatives to continue and believes that ESA should have a role to play, not only in supporting, but also in proactively developing and extending sharing and collaboration at local level.
53. A variety of incentives should be available to encourage and support sharing and collaboration, recognising and building on local "success stories" that demonstrate the common benefits. Such incentives might include building a new high specification common facility, for instance, in technology; financial support to promote sharing of staff and facilities between schools; and making it

attractive for two or more neighbouring schools to gain additional or better facilities than would normally be available.

54. Various forms of association, from voluntary coalitions and partnerships to a relationship involving formal management and governance structure, can provide the opportunity for schools to share and collaborate on a range of curricular and other issues, to procure efficiencies, and to secure improvements in the quality of education provided. These arrangements can accommodate the need, and the desire, to preserve and maintain the ethos of individual schools, while making more efficient use of resources. The options include confederation, federation, co-location, and a shared campus model. The degree to which a particular form of sharing promotes integration will depend on the extent to which pupils of the schools involved experience significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning. Arrangements for sharing and collaboration should be evaluated and reported, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement.

CHAPTER 13: THE WAY FORWARD

55. We have consulted widely and listened carefully and critically, but with an open mind. This engagement with the many educational interests was most valuable in helping the Review to consider the major issues facing it and to decide on its conclusions and recommendations.
56. The process of moving from the current configuration of the schools' estate to a more effective, efficient and better integrated system of schools, more assured of their future, will take time and careful, imaginative, sensitive planning. The change cannot, and should not, be achieved hastily. But it is an inescapable direction of travel, a journey that must be undertaken, and must begin without delay.
57. We believe that our recommendations taken together provide a realistic, achievable, yet challenging way forward to bring about the radical and long-term changes that are necessary if the children and young people of Northern Ireland are to be provided with an excellent education, in the broadest sense, in good schools with a secure future.

58. These new directions will require visionary, clear yet sensitive skill and leadership in managing change. They will require public support and ownership if they are to bring success and, therefore, high quality communication regarding the Review's recommendations will be essential for all those, not least children and young people, and the professionals themselves, whose stake in the outworking of any decisions is indeed great.

List of Recommendations

Allocating the Education Budget

1. The degree to which schools have control of their own budgets should be maximised, with appropriate arrangements for accountability put in place.
2. In addition to a delegated budget, schools should receive financial and other incentives to share resources and deliver improved provision in collaboration with other schools.
3. The budgets delegated to schools should continue to include resources for teachers' salaries and other staff costs.
4. The methodology used to distribute resources to schools through the Common Funding Formula should be reviewed to ensure that delegations under the formula reflect the costs of the main needs of schools.
5. The rationale for funding Preparatory Departments in grammar schools should be reviewed.

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Effectiveness and Efficiency

6. The policy for sustainable schools in Northern Ireland should ensure that all schools are sustainable in terms of the quality of the educational experience of children, enrolment trends, financial position, school leadership and management, accessibility, and the strength of their links to the community.
7. The sustainable schools policy should ensure that regardless of the financial position of a school or the other services it provides, it is not considered viable if the quality and breadth of the education it provides is less than "satisfactory".
8. (a) The minimum (not optimal) enrolments for new primary schools, and for Years 8–12 in new post-primary schools should be (i) Primary: 140 pupils in urban areas, and 105 pupils in rural areas, and (ii) Post-primary: 500 pupils. When the enrolment in an existing school falls below the relevant level, the future of the school should be reviewed.

- (b) The minimum (not optimal) enrolment for a new sixth form in an 11–18 school should be 100 pupils. When the enrolment falls below this level in an existing sixth form, the future of the sixth-form provision should be reviewed.
- 9. Surplus capacity in the schools' estate should be no more than 10 per cent of the estate's total capacity, distributed across the system.
- 10. Schools involved in rationalisation or closure should be given adequate funding to ensure that a satisfactory education can be provided for the remaining pupils during the period leading up to the rationalisation.

Planning: A Strategic Approach

- 11. The Education and Skills Authority should plan the schools' estate on a local area basis, within a strategic framework of vision, policy, principles, and guidelines provided by the Department of Education.
- 12. Within the strategic framework established by the Department of Education, the Education and Skills Authority should have overall operational responsibility for the strategic planning of the schools' estate.
- 13. Until the Education and Skills Authority has acquired the capacity to exercise its estate planning function, the Department of Education should act quickly and decisively to take forward area-based planning as soon as possible in the year 2007, with the full support of the relevant education authorities.
- 14. The Department of Education should establish a provisional timetable, to be refined and taken forward by the Education and Skills Authority, specifying target dates for the following key steps in setting up and implementing the area-based planning strategy: (a) the Department of Education's strategic framework of vision, policy, principles, and guidelines; (b) the specification of local areas; (c) the review of local provision; (d) the initiation and conclusion of local planning; (e) the submission of area proposals to the Education and Skills Authority; (f) the finalised and approved area plans; and (g) the implementation of individual plans for the estate as a whole.

15. Future school building projects should be approved only after area-based planning is established, and previously announced capital projects that are currently underway should be reviewed, according to their stage of development, for their consistency with the area-based approach.
16. Local areas should comprise coherent sets of nursery, primary and post-primary schools, and, as appropriate, special schools, as well as accessible further education provision, and as far as possible lie within a single local council's boundaries.
17. Planning should ensure that proposals for contiguous local areas are considered together, and that their interrelationships are identified and taken into account, before investment decisions are made.
18. Area-based plans should ensure that each area is served by sustainable schools that provide high quality education for all pupils and that, taken together, balance the expressed wishes of parents and the projected requirements of each school sector, with the cost-effective use of capital and recurrent funding.
19. To ensure effective, efficient and participative procedures for area-based planning, the Education and Skills Authority should establish, lead and co-ordinate planning groups that are representative of all the educational interests and that bring informed knowledge of local communities and circumstances to the planning process.
20. The process of area planning should incorporate intra-sectoral, cross-sectoral and cross-community considerations, and aim to achieve maximum agreement at local level on the proposals that are to be submitted to the Education and Skills Authority.
21. Planning should be open to the possibility of establishing schools of new management types as a result of cross-sector or cross-community agreement to maintain local educational provision.
22. In accordance with *A Shared Future*, proposals for new schools, or re-organisation, or rationalisation of schools should demonstrate that options for collaboration and sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored.

23. In area-based planning, the Education and Skills Authority should have the option of consulting directly with communities to ascertain views on options for educational provision, with the information obtained being considered alongside the assessments of need made by the various school sectors.
24. With the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority, the Department of Education should provide appropriate resources for each sector to ensure that they have the capacity to support the planning of the schools' estate.
25. The Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority should establish quality indicators and other criteria and use these consistently, in conjunction with a sustainable schools policy, to assess the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of the educational provision in an area; the sufficiency, suitability and condition of the schools' accommodation and facilities; the nature and quality of the connection between the schools and the community; arrangements for sharing and collaboration; and the extent to which the provision reflects value for money.
26. Using the specified quality indicators and other criteria, the Education and Skills Authority should undertake a detailed area-based audit of provision (including that in Further Education), and, having done so, it should maintain and regularly up-date the resulting data.
27. The Education and Skills Authority should regularly monitor area-based provision against the quality indicators and other criteria, identify factors that suggest a review of provision is required, promote innovative ideas for consideration, prompt and encourage linkages, initiate discussion with the sectors and community interests, and work with others to remove hindrances to desirable developments.
28. To ensure coherence and consistency in education policy, the planning of the schools' estate should harmonise with policy on the curriculum, and with policy in such areas as Extended Schools, special needs provision, youth provision, admissions procedures and criteria, and transport.
29. The planning of the schools' estate should, as far as possible, be co-ordinated with planning in such fields as health; social services; adult education; youth provision; sports, arts and recreation; and community regeneration and development.

30. The planning of the schools' estate and of the Further Education estate should be co-ordinated in order to optimise the use of accommodation and resources across the education system.
31. School accommodation that becomes available through rationalisation and re-organisation should be appraised for its potential as an alternative to new builds to meet identified sector or community requirements for additional provision.
32. The forecasting of enrolments should consider all the relevant determinants of demand to the greatest practicable extent, including demographics, pupil movements, population shifts, economic development, parental choice, and changes in school performance and sustainability.
33. To inform the siting of new schools, maximum travel distances and maximum travel times for all pupils should be established.
34. A data collection and analysis capability, availing of modern data gathering technology, should be established and maintained by the Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority, as a service to all the education partners, to enable them to access and use up-to-date and relevant data, and to take full account of the determinants of demand and the interactions between geographic areas and sectors.
35. As soon as there are signs that a school's enrolment is falling and there is a budgetary difficulty, the Education and Skills Authority should identify and address the causes and, if these can not be addressed, consider the options for future provision and implement that which is effective and efficient in the interests of learners.
36. When considering the long-term future of a school, the Education and Skills Authority and the appropriate sector should not take account of short-term funding arrangements (such as those contingent on certain initiatives) that can distort or mask the financial viability of a school.
37. The Department of Education should review the existing procedures with the aim of accelerating the rationalisation and procurement processes.

38. The approach to re-organisation should not focus on the deficits in the current position, but rather concentrate on demonstrating the gains and benefits that alternative and better provision can bring to learners and, indeed, to the entire community.
39. School design and schedules of accommodation should be amended to take account of such factors as: the changing nature of schools and their functions in local communities; the potential for using new technologies for teaching and learning; the requirement to ensure that the schools' estate is environmentally sustainable; and the provision of areas within the school that are conducive to social interaction and individual study.
40. The planning, to quality standards, and the use of sports facilities in schools should be set within a co-ordinated strategic approach, involving bodies concerned with sports facility provision at central and local level.
41. School sports facilities should be made available to outside groups at reasonable cost, with schools and other providers working together to share the provision and maintenance of these facilities.
42. The planning of the schools' estate should take account of policy on Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, including such aspects as accommodation, school based support, and collaboration between all schools, specialist services, and multi disciplinary teams.

Collaboration Between Schools and Further Education

43. To ensure that provision is consistent and coherent, and that all young people have access to the same range and high quality of education, the delivery of the 14-19 curriculum should take full account of the defined local areas and involve the collaboration of schools, colleges of further education, and training providers.
44. The full potential of collaboration – through the innovative use of information technology and movement of staff – should be explored, particularly where it can contribute positively to the quality and range of provision available (e.g. in sparsely populated, rural areas where there are poor public transport facilities, or in areas involving the crossing of sectarian interfaces).

45. The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning should progress urgently their current review of 14–19 provision, with particular reference to curriculum, funding, and planning of provision, and taking account of local and regional requirements, establish a common and coherent 14–19 education and training policy and strategy.
46. The provision in schools, colleges of further education, and work-based learning should be more complementary and better co-ordinated, with each type of organisation capitalising on its distinctive strengths and capabilities in terms of its provision, teaching expertise, and facilities. Progression routes within each type should be made accessible and clear to their respective users.
47. Learners should have access to high quality and impartial services to help them make informed choices based on sound careers education, information, advice and guidance.
48. In order to take account of developments in provision for 14–19 year olds, current teacher education arrangements (and related in-service training), including an examination of the desirability of a common set of standards for qualified teacher status across 14–19 provision, should be reviewed.
49. Staff development should be provided across the schools' and Further Education sectors to ensure high levels of understanding about each other's provision and culture, and to help those involved to value difference and diversity without the pressure of organisational self-preservation.
50. Each learner should have a "host" learning organisation that takes responsibility for overseeing the coherence, suitability, and development of his or her learning programme.
51. An urgent examination should be undertaken of the factors that contribute to a competitive rather than a co-operative environment, such as the open enrolment policy and differentials in funding mechanisms, with a view to removing or at least reducing impediments to collaborative work.

Perspectives on Integration and Collaboration

52. In undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, the Education and Skills Authority should be required to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools.
53. To encourage and support a more inclusive approach to integrating education, additional funding – in the form of (a) an enhanced unit of resource, and (b) special funding for particular areas of work such as staff development – should be provided to schools that are actively engaged in sharing with other schools, or a school that is developing an inclusive environment in recognition of the diversity of its pupils' religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
54. Either through new arrangements under the Review of Public Administration, or through a dedicated strategic forum, the Department of Education should help education stakeholders to discuss issues pertinent to integrating education and improving collaboration, promoting trust and mutual understanding, and working to develop collaboration and sharing.
55. The Department of Education should make clear that, in discharging its legislative duty in respect of integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools.
56. The Department of Education should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium education.
57. The planning for Irish-medium education should make use of a variety of feasible options capable of providing the accommodation and facilities that support a high quality of education through the medium of Irish, including:
 - creating new sustainable Irish-medium schools through new builds, adapting existing surplus capacity in the schools' estate, and transformation; and
 - collaborating and sharing within the Irish-medium sector, and with English-medium schools, including the provision of Irish-medium units or streams in English-medium schools.

Models of Collaboration and Sharing

58. Local "success stories" of collaboration and sharing should be encouraged, identified, and used to disseminate good practice.
59. The Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Education and Skills Authority should develop a range of incentives to encourage and support local schools to build on existing levels of shared facilities and staff and to develop their partnership further. Examples of incentives that should be considered include:
 - providing a new high specification common facility, for example, in technology;
 - funding for an additional teacher to facilitate link arrangements and work across schools or between schools and Further Education;
 - modifying the accommodation norms and standards to make it attractive for two or more geographically close schools to gain facilities which, if they continued to operate separately, would be inappropriate (due to school enrolment) or less practicable; and
 - prioritising proposals for school improvements that incorporate sharing and collaboration.
60. Sharing and collaboration between schools should be evaluated, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement.
61. The manifestations and outcomes of the distinctive character of schools, and the contribution of schools to the spirit of *A Shared Future*, should be included in schools' annual reports and in inspection reports, taking account of the community environment of the school.

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PART A

The Context

- 1.1 This chapter sets out the terms of reference for the Review and describes the Review process. It concludes by outlining the main parts of the report.

Terms of Reference

- 1.2 The Independent Strategic Review of Education in Northern Ireland was announced in March 2006 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Peter Hain MP, with the following terms of reference: "To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14–19 year olds, and also demographic trends."
- 1.3 Elaborating on the terms of reference, the Secretary of State asked the Review to look particularly at how new models of schooling could be developed, ensuring that resources are shared in the best way, and giving young people the best environment in which to be educated. In addition, the Review was asked to look at how best to encourage and facilitate integrated education as a vital building block towards creating the conditions necessary for long-term peace and stability in Northern Ireland. It was made clear that the particular importance attached to integrating education was not to limit the different ethos that parents and others want to see in schools, but to focus attention on developing thinking about new ways of working together, and of envisaging approaches to schooling that share resources.
- 1.4 The full terms of reference for the Review were confirmed on 30 June 2006 by the Minister with responsibility for Education, Maria Eagle MP. On that occasion the Minister said:

This Review is a key element in our package of major reforms to deliver a world class education system for Northern Ireland. This Government's continuing commitment to investing in the local education system is clear, but we must be sure that our investment creates maximum benefit for Northern Ireland's young people. We need to ensure that our planning of schools is more strategic, taking account of demographic trends and future educational needs.

Existing and new schools must be sustainable in the long term, and Northern Ireland's young people must be given the best environment in which to be educated. We have too many schools in Northern Ireland with resources spread too thinly, impacting directly on teachers and children. We need to see greater co-operation and collaboration between school sectors, achieving higher standards, better facilities and a better use of resources. This Review will examine arrangements which would deliver these benefits.

- 1.5 The full terms of reference are set out under three headings: Financial Issues, Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate, and Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration.

Financial Issues

- consider the overall deployment of resources across the education system in Northern Ireland and assess how effective this is in delivering a high quality education system;
- compare the overall funding available to the education system in Northern Ireland with the funding made available elsewhere;
- compare teacher/pupil ratios across Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom and advise on optimum educational need, compared to current provision;
- assess the costs associated with multi-sector provision in a divided society, the impact of school size and the impact of the rural nature of much of Northern Ireland; and
- advise on the cost/benefit of the investment and rationalisation programme.

Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate

- consider the proposed approach being adopted to strategic planning of the estate and how the planned investment programme can best be utilised to ensure it is invested in viable schools that make more cost-effective use of capital and recurrent funding;

- advise on how the benefits from the investment and rationalisation of the schools' estate can best be communicated to stakeholders and the wider community;
- advise on the appropriate level of surplus capacity, allowing flexibility for changes and parental choice;
- advise on the best combination of factors that should be taken into account in estate planning, such as projected enrolments, transport, parental choice, the number of small schools, condition/suitability and deprivation; and
- consider how post-primary and Further Education (FE) provision can best be planned together, particularly for 14–19 year olds, given the challenges of the Entitlement Framework, the new curriculum and the need to optimise collaboration with the FE sector.

Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration

- consider how strategic planning of the schools' estate can best encourage and support cross-sector collaboration and models of schooling that promote greater integrating of education in line with *A Shared Future*;
- advise on how the planned investment to renew the schools' estate can best be deployed to incentivise collaboration and sharing, how the barriers to such sharing can be overcome and how best to address the Department of Education's (DE) duty to encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish-medium education; and
- consider what models of collaboration and sharing will work and what are the processes that need to be deployed to ensure that the models can be delivered on the ground, as the investment programme develops.

Review Process

- 1.6 Relatively early in its work, the Review team prepared a consultation paper (Appendix A) focused on the key issues in the terms of reference, and invited written submissions from a wide range of education stakeholders. Responses were also received from a few organisations and individuals who indicated a wish

to present their views. As an important part of the consultation process, the Review held meetings with most of the organisations that provided written responses. In addition, the Review invited respondents to specify the key recommendations they would wish to see included in the Review report. The written submissions received and the subsequent discussions provided the Review with a considerable body of valuable material for consideration in its analysis of the issues and in formulating recommendations. Appendix B lists the organisations and individuals who participated in the consultation. DE provided the Review with information, analyses and perspectives on a wide range of matters both in relation to funding education and to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate. The Review acknowledges the positive and constructive engagement with all those who contributed to its work. The quality of the responses received is a measure of respondents' appreciation of the importance of the issues addressed by the Review.

Outline of the Report

- 1.7 The report is in five parts. Part A establishes the overall context for the Review. It sets out the terms of reference for the Review and describes the Review process; identifies strategic elements in education provision of relevance to the Review; describes the main features of the Northern Ireland education system; and considers issues concerning quality in education. The remaining parts focus on the three themes in the terms of reference: Financial Issues, Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate, and Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration. Part B deals with education funding, with particular reference to the determination and allocation of the education budget, and to effectiveness and efficiency. Part C focuses on strategic planning of the schools' estate. It examines key considerations in a strategic approach to planning for a system of schools that are educationally and financially viable; it also examines the potential for collaboration between schools and Further Education. In Part D, the Review explores perspectives on integration and collaboration, identifies models of collaboration and sharing, and considers how progress towards greater integrating of education could be encouraged and supported. In Part E, the final chapter makes some concluding observations on the Review's work.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 This chapter highlights major reforms and other drivers for change that define the strategic context for the Review, both in its analysis of issues and in its formulation of recommendations for action. These include demographic trends, reforms within education, the Government's policy and strategy for good relations in Northern Ireland (*A Shared Future*), a ten-year programme of investment in education through the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, and the Government's reform of public administration.

Demographic Change

- 2.2 The schools system is experiencing a major reduction in the pupil population, a decline forecast to continue well into the future, though not uniformly distributed throughout Northern Ireland. As a result of the demographic downturn, many schools have declining enrolments, some, both primary and secondary, to the point where their viability, both educational and financial, is in serious question. Currently, the schools' estate has more than 50,000 surplus places and the number is expected to rise to more than 80,000 (more than a quarter of the current school population) over the next ten years if action is not taken. Although submissions to the Review raised issues about the concept of a surplus place and the method of calculating surplus places, there is overwhelming agreement that the extent of over-provision is an urgent and serious issue. The school system has reached a point where resources are spread too thinly and inefficiency is at an unacceptable level.
- 2.3 Table 2.1 provides school population figures for the ten-year period 1996/97 to 2005/06. As can be seen, there has been a steady decline in primary school enrolments over that period, with a decrease of almost 13 per cent. The downward trend in the post-primary population has lagged behind that in the primary population. The number of pupils in Years 8-12 peaked in 2000/01 and the number of pupils in Years 8-14 peaked in 2002/03.

Table 2.1: School Population Figures for Year 1-Year 7 Pupils and Post-primary Pupils, 1996/97–2005/06

Pupil Groups	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Year 1–7 pupils	184,638	182,261	179,033	175,602	172,491	170,553	167,799	165,347	163,220	161,143
Year 8–12 pupils	130,563	130,914	131,847	132,546	132,671	131,951	130,906	129,502	127,119	125,390
All post-primary pupils	152,743	153,094	153,944	154,964	155,553	155,503	155,747	155,394	153,449	151,840

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

2.4 Table 2.2 provides school population projections until the year 2029 and percentage changes from 2004. By 2012 the number of children aged 4–10 will have decreased by an estimated 8 per cent from the 2004 figure. From 2012, the estimated percentage decrease will not fall below 8 per cent and will reach 11 per cent in 2029. The decline in the population of 11–15 year olds is more marked. Compared with 2004 the estimated number of children in this age range will have fallen by an estimated 10 per cent by 2012 and by 17 per cent by 2024.

Education Policy

2.5 Within the education service, substantial policy developments are underway in relation to the post-primary phase, including significant changes to the arrangements for transfer from primary to post-primary education, the details of which will be a matter for the Assembly to determine once it is established. At the 14–19 stage, the Curriculum Entitlement Framework has been developed to provide pupils with access to learning pathways that offer a broader and more flexible curriculum and that allow them to choose a blend of courses. The Entitlement Framework will require schools to provide access to a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (KS4) and, for schools with sixth forms, a minimum of 27 courses at post-16. At least one-third of the courses must be general (academic) and at least one-third must be applied (vocational or professional/technical). The

Table 2.2: Population Projections for Children of Compulsory School Age in Northern Ireland, 2004-2029^a

Pupil Groups	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Age 4-10	167,184	164,704	162,356	159,872	157,383	156,139	154,711	153,918	153,654	153,382	153,130	152,456	151,394
Age 11-15	129,520	127,793	126,005	124,082	122,937	121,853	120,729	119,037	116,677	113,812	111,677	110,409	110,437
Age 4-10 % change from 2004		- 1.5	- 2.9	- 4.4	- 5.9	- 6.6	- 7.5	- 7.9	- 8.1	- 8.3	- 8.4	- 8.8	- 9.4
Age 11-15 % change from 2004		- 1.3	-2.7	- 4.2	- 5.1	- 5.9	- 6.8	- 8.1	9.9	- 12.1	- 13.8	- 14.8	- 14.7
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Age 4-10	151,015	150,934	151,092	151,432	151,837	152,201	152,444	152,496	152,325	151,905	151,224	150,306	149,182
Age 11-15	110,553	110,566	110,478	109,825	108,678	108,160	107,916	107,916	108,121	108,444	108,806	109,127	109,353
Age 4-10 % change from 2004	- 9.7	- 9.7	- 9.6	- 9.4	- 9.2	- 9.0	- 8.8	- 8.8	- 8.9	- 9.1	- 9.5	- 10.1	- 10.8
Age 11-15 % change from 2004	- 14.6	- 14.6	- 14.7	- 15.2	- 16.1	- 16.5	- 16.7	- 16.7	- 16.5	- 16.3	- 16.0	- 15.7	- 15.6

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Note:

^aFigures for 2004 and 2005 are estimates based on the 2001 Population Census and so include children not at school.

Curriculum Entitlement Framework represents such a radical change from current curricular provision that it poses fundamental questions about the arrangements necessary to meet the diverse needs and interests of pupils in the 14-19 age range. The implementation of the Entitlement Framework carries significant implications for the planning of the schools' estate, for the provision of facilities in schools and the further education sector, and for collaboration among schools and between schools and the further education sector. The implementation of the revised curriculum for primary schools also has implications for the design of primary schools. Moreover, DE is currently conducting a review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. That review is due to be completed by late 2006, for implementation in late 2007, subject to the legislative timetable. Chapter 7 of this report describes the main features of the review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.

- 2.6 A programme, financed by the Children and Young People funding package, is underway to develop a network of Extended Schools throughout Northern Ireland. At the time of writing some 476 schools – nursery, primary, secondary and special schools – have become involved in the initiative, representing about one-third of schools and pupils in Northern Ireland. The concept of the Extended School suggests that in addition to their core educational purposes, schools should be used more widely for a variety of community purposes and for the provision of services complementary to education. Such developments have significant implications for the planning and design of schools and call for integrated and holistic planning of education and other services, both across departments and at local level.
- 2.7 On 25 April 2006 the then Minister for Education, Angela Smith MP, announced that policy responsibility for early years functions would transfer from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to DE, so that DE will assume the policy lead in relation to all early years provision. The new arrangement is intended to provide better co-ordination of services in this area.

A Shared Future

- 2.8 The Government's policy and strategy framework for good relations in Northern Ireland, presented in *A Shared Future* (March 2005), is another major feature of

the strategic context in which the Review addressed its terms of reference. In the realm of education, *A Shared Future* calls for:

- promoting sharing in all levels of education and encouraging integrated education – in its widest sense;
- developing opportunities for shared and inter-cultural education at all levels;
- ensuring that schools through their policies, structures and curricula consciously prepare their pupils for life in a diverse and inter-cultural world; and
- encouraging understanding of the complexity of our history.

2.9 The First Triennial Action Plan for implementing *A Shared Future* sets out commitments for DE in relation to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate. DE is committed to:

- proposals on new schools or re-organisation/rationalisation of schools demonstrating that options for collaboration/sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored;
- projects related to new schools, re-organisation or rationalisation being more likely to justify receipt of financial support if they are shared or operate across the community divide; and
- a shared model of schooling being treated as the presumed option for new housing developments which are similarly shared.

Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme

2.10 The Government's commitment to invest some £3 billion in the Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme over a period of ten years is a clear acknowledgement of the need for substantial improvements in the schools' estate. The stated goal of the capital investment programme is a "fit for purpose schools' estate, efficiently delivered and managed", where fitness of purpose is measured in terms of sufficiency, suitability and condition of accommodation. The objective

of the estate planning process is to provide a sufficiency of school places through the right mix of schools of the right size in the right locations.

- 2.11 There is widespread agreement that current planning, procurement and delivery arrangements are inadequate to achieve this objective in a cost-effective manner and on the scale required within acceptable time frames. Nor, without a radical reconfiguration of the schools' estate, is it possible to fund improvements that will provide all schools with suitable accommodation and facilities that make for a stimulating, safe and healthy learning environment. The long-term development and maintenance of the estate needs to be planned to ensure cost-effective use of public funds and to avoid placing unsustainable demands on capital and recurrent expenditure to the overall detriment of schools.
- 2.12 There is unanimous agreement that to overcome the weaknesses in the current arrangements a strategic approach to the management and development of the schools' estate needs to be adopted. Part C of this report deals specifically with this issue. Reconfiguring the schools' estate offers a real opportunity to clarify and give effect to a common vision for education and the school system, and to a strategy for working towards that vision. The challenge is to make best use of funding to ensure that communities are well served by sustainable, educationally effective and efficiently functioning schools, optimising the use of their facilities for the benefit of all through, where appropriate, agreed models of collaboration and sharing. Working and planning together in new ways for the common good will require visionary and courageous leadership, persistent commitment, innovative thinking and, perhaps most of all, skill in developing relationships, managing change, and building confidence in new ways of working.

Review of Public Administration

- 2.13 Our Review takes place against a backcloth of major reforms in public administration in Northern Ireland, the Review of Public Administration (RPA), heralding not only far-reaching changes in the administration of education but in the provision of public services more generally. The Review's analysis of the issues central to its terms of reference is set in the context of current policies, practices and administrative structures, but its recommendations are formulated in the light of emerging arrangements for education policy, strategy and administration in Northern Ireland. In formulating its recommendations and in considering their

implementation, the Review has taken account of the proposed functions of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA), including its role in the strategic planning of the schools' estate, and the role of the Department of Education (DE) focused on the development of policy and strategy, the monitoring of standards, the allocation of resources, and the maintenance of accountability. ESA will absorb all the functions of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the operational functions of DE. In addition, the functions of the funded sectoral bodies – the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) – will also be transferred to ESA.

- 2.14 This Review is an integral part of a programme of major reforms in education in Northern Ireland and is also set in a broader context of other developments, in particular *A Shared Future* and the RPA. Issues arising from the significant and long-term decrease in the demand for school places are central to the Review, as are the implications of substantial changes in curriculum provision, particularly for 14–19 year olds. Finally, the Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme is the vehicle for much needed improvements in the schools' estate to be achieved by a new strategic approach to planning.

CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN IRELAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

- 3.1 This chapter outlines current arrangements for the administration of education in Northern Ireland and explains the structure of the school system. It also refers to expected changes in administrative arrangements.

Administration

- 3.2 The Department of Education (DE) is responsible for the central administration of education and related services in Northern Ireland, with the exception of the Further and Higher Education sectors, which are within the remit of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). DE's primary statutory duties are to promote the education of the young people of Northern Ireland and to secure the effective implementation of education policy. Its main areas of responsibility are pre-school, primary, post-primary, and special education; the youth service; the promotion of community relations within and between schools; and teacher education.
- 3.3 DE's powers of inspection, and hence the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), are conferred by Article 102 of the 1986 Education and Libraries Order, as substituted by Article 33 of the 1996 Education Order. The Ministerial statement on the Review of Public Administration (RPA) reiterates the agreed principle that inspection and monitoring of all education and training establishments will continue to be the direct responsibility of ETI, which will be operationally independent of all providers and users for which it provides inspection services. On all education policy initiatives ETI will provide an independent professional assessment of the effectiveness of existing or proposed policy. This independence is in keeping with key government principles for inspection.
- 3.4 Responsibility for the delivery of day-to-day education services within the policy, strategy and procedures set by the Department currently lies with:
- the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), including the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards;
 - the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS);

- the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA);
- the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI);
- other grant-aided bodies, including the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); and
- schools.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs)

3.5 The ELBs are the local education and library authorities for their areas. They have a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient schools for providing primary and post-primary education to meet the needs of their area; to provide all the finance for the schools under their management; and to equip, maintain and meet the other running costs of maintained schools. They provide milk and meals, free books, and free transport for eligible pupils; enforce school attendance; provide a curriculum advisory and support service to all schools in their area; regulate the employment of children and young people, and secure the provision of youth service facilities. ELBs are also required to secure the provision of recreation services (overseen by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)), and are responsible for student support services (overseen by DEL). ELB expenditure on schools and youth is fully funded by the Department of Education, primarily through a block grant.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

3.6 CCMS is responsible for the employment of teachers in Catholic maintained schools, for promoting and co-ordinating the planning of school provision in the Catholic maintained sector and for a number of other, mainly advisory, functions.

Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

3.7 CCEA's duties are both advisory and operational. In general, it:

- advises DE and DEL on matters relating to the curriculum, examinations and assessment;

- regulates all qualifications offered in Northern Ireland, apart from NVQs; and
- conducts a range of examinations and assessments including GCSE, GCE AS and A-levels, end of key stage assessments (including the Key Stage 3 tests), and the Transfer Procedure tests (11-plus).

Youth Council for Northern Ireland

3.8 The Youth Council's responsibilities include:

- advising DE, the ELBs and other bodies on the development of the Youth Service;
- encouraging cross community activity by the Youth Service;
- encouraging the provision of facilities for the Youth Service; and
- grant aiding the administration of Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations.

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG)

3.9 NICIE and CnaG receive grants from the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education and Irish-medium education respectively.

Review of Public Administration

3.10 On 22 November 2005, the Secretary of State announced major changes to the administration of education resulting from the overall Review of Public Administration (RPA). In effect, implementation of the Review will put in place a simplified structure, with fewer organisations and with the functions of currently funded education bodies, including the operational functions of DE, being absorbed into the new proposed Education and Skills Authority (ESA). DE will be responsible for developing and implementing education policy and strategy, for monitoring standards and allocating resources, and for maintaining accountability.

System of Schools

3.11 The system of schools in Northern Ireland is sub-divided into five main sectors: Controlled Schools – including Controlled Integrated Schools – Catholic Maintained Schools, Voluntary Grammar Schools, Grant-maintained Integrated Schools and Irish-medium Schools. There is also a small number of “other” maintained schools. Controlled schools are fully funded by the ELBs. Catholic maintained schools and approved Irish-medium schools are funded by the ELBs for their running costs and by DE for capital building works. Voluntary Grammar schools and Grant-maintained Integrated schools are funded by DE for both running costs and capital building works. There is also a small number of independent schools that do not receive government funding.

- *Controlled schools* are owned and funded by the ELBs and managed through Boards of Governors. The ELBs are currently contracting authorities for capital projects in this sector and are the direct providers of maintenance and facilities management services to schools.
- *Catholic maintained schools* are owned by Trustees and managed through Boards of Governors. The running costs of the schools are funded through the ELBs and capital costs are funded directly by DE. The Trustees are normally the Bishops of Dioceses and/or their nominees, or senior members of the religious orders or congregations that have provided the school. The Trustees are currently the contracting authority for capital projects in this sector, with advice and support provided by CCMS. Maintenance and facilities management services are provided by the ELBs.
- *Voluntary Grammar schools* are owned and managed by Boards of Governors or Trustees and are funded directly by DE. The Boards of Governors or the Trustees of each school are currently the contracting authority for capital projects and services.
- *Grant-maintained Integrated schools* are owned and managed by Boards of Governors and funded directly by DE. Under current arrangements, NICIE fulfils the role of contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish the school. The role of contracting authority for capital projects and services transfers to the Board of Governors once the viability of the school is established and it qualifies for capital funding.

- *Irish-medium Schools*, in which teaching is through the medium of the Irish language, are almost all owned and managed by their Boards of Governors. The running costs of the schools are funded through the ELBs. CnaG fulfils the role of contracting authority in the provision of accommodation to establish a new school. The role of contracting authority for capital projects and services transfers to the school's Board of Governors when the school is recognised for capital funding.

3.12 The present structure of the schools system has evolved over a lengthy period of time and reflects long-established traditions and policy approaches. Ownership of the schools' estate has developed in a range of ways at different stages in history. At one stage ownership of most of the schools was in the hands of the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church. Over a period of time (from the 1930s to the 1950s), the Protestant churches transferred almost all their schools to state control on the understanding, enshrined in an Act of Parliament, that the Christian ethos of these schools would be maintained. As a result of this, Transferors were given rights of representation on school management committees (equivalent now to Boards of Governors) and Education Authorities (now ELBs). Table 3.1 shows the number of schools by management type in 2005/06. Of the 1,264 grant-aided schools, almost half are controlled and approximately 43 per cent are in Catholic trusteeship.

3.13 In response to parental wishes, Grant-maintained Integrated schools and Irish-medium schools were established. The legislation to fund integrated schools was introduced in 1989 and the corresponding legislation for Irish-medium schools in 1998. Under different funding arrangements, the first integrated school received grant aid in 1984 and the first Irish-medium school also in 1984. DE has a legislative duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education and Irish-medium education. Although Grant-maintained Integrated schools are established with the prime purpose of ensuring a balanced representation from the two main faith traditions in Northern Ireland, the other types of school are also open to pupils whatever their religious affiliation. Legislation also exists to allow schools to transform to integrated status; a small number of schools, all controlled, have availed of this option.

Table 3.1: Number of Schools by School Type and Management Type, 2005/06

School Type	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Irish-medium ^a (IM)	Other Maintained (non-IM)	Integrated ^b	Voluntary	Non-grant aided	Total
Nursery	67	33	0	0	0	0	0	100
Primary ^c	416	410	18	5	37	0	0	886
Post-primary	83	75	1	0	19	52	0	230
Special	42	2	0	1	0	0	0	45
Independent	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	19
Hospital ^d	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	611	520	19	6	56	52	19	1,283

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aIncludes one Irish-medium controlled school (53 pupils) and one Irish-medium Catholic maintained school (147 pupils).

^bIntegrated includes controlled integrated and Grant-maintained Integrated schools.

^cDoes not include 17 grammar school preparatory departments.

^dEducation and Library Boards have a statutory obligation to provide education for children in hospitals.

3.14 The diversity of school type, the selective system of education, the existence of single sex schools, and the substantially rural nature of Northern Ireland primarily explain both the relatively large number of schools that exist and the sizeable proportion of small schools. The continuing decrease in the school population is fuelling a decline in enrolment in many schools. Table 3.2 shows the number and percentage of primary and post-primary schools in various enrolment bands.

3.15 More than one-third of primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 90 pupils. Approximately one-sixth of post-primary schools have an enrolment of fewer than 300 pupils and nearly two-fifths have an enrolment of fewer than 500 pupils. This large number of small schools comes at a significant educational cost to some pupils in terms of reduced educational opportunity. Furthermore, the number and size of schools are highly significant determinants of the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the education system. The substantial demographic downturn exacerbates the inefficiency. The diversity of school types,

coupled with the relatively high proportion of small schools, inevitably results in a less than optimum use of the finance made available for education. Although the range of provision is explained, and indeed justified, by the principle of parental choice, the manifest inefficiencies in the system need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Table 3.2: Number and Percentage of Schools by Size, 2005/06

Number of Pupils	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools (%)	Number of Pupils	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools (%)
Primary^{a,b}			Post-primary		
< 30	36	4.0	< 200	18	7.8
30 - 59	127	14.1	200 - 299	18	7.8
60 - 89	145	16.1	300 - 399	24	10.4
90 - 119	104	11.5	400 - 499	25	10.9
120 - 149	84	9.3	500 - 599	24	10.4
150 - 179	70	7.8	600 - 699	19	8.3
180 - 209	67	7.4	700 - 799	29	12.6
210 - 299	104	11.5	800 - 899	20	8.7
300 - 399	88	9.7	900 - 999	16	7.0
400 - 499	39	4.3	1000 - 1499	33	14.3
500 - 599	26	2.9	> 1499	4	1.7
> 599	13	1.4			
Total	903	100.0		230	100.0

Source: Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aIncludes preparatory departments in grammar schools.

^bExcludes nursery and reception pupils.

3.16 The legislative basis for parental choice is provided in Article 44 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which states that the Department of Education and the Education and Library Boards shall 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. DE, in its strategic plan, undertakes to ensure equality of access to education and youth service provision, to facilitate parental choice as far as possible, and to promote respect for, and the value of, diversity, equality and human rights.

- 3.17 Following from this general principle, Part III of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 provides the legislative basis for the Department of Education's open enrolment policy. Submissions to the Review expressed concerns about this policy, particularly in the context of a selective system of secondary education. Under the policy of open enrolments, parents have a right to express a preference for the school to which they wish their child to be admitted, and schools must comply where they have places available up to their approved admissions and enrolment numbers; hence the realisation of parental preference is not unconstrained as it is restricted in practice by the physical capacity of schools.
- 3.18 Current arrangements under the Department's transport policy provide for free transport to pupils who have been unable to gain a place in all suitable schools within statutory walking distance of their home (two miles for primary and three miles for secondary age pupils). For the purpose of the transport arrangements, the term "suitable school" relates solely to controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish-medium, and in the grammar sector, denominational and non-denominational schools. Currently, pupils who qualify for free transport are granted transport assistance to any school of their choosing (within the relevant category) regardless of the distance involved. This can result in many pupils travelling excessive distances and by-passing nearer "suitable" schools – as defined above – with a consequent additional expenditure by the ELBs. The cost of providing the transport service is expected to rise to around £68 million in 2006/07. The Department of Education is conducting a review of home-to-school transport.
- 3.19 Although tempered by an obligation to avoid unreasonable public expenditure, the legislative position on parental choice is reflected in international and European instruments on the human rights of parents in relation to the education of their children, particularly with regard to their religious and philosophical convictions. Basically, the state has a duty to respect the right of parents to choose education and teaching, including religious and moral education, in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions, and which meet minimum educational standards laid down by the state. The diversity that originates from a primarily faith-based system of schools and a selective system of secondary education, augmented by the more recently extended range of choice to integrated schools and Irish-medium schools, may be viewed as a reasonable response to meeting the wishes of parents in relation to choice in education. The

acceptance, indeed the promotion, of choice in state-funded educational provision is a characteristic of current education reforms in England, and in some other countries, not only on philosophical or religious grounds, but as a strategy for improving the quality of education for all pupils through developing a system of thriving successful schools. Ultimately, parents want what they consider to be a good education for their children, and their school preferences are influenced by a variety of factors.

- 3.20 This chapter has outlined the current arrangement for the administration of education in Northern Ireland, arrangements that will be replaced by new structures arising from the RPA, as indicated in Chapter 2. The chapter has also described the main features of the system of schools and traces the development of the diverse multi-sector provision now in place. It has explored the principle of parental choice and explained the policy of open enrolment, indicating that submissions to the Review had raised concerns about the consequences of this policy, including aspects of the transport policy.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

- 4.1 This chapter is of particular importance in the context of the Review's terms of reference. It would not be meaningful to examine issues concerning funding and the provision of schools without considering the fundamental question "what are schools for?". Drawing on submissions to the Review and on material from other sources, this chapter establishes a framework of purposes and principles for which there appears to be broad support. The chapter also draws out the vital importance of good schools at the heart of educational provision and examines in general terms how the education service and schools could play a significant role in developing good community relations in Northern Ireland.

Purposes and Principles

- 4.2 A review of the funding of the education system generally and of the planning and organisation of the schools' estate in particular must give prior consideration to the fundamental purposes and principles that give direction and coherence to the education provided for learners. This view was strongly emphasised in a number of submissions that stressed the need for, and importance of, a shared vision for education in Northern Ireland founded on an agreed understanding of the purposes of education in schools. Purposes and principles reflect values and choices. It is reassuring, therefore, that submissions made to the Review, together with material from other sources, reflect a large measure of agreement on such fundamental matters, central to which is the paramount importance of the pupil as learner and as a unique human being living in community with others.
- 4.3 The aims of education in schools proposed in the consultation paper were widely endorsed. It was proposed that, in broad terms, the education system should:
- provide all pupils with high quality educational opportunities and experiences in terms of curriculum, learning and teaching, through which pupils achieve high standards in terms of their attainment, personal growth and social development, and achieve their potential; and
 - be vital to social and community well-being, contributing effectively and appropriately to broader social and economic goals and processes.

4.4 These aims are consistent with the strategic aims set out in the Department of Education's strategic plan, particularly the following that pertain to fulfilling potential:

- to provide flexible learning opportunities that meet the varying needs and abilities of all young people;
- to raise educational attainment for all young people;
- to foster the personal development of young people, including an understanding of their rights and responsibilities within society; and
- to foster creativity and provide young people with the knowledge and skills for life, employment and further learning.

4.5 The Costello Report (*Future Post-Primary Arrangements in Northern Ireland*) sets out seven guiding principles, the first four being pupil-centred and the others relating to the education service.

- *Equality*: Each young person should be highly and equally valued.
- *Quality*: Each young person should enjoy education of the highest quality in all aspects of teaching, learning and wider educational provision.
- *Relevance*: Each young person should be equipped with the values and skills needed to lead a fulfilling life and contribute positively to a changing society and economy.
- *Access*: Each young person should have effective access, with appropriate support, to education that allows them to fulfil their potential and that fosters lifelong learning.
- *Choice*: The education service should be flexible and provide a range of choices with information and advice so that all young people and their parents may make informed decisions relating to their educational development.
- *Respect*: The education service should promote tolerance and reconciliation through an understanding of, and respect for, diversity.

- *Partnership:* The education service should foster effective partnerships among pupils, parents, teachers, education bodies and the wider community based on trust, openness, transparency and mutual support.

4.6 The views expressed in consultation reflect and build upon the aims and principles set out above, and the Review considers it important to reflect those views in this report. The paragraphs that follow endeavour to encapsulate the thinking presented to the Review on the nature and purpose of education and the underlying principles and values, explicit and implicit. The source of, motivation for, and the practical expression of what are shared core values and principles are influenced or determined by specific educational philosophies, whether based on religious and faith-based perspectives or other viewpoints. These perspectives make for a certain distinctiveness in the educational experience and should be manifest in the ethos of the schools, but with scope for each school to develop and maintain its own particular character.

4.7 Education, in all its phases and aspects, has vital social and economic purposes in the service of the common good. Education is concerned with all aspects of life and as a path to self-realisation and personal fulfilment, civic well-being, and economic prosperity. A commitment to, and appropriate investment for, excellence in education, in all phases, is an essential investment in Northern Ireland as an economic entity and, as importantly, a stable society respectful of diversity and individual needs. Education, in its fullest sense, embraces both the formal and informal and is the responsibility not just of professionals but of students, parents and society as a whole. There should be a coherent system of provision that ensures access to the highest quality of educational opportunities for all young people; meets the increasing demands of society while remaining in the service of the individual; acknowledges his or her dignity; and promotes a rounded human development whereby pupils' multiple intelligences, including their emotional, moral, ethical and spiritual development can be promoted. As the submission from the Transferors' Representative Council (TRC) put it "we would reject a utilitarian view of education in favour of a holistic vision which encompasses a spiritual purpose".

4.8 Education, in developing social and human capital, should facilitate personal development and empowerment and contribute to communal well-being and social cohesion. Education policy should seek to address the debilitating effects

of social, cultural and economic deprivation, and education as a moral enterprise should embody a commitment to social justice. Education structures, therefore, should not, in practice, facilitate greater social gaps.

4.9 The submission from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) describes four "essential pillars of learning" as serving the personal, social and economic functions of education":

- *Learning to Know:* in recognition that knowledge is the basis of future development and is growing at an exponential rate.
- *Learning to Do:* concerned with applying knowledge in a creative and productive way.
- *Learning to Be:* focusing on the area of personal understanding and development, and the need to recognise the notion of personal worth and personal responsibility.
- *Learning to Live Together:* particularly apposite to society in Northern Ireland and for relationships in a pluralist and diverse world.

4.10 The relationship between school and community was a recurring theme in the responses to the Review. The general view was that the education system and individual schools should acknowledge and strengthen the primary role of parents, families and society in the education of young people. Good schools both benefit from, and contribute to, social cohesion through their relationship with healthy communities, which in turn play a major role in educating young people and make a real contribution to education and to social stability. Good schools contribute to the development of identity, confidence and reconciliation as key elements in building a healthy and thriving society, where all individuals, families and groups can live and celebrate their unique contribution to a diverse and genuinely pluralist society. The corollary is that rationalisation of schools cannot be based on economic considerations alone and need to take serious account of the importance of active community building. To quote from the response by the Catholic Bishops: "once social capital has been spent or destroyed, it is very difficult to replenish; fragmented communities exact a huge price on those who live there and on the public purse. Schools with clear identity and which serve specific communities have made a huge contribution to holding communities

together and enabling young people to develop confidence and hope for the future."

Importance of Good Schools

4.11 Equality of opportunity should underpin any decision on educational policy; it should include the right of every young person to have access to high quality education and training in a good school (or college of education or training organisation), with the flexibility to experience learning and training in more than one institution, if that is appropriate. Ultimately, a good education depends on good educational institutions. Recommendations within the three main themes of this Review – funding, strategic planning of the schools' estate, and integrating education and improving collaboration – are of great significance for developing a system of successful and viable schools as the foundation for a good education.

4.12 The argument for cost-effective and cost-efficient infrastructure and arrangements rests on the premise that the maximum proportion of expenditure should be directed towards those things that determine high quality and standards. At school level, it is widely recognised that the quality of learning and the standards achieved by pupils are dependent on such key factors as:

- the suitability of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs;
- the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and governance in schools (sufficient well qualified, effectively deployed, high performing and motivated teachers and support staff);
- the quality of the learning environment, including the suitability and condition of the accommodation, facilities and resources for teaching and learning, and an attractive, safe and well-maintained environment;
- the quality and effectiveness of support services; and
- the confidence and support of parents and the wider community.

As well as reflecting the key indicators on standards, pedagogy, curriculum, pastoral care, and effective partnerships, a good school or learning organisation will also ensure that the resources and facilities it provides, and its structures and

management arrangements, are suited to the age, maturity and range of learning styles of its learners.

- 4.13 In view of the vital importance of good schools (where appropriate, in partnership with colleges of further education) to a good education, a coherent strategy for quality assurance and improvement should be a vital element in ensuring that all pupils have access to a good school that meets their needs. Within a culture of self-evaluation leading to self-improvement, external evaluation through inspection should have a key role in assuring government and parents of the quality of learning and teaching and the standards achieved. The availability of appropriate performance data should be integral to monitoring and evaluating standards. Such data facilitate self-evaluation at school level and enable managing authorities to exercise a challenge function. High quality support arrangements for schools whose performance is not up to standard should be part of an improvement strategy that aims to bring all to the level of the best.
- 4.14 A good school is distinguished by the high quality of teaching, leadership and management and the calibre of other professional and support staff. A comprehensive and coherent educational improvement strategy needs to give priority to issues concerning the supply, recruitment and deployment of suitably qualified and trained teachers and headteachers and to their continuing staff development. There also needs to be a review of the school workforce and particularly of whether there are aspects of a teacher's current workload that could be undertaken by appropriately skilled and qualified support staff. In the context of collaborative approaches to 14-19 provision between schools and colleges of further education, the desirability of a common set of standards for qualified teacher status across 14-19 provision should be explored.

Education and Good Community Relations

- 4.15 This chapter has already referred to vital purposes of education in relation to the personal and social development of pupils – including an understanding of their rights and responsibilities – to civic well-being and social cohesion, and to learning to live together in a pluralist and diverse world. These goals, and commitment to realising them, assume a particular significance at this point in the development of Northern Ireland society, often described as a divided society emerging from a long period of conflict, a people divided on many counts and now

moving along the path of reconciliation towards, to quote *A Shared Future*, "a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust". There are acknowledged differences of opinion as to a causal link between the nature of the school system and the state of community relations in Northern Ireland. Submissions made to the Review, however, highlighted the stabilising role of schools, many of which were in severely challenging circumstances, and their contribution to social cohesion, throughout the period of conflict.

- 4.16 Looking to the future, and in line with *A Shared Future*, the education service in general and schools in particular are faced with the challenge of contributing to the building of a better future, an aspiration universally endorsed in the submissions made to the Review. Within the terms of reference of the Review, Chapter 11 explores in some detail a rationale for integrating education and improving sharing and collaboration based on three key and interrelated factors: the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money.
- 4.17 Northern Ireland is a changing society, where communities are working together to move forward and deal with the past constructively. People have also put to us that although much work needs to be done in the area of reconciliation, it would be unfortunate if the only division to be addressed by the Review were to be that based on perceived religious affiliation. Issues of social and economic disadvantage also need to be addressed. Moreover, the arrival of new citizens from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds to our communities and schools is a significant part of the changing landscape. As a society, we need to consider how to include and celebrate the diversity of cultures that will increasingly characterise our society.
- 4.18 The important message of this chapter is that a consideration of quality and purpose in education, and of the underlying principles, is an essential prelude to examining issues of funding and the planning of the schools' estate. The chapter

has highlighted the vital importance of good schools at the heart of educational provision and identified indicators of quality. It has also signified, in general terms, how the education service and schools could play a significant role in developing good community relations in Northern Ireland, a theme to be developed in Chapter 11.

PART B

Education Funding

CHAPTER 5: DETERMINING THE EDUCATION BUDGET

- 5.1 This chapter explains how the overall level of funding available for devolved public services in Northern Ireland is determined in the context of the United Kingdom Spending Review. It then describes how the education budget is determined within the annual Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget Process. The levels of education expenditure in Northern Ireland are then compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, together with an account of the factors that need to be considered when making such comparisons.

Public Expenditure and the Barnett Formula

- 5.2 The overall budget allocation for Northern Ireland comprises two distinct elements: the Departmental Expenditure Limit and Annually Managed Expenditure. Together these comprise Total Managed Expenditure for Northern Ireland. Departmental Expenditure Limits are fixed for three-year periods in National Spending Reviews. Annually Managed Expenditure is agreed annually with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) because it largely covers demand-led services (e.g. social security benefits) that cannot reasonably be subject to multi-year limits. The focus for allocation of funds to public services in Northern Ireland is, therefore, the Departmental Expenditure Limit.
- 5.3 The allocation of funding to the Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure Limit is largely determined at the outcome of the United Kingdom-wide Spending Reviews. These normally take place biennially and cover a three-year period. Most recently, the 2004 Spending Review (SR04) covered the period 2005/06 to 2007/08. The level of funding available for public services in Northern Ireland, as determined by the Spending Review, can be increased by revenue generated through the Regional Rates in Northern Ireland and through a borrowing facility established under the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative (RRI).
- 5.4 Changes in the level of the Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure Limit (and that for Scotland and Wales) are determined through the application of a population-based mechanism, the Barnett Formula. Under the Barnett formula, Northern Ireland receives its population-based proportion of changes according to planned spending on comparable United Kingdom government services in

England, England and Wales, or Great Britain as appropriate. Thus, if the government decides to increase (or decrease) the budget of a United Kingdom government department by £100m for services in England, and there is 100 per cent comparability with the services carried out in Northern Ireland, the budget change for Northern Ireland is determined on the basis of the overall Northern Ireland population as a percentage (3.42 per cent) of the overall English population, i.e. $£100m \times 3.42 \text{ per cent} = £3.42m$. This sum is abated by 2.5 per cent (i.e. $£3.42m \times 97.5\% = £3.3345m$) since Northern Ireland departments can reclaim VAT, whereas departments in the rest of the United Kingdom cannot.

- 5.5 The Barnett Formula determines only *changes* to the Departmental Expenditure Limit; it does not determine the total allocation for Northern Ireland's devolved services. Changes arising as a result of the Barnett Formula are generally referred to as Barnett consequentials. These consequentials are not automatically attributed to the same department or services in Northern Ireland as those in England that gave rise to the consequential. Funding is allocated to devolved services in Northern Ireland at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland Executive and the Assembly under devolution) in the context of the annual Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget Process. In accordance with Paragraph 20 of Strand One of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the Northern Ireland Executive (the Secretary of State under suspension of devolution) is required to produce annually a programme incorporating an agreed budget linked to policies and programmes. Material changes in the level of funding available as a result of the Barnett consequentials arise in the context of United Kingdom Spending Reviews, and thus the overall level of funding available in the annual Priorities and Budget Process remains largely as set out in the most recent Spending Review. Some marginal increases to the Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure Limit may, however, come from outside the Spending Review (i.e. from the Chancellor's March Budget or the Pre-Budget Report).
- 5.6 In the course of any financial year, the overall allocations to departments are subject to formal monitoring and review on a quarterly basis. The key purpose of the monitoring process is to take account of unforeseen pressures and easements arising in-year and to provide an opportunity, where necessary, for reallocation of resources between priorities. As with the formal budget process, any changes to the departmental allocations are decided by the Secretary of State.

Education Budget

- 5.7 The outcome of the most recent Priorities and Budget Process in Northern Ireland was published in December 2005 and provided agreed allocations for 2006/07 and indicative allocations for 2007/08. For 2006/07, Education received 20.2 per cent of the overall Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure Limit compared with 20.1 per cent in 2005/06 and 20.7 per cent in 2004/05.
- 5.8 The education budget supports two objectives, related to schools and the youth service and community relations measures for young people. To quote *Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget, 2006–2008*:
- *Objective A*: "to ensure that all young people, through participation at school, reach the highest possible standards of educational achievement that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning and employment, and develop the values and attitudes appropriate to citizenship in an inclusive society"; and
 - *Objective B*: "to promote, through the Youth Service, the personal and social development of children and young people and assist them to gain the knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals; and, through community relations measures for young people, to encourage the development of mutual understanding and promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity".

Within each objective there are separate budgets for current expenditure and capital investment. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 give budget figures for current and capital expenditure on Objectives A and B for the years 2004/05 to 2007/08.

Schools-related Current Expenditure

- 5.9 Within the current expenditure budget determined for the schools-related Objective A, the main decisions for the Education Minister each year are the amount of funding that should be delegated directly to schools under the Local Management of Schools' (LMS) Common Funding Formula (CFF), and the amount of funding to be allocated to the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) for schools-related services. Funding for ELBs comprises allocations for support services and earmarked allocations, primarily for a range of specific educational initiatives. Allocations to individual ELBs for support services are made under an

Table 5.1: Current Expenditure on Education in Northern Ireland, 2004/05–2007/08

Objective	2004/05 outturn ^a (£m)	2005/06 planned (£m)	2006/07 planned ^b (£m)	2007/08 planned ^b (£m)
Objective A (schools)	1,448.0	1,532.1	1,594.8	1,665.5
Objective B (youth/ community relations)	27.7	27.5	29.1	30.1
EU Peace Programme ^c	5.7	7.2	1.0	0.7
Total current expenditure	1,481.4	1,566.8	1,624.9	1,696.3

Source: DE.

Notes:

^a2004/05 figures are provisional outturn.^b2006/07 and 2007/08 figures take account of approved post-Budget 2005 technical changes.^cThe European Union programme provides funds for Northern Ireland to promote peace and reconciliation.

Table 5.2: Capital Investment on Education in Northern Ireland, 2004/05–2007/08

Objective	2004/05 outturn ^a (£m)	2005/06 planned (£m)	2006/07 planned (£m)	2007/08 planned (£m)
Objective A (schools)	142.1	158.2	207.0	406.9
Objective B (youth/ community relations)	3.5	4.1	6.5	7.5
EU Peace Programme ^b	0.7	-	-	-
Total	146.3	162.3	213.5	414.5

Source: DE.

Note:

^a2004/05 figures are provisional outturn. Final outturn figures are presented in Table 5.9.^bThe European Union programme provides funds for Northern Ireland to promote peace and reconciliation.

Assessment of Relative Needs (ARNE) methodology. Table 5.3 provides a breakdown of the education budget by main budgetary responsibilities, and indicates that most of the budget goes to schools or other grant-aided bodies, in particular the ELBs.

Table 5.3: Budgetary Responsibilities, 2006/07^a

Budget – Current and Capital	Amount (£m)	% of Total Departmental Expenditure Limit
Schools-related Current		
Schools-related delegated	995	54.1
ELBs non-delegated ^b	529	28.8
Voluntary Grammar/Grant-maintained Integrated school non-delegated	23	1.3
Other bodies	27	1.4
Other schools-related current	32	1.7
European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity programme income	-11	-0.6
Schools-related capital investment	207	11.3
Youth and community relations	35	1.9
EU Peace Funding	1	0.1
Total Departmental Expenditure Limit	1,838	100.0

Source: DE.

Notes:

^aDE responsibilities include certain schools' infrastructure provision, non-delegated voluntary grammar and Grant-maintained Integrated schools' recurrent provision, Departmental running costs, and a range of other minor provision.

^bThis comprises ELB central support services to schools and earmarked funding, primarily for education initiatives. The budget is over £11m gross in relation to initiatives partly funded under the European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity programme.

5.10 The 2006/07 budget for schools-related current expenditure is £1,595m (see Table 5.1) and comprises the entries in Table 5.3 under "Schools-related delegated", "ELB non-delegated", "Voluntary Grammar/Grant-maintained Integrated School non-delegated", "Other bodies" and "Other schools-related

current" and "European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity programme income". It consists of the following elements:

- £995m (approximately 62 per cent) of schools-related current expenditure is allocated to nursery, primary and post-primary schools' delegated budgets as determined under the LMS scheme and the CFF. Of this, £761m relates to controlled and maintained schools, which are funded by ELBs. The remaining £234m relates to Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-maintained Integrated (GMI) schools, which are funded directly by DE.
- £529m (approximately 33 per cent) is allocated to the ELBs, but within that sum are two different kinds of allocation:
 - ◆ £377m (approximately 24 per cent) relates to ELB centre budgets. These budgets cover a range of education and education support services, including some funding (e.g. for some teacher substitution, support for Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils in mainstream schools) which goes to meet costs incurred directly by schools but which are not a charge on schools' delegated budgets.
 - ◆ £152m (approximately 9 per cent) relates to earmarked allocations to ELBs, primarily for a range of education initiatives. Some of this funding will be allocated to schools over and above their delegated budgets.
- The remaining £82m (approximately 5 per cent) relates mainly to VG and GMI school costs that are outside the scope of these schools' delegated budgets, the Department of Education's (DE) administration costs, and funding for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

5.11 These figures for schools-related current expenditure add up to £1606m but the budget is then offset by £11m estimated income in relation to ELB earmarked initiatives partly funded under the European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme. 2006/07 is the first year in which departmental budgets are allocated net of this European Union income due to a change in the public expenditure control framework. A fuller account of the distribution of schools' current expenditure (including the LMS scheme and the CFF), together with an account of the distribution of capital investment, is given in Chapter 6.

Youth and Community Relations

5.12 Table 5.3 gives the youth and community relations budget as £35m (an approximated sum of the £29m of current expenditure and £6.5m of capital investment identified in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 for 2006/07). Again, a fuller account of the distribution of this money can be found in Chapter 6.

Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales

5.13 HMT's Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA) series provides information on United Kingdom expenditure by function and country, per head of population, indexed to a United Kingdom average of 100. The coverage is significantly broader than the functions of DE (it includes further and higher education, and training). On this basis, PESA 2006 indicates the broad levels of expenditure per head of population shown in Table 5.4. It shows that the amounts of educational expenditure per head of population in Northern Ireland, although generally falling, have been greater in recent years than in other United Kingdom countries. Expenditure *per head of total population*, however, does not take account of the higher level of relative need for education expenditure in Northern Ireland.

Table 5.4: UK Identifiable Expenditure on Education and Training, per Head of Population, Indexed, 2000/01-2005/06^a

Year (UK = 100)	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
2000/01	97	116	105	144
2001/02	97	116	105	126
2002/03	98	111	106	131
2003/04	98	106	102	124
2004/05	99	106	102	120
2005/06	98	108	100	125

Source: Her Majesty's Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA) Series, 2006, Table 7.12.

Note:

^aFigures for 2005/06 have not yet been validated by the Office for National Statistics.

5.14 Relative need for expenditure on education is affected by a number of factors. These include the:

- number of pupils;
- age profile of pupils (on average, post-primary school pupils tend to require significantly greater expenditure per pupil than primary pupils);
- sparsity of population (i.e. rural/urban distribution);
- levels of deprivation; and
- numbers of nursery-age children.

The most important factor is the number of pupils and this is the main reason for Northern Ireland's higher level of relative need. Northern Ireland has a greater number of pupils per head of population than in other United Kingdom countries. It has 2.9 per cent of the total United Kingdom population but 3.4 per cent of the population aged 4-18. It also has a compulsory school-starting age of four as against five for other parts of the United Kingdom. In addition, post-16 participation in full-time education in Northern Ireland is higher than the average for the rest of the United Kingdom: in 2005/06, 86.6 per cent of 16 and 17 year-olds attended schools and institutions of further education in Northern Ireland compared with 77.4 per cent in England.

5.15 Policy differences between Northern Ireland and other United Kingdom countries also have an impact on expenditure comparisons. These differences include the promotion of various forms of education distinctive to Northern Ireland (e.g. Integrated, Irish-medium), and the range of school management systems within Northern Ireland schools (e.g. controlled, maintained, and VG).

5.16 Since 2000/01 there have been increases in schools-related expenditure, and decreases in pupil populations, in both Northern Ireland and England. Table 5.5 indicates that between 2001/02 and 2005/06, schools-related current expenditure increased by 27.2 per cent in Northern Ireland and by 41.2 per cent in England.

Table 5.5: Increase in Schools-related Current Expenditure in Northern Ireland and England, 2001/02–2005/06^a

Country	2001/02 (£m)	2005/06 (£m)	Increase (%)
Northern Ireland	1,203	1,532	27.2
England ^b	28,353	40,037 ^c	41.2

Sources: DE (Northern Ireland expenditure); *DfES Departmental Report*, Table 8.3 and Annex A (England expenditure).

Notes:

^aExpenditure figures from 2001/02 are on an accruals basis. Prior to this, expenditure was on a cash basis.

^bEngland expenditure figures exclude funding for sixth-form colleges.

^cEstimated outturn.

5.17 Table 5.6 indicates that, over the same period, pupil numbers decreased by 3.8 per cent in Northern Ireland compared with a decrease of 1.8 per cent in pupil numbers in England. When allowance is made for the relatively greater decrease in pupil numbers in Northern Ireland from 2001/02 to 2005/06, the increase in expenditure relative to pupil numbers in England over the same period is still higher than that in Northern Ireland.

Table 5.6: Decrease in School Pupil Numbers in Northern Ireland and England, 2001/02–2005/06

Country	2001/02 Pupil Numbers (FTE) ^a	2005/06 Pupil Numbers (FTE) ^a	Decrease (%)
Northern Ireland ^b	342,248	329,335	-3.8
England ^c	7,623,240	7,489,750	-1.8

Source: DE Statistical Press Releases; DfES Statistical First Release 38/2006, Schools and Pupils in England, January 2006 (Final).

Notes:

^aNorthern Ireland numbers are at October; England numbers are at January.

^bNorthern Ireland numbers exclude pupils in hospital schools and independent schools.

^cEngland numbers exclude pupils in independent schools and sixth-form colleges.

5.18 Current funding for schools in Northern Ireland comprises three broad categories as set out in Paragraph 5.10: the delegated LMS allocations, earmarked allocations, and ELB centre budgets. Published per pupil funding figures across the United Kingdom countries are calculated using combinations of the elements within these categories. Northern Ireland's figures are calculated using the first two categories. Table 5.7 shows that, over the two-year period 2002/03-2004/05, per pupil funding increased by 12.4 per cent and 13.3 per cent for the primary and post-primary sectors respectively.

Table 5.7: Northern Ireland Delegated Expenditure per FTE Pupil, 2002/03-2004/05

School Type	2002/03			2003/04			2004/05		
	Funding (£000s)	FTE Pupils	Per Capita	Funding (£000s)	FTE Pupils	Per Capita	Funding (£000s)	FTE Pupils	Per Capita
Primary	347,646	172,081 ^a	2,020	366,642	169,589 ^a	2,162	380,294	167,433 ^a	2,271
Post-primary	47,604	158,398	3,022	510,491	158,000	3,231	534,195	156,025	3,424

Source: DE Funding information from published outturn statements. Pupil data are from the *Compendium of Northern Ireland Education Statistics 1992/93 to 2004/05*.

Note:

^aPrimary schools include nursery class pupils on a full-time equivalent basis. It is not possible to disaggregate expenditure only for these pupils.

5.19 It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons of per pupil funding across the United Kingdom countries, however, because the other jurisdictions calculate these figures using different categories, and different elements within those categories. Differences in levels of delegation and in arrangements for distribution of central funding add a further layer of complexity. Some funding streams do not have equivalents across the countries and, as outlined in Paragraphs 5.13 to 5.15, differences in spend must be considered in the context of different levels of relative need. Given these significant differences, only comparisons with Wales have been included. These comparisons are based on adjustments to both the Northern Ireland figures in Table 5.7 and the published Welsh figures to make allowance for differences in the methodologies. There remain differences for

which adjustments could not be made and, consequently, the information in Table 5.8 should be interpreted with caution. It shows, for 2004/05, that while Northern Ireland spent slightly more per pupil than Wales in the post-primary sector, its spend in the primary sector was considerably less than Wales.

Table 5.8: Expenditure per Pupil in Northern Ireland and Wales, 2004/05^a

Country	Primary	Post-primary
Northern Ireland	2,398	3,615
Wales	2,898	3,595

Source: DE. Figures for Wales adjusted from Local Government Finance Statistics, National Assembly for Wales.

Note:

^aThe comparison must be interpreted with caution given that the analysis was not based on a detailed understanding of the Wales figures but on interpretation of published material. Per pupil costs across the United Kingdom Home Countries are compiled using locally defined combinations of expenditure on schools and services. Each country holds detailed information about its own education expenditure but funding and accounting arrangements for the capture of education expenditure vary considerably. There are also significant differences in the types of resources delegated to schools or provided by a centralised service in each country. The educational needs to be met by individual funding streams are also not necessarily directly comparable. This makes meaningful comparisons difficult. The comparison here was constructed by selecting the categories of Northern Ireland expenditure most closely comparable to those in Wales. The Wales figures were then adjusted to include items that cannot easily be disaggregated from the Northern Ireland figures.

Schools-related Capital Investment

- 5.20 Table 5.9 indicates the level of investment in the schools' estate over recent years. The expenditure includes allocations for major capital projects (over £300,000), specialist accommodation, and minor works projects.
- 5.21 Table 5.9 shows that the capital budget for schools of £207m in 2006/07 is significantly higher than the capital budget for the preceding years; the planning figure for 2007/08 of £406.9m represents a further step change in capital expenditure. The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, published in December 2005, indicates capital investment in education of £3.4 billion (including £2.3 billion for major works schemes) over ten years from 2005/06. This means that the levels provided in recent years will be sustained in the coming years.

Table 5.9: Schools-related Capital Investment, 2000/01–2007/08 (£m)^a

Year	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Amount (£m)	92 ^b	106	120	142	144	122	207 ^a	406.9

Source: DE.

Notes:

^aFigures for the years 2000/01 to 2005/06 are final outturn. The figure for 2006/07 is initial budget and may be subject to change.

^bFigures from the year 2001/02 are on an accruals basis; the figure for 2000/01 is cash.

- 5.22 This chapter has outlined how the education budget for Northern Ireland is determined. The first stage is the determination of the Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure Limit, changes to which are made using the population-based Barnett Formula. The education budget is then determined by the Secretary of State within the Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget Process. In 2006/07 the education budget is £1838m and this represents 20.2 per cent of Northern Ireland's overall Departmental Expenditure Limit. £1595m of the education budget is allocated to current expenditure on schools and is either delegated to individual school budgets (2006/07 delegations are 62 per cent of schools current expenditure), or allocated to the ELBs to cover a range of services (in 2006/07 ELB centre budgets and earmarked allocations represent 34 per cent of current expenditure on schools).
- 5.23 Comparing the relative size of the Northern Ireland education budget with other countries within the United Kingdom is problematic because of the different bases upon which figures are produced. In addition, population-based comparisons ignore the significant fact that pupils in full-time education represent a larger proportion of the overall population in Northern Ireland than in England. This proportion will, to a large degree, dictate changes in a country's schools-related expenditure. Both Northern Ireland and England are currently experiencing decreases in their pupil numbers but, in Northern Ireland, the decrease is more marked. Its pupil population, however, still remains relatively higher than England's, whose increase (41.2 per cent) in schools-related current expenditure between 2001/02 and 2005/06 was higher than Northern Ireland's (27.2 per cent). To the extent that pupil-level investment comparisons can be relied upon, they

suggest that Northern Ireland, in 2004/05, spent slightly more per post-primary pupil than Wales, but considerably less per primary pupil than Wales.

- 5.24 In terms of capital investment in education, substantial increases in recent years contrast with the much lower levels of investment experienced during the 1990s. This change follows the pattern of increased investment in the other countries of the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER 6: ALLOCATING THE EDUCATION BUDGET

6.1 Chapter 5 explained how the education budget was determined and how, within the overall budget, there are separate current expenditure and capital investment budgets for schools, and also for youth services and community relations measures for young people. This chapter explains how these budgets are distributed. As schools-related funding makes up the majority of the education budget, most of this chapter and all its conclusions will be devoted to this topic. It begins, however, by briefly considering current and capital allocations to youth services. It then describes the allocations process for schools-related capital investment before turning to the complex matter of schools-related current expenditure. Finally, it describes the ways in which the government holds budget holders to account for their use of the allocations made to them.

Youth and Community Relations

6.2 As stated in Paragraph 5.12, the 2006/07 current expenditure and capital investment budgets for the youth service and community relations measures under Objective B of the education budget were £29m and £6.5m respectively. Of the budget for current expenditure:

- £21m relates to the five Education and Library Boards' (ELB) budgets. Of this, £19m to youth services (including £1m under the Children and Young People Funding Package), and £2m to community relations; and
- £4m relates to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

The remaining £4m comprises £2m for voluntary sector community relations provision, £1m for voluntary youth service provision, and £1m for the Department of Education's (DE) administration costs. The £6.5m of capital investment within the youth and community relations budget comprises £3.9m for ELB youth services and £2.6m for the youth voluntary sector.

Schools-related Capital Investment

6.3 The planning of the schools' estate is discussed in detail in Part C of this report. The focus of Part C is on the structures and processes necessary to maximise

benefits from the proposed substantial investment in school buildings flowing from the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI). This section quantifies past and planned future spending levels and provides a brief description of current capital investment processes in education.

- 6.4 The 2006/07 capital budget provides capital funding of approximately £207m for the schools' estate. This programme is largely directed towards new replacement buildings or school refurbishment, and generally seeks to ensure that pupils and teachers are provided with a modern learning environment. There are a number of major policy developments in education – particularly the implementation of the post-primary review and the Extended Schools initiative – that are expected to affect school accommodation requirements in the future.
- 6.5 Capital investment in schools is more centrally managed than schools-related current expenditure. The procedure is that school authorities identify potential schemes to DE for major capital funding. DE then assesses the schemes, and those confirmed as requiring major capital investment are permitted to progress to a feasibility study in the case of the maintained, Voluntary Grammar (VG), Integrated and Irish-medium sectors, and to economic appraisal in the case of the controlled sector. Following the completion of agreed economic appraisals for all schemes, they are assessed on the basis of educational need (using criteria described in Chapter 8) to establish their order of priority. They are then funded according to the available budget.
- 6.6 ELBs are funded to provide accommodation for approved projects for controlled schools. Approved accommodation for schools in the other sectors is funded by the individual school authorities with grants paid by DE, with the exception of school meals accommodation for maintained schools, which is provided by ELBs. DE funds the ELBs for capital expenditure and pays capital grants to the maintained, VG, Grant-maintained Integrated (GMI), and Irish-medium schools on approved capital expenditure.
- 6.7 The minor works programme is also funded from the capital budget. This programme mainly consists of projects costing under £300,000 and includes a wide variety of schemes ranging from playground refurbishment to the provision of new classrooms. The minor works budget also funds school development in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors, and the Disabled Access Programme to meet

the requirements of pupils with special needs. Applications for minor works are submitted to DE by individual school authorities and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

- 6.8 Minor works carried out in controlled schools by the ELBs are also projects costing under £300,000. DE allocates resources for minor works to the ELBs on an annual basis. Within these allocations the ELBs determine their overall annual programme of works. All ELBs have arrangements in place under which they determine priorities for minor works and temporary accommodation. These arrangements cover health and safety works, further accommodation for pupils of compulsory school-age, school meals provision, needs arising from room conversions, and unsatisfactory accommodation.

Schools-related Current Expenditure

- 6.9 Schools-related current expenditure in 2006/07 amounts to £1, 595m (net of the £11m estimated income described in Paragraph 5.11). In 2006/07, £611m (approximately 38 per cent) of this current expenditure relates to three categories of funding: ELB centre budgets, earmarked allocations, and other schools-related current expenditure.

ELB Centre Budgets

- 6.10 ELB centre budgets in 2006/07 account for £377m (approximately 24 per cent) of schools-related current expenditure. These budgets cover a range of services, including special schools, home-to-school transport, school meals, the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS), landlord maintenance, Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in mainstream (i.e. non-special) schools, teacher substitution costs outside the scope of schools' delegated budgets, pupil support measures, and ELB headquarters' administration.
- 6.11 ELB centre budget allocations are made through a formula known as the Assessment of Relative Needs Exercise (ARNE), which is designed to ensure that allocations are made in a way that reflects the needs of different areas (including pupil numbers and levels of social disadvantage). The arrangements for distributing the current centre resources for schools-related and miscellaneous services between the ELBs were last reviewed in 2002. The review introduced a

revised ARNE in 2003/04 that is currently being phased in. In 2006/07, ELBs received their centre allocations based on a 75 per cent revised ARNE/25 per cent old ARNE split. In 2007/08, all allocations will be made under the revised formula.

Earmarked Allocations

6.12 Earmarked allocations in 2006/07 account for £152m (approximately 9 per cent) of schools-related current expenditure and relate primarily to a range of educational initiatives. Earmarking is used by DE to ensure that a specific amount of money is spent on a specific initiative. Certain parts of this funding will be allocated to schools over and above their delegated budgets. Initiatives for which earmarked allocations have been made in 2006/07 include:

- Classroom 2000 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) provision;
- the Children and Young People's Funding Package;
- pre-school initiatives;
- the Making a Good Start in Primary 1 and 2 programmes;
- school improvement programmes;
- SEN provision;
- discipline strategy;
- curriculum development, post-primary reform; and
- provision for Private Finance Initiative/ Public Private Partnership (PFI/PPP) and certain equipment costs.

Other Schools-related Current Expenditure

6.13 In addition to the £529m (approximately 33 per cent) of schools-related current expenditure described in the two categories above, there is in 2006/07 a further £82m (approximately 5 per cent) allocated as follows:

- £23m for VG and GMI schools' grant-aid outside the scope of these schools' delegated budgets;

- £24m for DE's administration costs;
- £23m for the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA);
- £4m for CCMS; and
- £8m for a range of miscellaneous educational services.

Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme

- 6.14 In 2006/07, £995m (approximately 62 per cent) of schools-related current expenditure (over half of the education budget) was distributed to schools' delegated budgets. This delegation level represents a key ministerial decision about the extent to which decisions on funding priorities are either made centrally or devolved to individual schools. The Northern Ireland delegation level of 62 per cent is lower than in England where Local Education Authorities have been set tough targets to increase the level of delegated resources in individual schools' budgets. As a result, levels of delegated funding in England typically exceed 80 per cent and though targets for the overall level of delegation to schools have not been set since 2003, there are still mechanisms to limit the level of centrally held resources.
- 6.15 Even after taking account of those funds initially held centrally but subsequently distributed to individual schools' budgets, the proportion of funding delegated to schools in Northern Ireland (around 69 per cent) is still lower than in England. Comparisons need to take account, however, of differences between the two countries' school systems. These differences include the way in which nursery school provision and Special Schools are funded, the larger proportion of smaller schools in Northern Ireland, levels of rurality, and the role of programmed (earmarked) funding.
- 6.16 The £995m delegated to individual schools' budgets for 2006/07 is known as the Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB). The delegation of the ASB is conducted under the LMS Scheme for the financing of schools (other than special schools) in Northern Ireland. This was first introduced in 1991 and allows for the delegation of financial and managerial responsibilities to schools. The management of a school's budget is then determined by the Board of Governors and the Principal, who are best placed to make decisions on relative priorities and the most effective

use of resources in accordance with their School Development Plan. Under the current arrangements introduced in April 2005, all schools' budgets are determined by the Common Funding Formula (CFF) within the LMS scheme, which deals both with the arrangements for delegated funding and the arrangements whereby schools, in certain circumstances, can seek resources from centrally held funds.

Common Funding Formula

6.17 Until 2004, delegated school budgets were determined under seven separate LMS formulae, one in each of the five ELBs, and a further two operated by DE for VG and GMI schools. The introduction of a single funding formula in April 2005 for all schools sought to ensure that the calculation of all school budgets was consistent, transparent and provided schools of similar size and characteristics with similar funding regardless of sector or geographic location. The move from seven separate funding formulae inevitably created changes in the relative levels of funding received by individual schools. Transitional arrangements (see Paragraph 6.32) were put in place, therefore, for the first two years of operation of the new formula (2005/06 and 2006/07) to help schools, particularly those with financial reductions, to manage the move to their new funding allocations.

Factors Within the Common Funding Formula

6.18 DE calculates the formula allocation for all schools and provides each funding authority with details of the allocation for every one of its schools. The calculations are made using the range of factors that exist within the CFF and that have been developed to reflect the main costs associated with the running of a school. These are:

- pupils' ages and year groups;
- premises-related costs;
- the incidence of educational under-achievement;
- pupils from socially deprived backgrounds;
- above average teaching salary costs;

- the educational needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language;
- children of the Travelling Community and of service personnel;
- allocations for sports;
- the additional costs that VG and GMI schools incur in providing services that, in the case of maintained and controlled schools, are undertaken by the ELBs; and
- curriculum support for small schools.

6.19 The challenge of determining the factors within the formula, and the values associated with them, is how best to balance the differing needs of schools and to ensure that those needs are met within the available resources. In total there are fifteen factors. The four main factors, in terms of the proportions of ASB they distribute, are the:

- Age Weighted Pupil Unit Factor (AWPU);
- Premises Factor;
- Targeting Social Need Factor (TSN); and
- Small Schools Support Factor.

In 2006/07, funds distributed under the CFF using these four factors represent 96 per cent of the ASB, as Figure 6.1 illustrates. An explanation of these factors is provided below.

6.20 The *AWPU Factor* is the most significant within the CFF: £815m (82 per cent) of the 2006/07 ASB of £995m is allocated according to this factor. Pupil numbers are weighted to reflect the different costs associated with educating pupils of different ages. Allocations under this factor are calculated by multiplying the total number of AWPU generated by the pupils in a school by the AWPU cash value. The 2006/07 AWPU weightings are set out in Table 6.1.

6.21 There are currently around 2,500 primary-age pupils funded in 16 preparatory departments of grammar schools, about 1.5 per cent of all primary age pupils in 2006/07. The lower rate of grant-aid for pupils in preparatory departments

(0.4 AWPU) is based on 30 per cent of the teaching costs for these pupils. This lower rate recognises that such preparatory departments charge fees and that a parent's ability to pay this fee is the main criterion for admission.

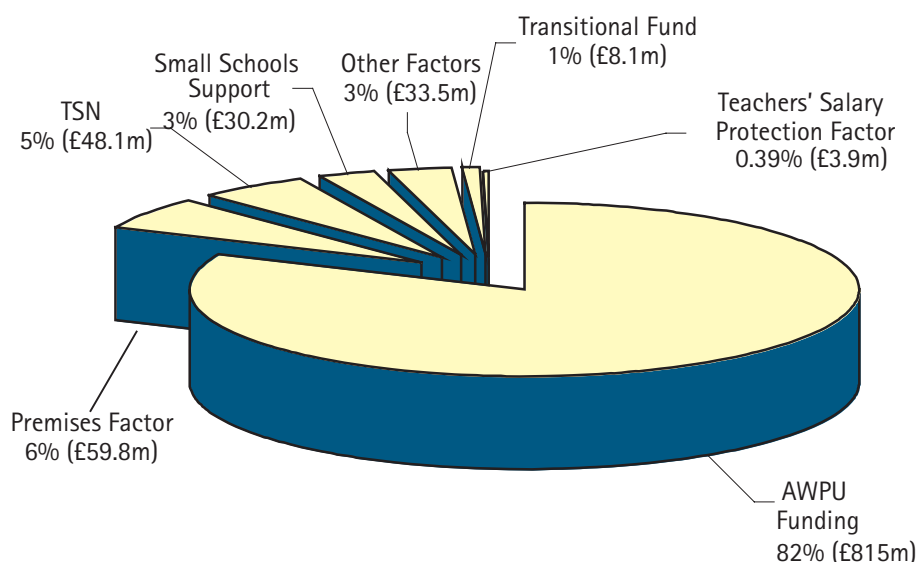


Figure 6.1: Distribution of the Aggregated Schools Budget According to Factors within the Common Funding Formula, 2006/07^a

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations, 2006/07.

Note:

^aPercentages rounded to nearest whole number except Teachers Salary Protection Factor.

6.22 The *Premises Factor*, according to which £59.8m (6 per cent) of the ASB is distributed in 2006/07, is designed to allocate resources to schools in a way that reflects their responsibilities in maintaining and managing school buildings, including internal decoration, heating and lighting, cleaning and caretaking. This factor reflects both the size of the school premises and the number of pupils enrolled at the school in the following proportions:

- Size element: 40 per cent of the funding allocated under this factor is distributed according to the size of the school building (£7.87 per square metre in 2006/07).

Table 6.1: AWPU Weightings, 2006/07

School Type	Weights
Nursery	
Full-time nursery school pupils	1.452
Part-time nursery school pupils	0.955
Full-time nursery class pupils	1.350
Part-time nursery class pupils	0.895
Primary	
Primary reception pupils	1.010
Primary years 1-7	1.010
Primary special unit pupils years 1-7	0.780
Infant school mainstream weighting	1.010
Infant school special unit weighting ^a	0.780
Preparatory department pupils primary years 1-7	0.400
Post-primary	
Post-primary years 8-12	1.680
Post-primary years 13-14 ^b	2.180
Post-primary special unit pupils years 8-14 ^{a,b}	1.280
Senior high years 11-12	1.848
Senior high special unit years 11-12 ^a	1.408

Source: DE.

Notes:

^aThe cost of approved teaching and non-teaching staff in Special Units attached to schools are met centrally for each funding authority outside of the delegated Common Funding Formula. This arrangement is reflected in a reduced AWPU weighting for pupils in Special Units. Schools also receive a lump sum of £3,000 for each Special Unit.

^bIncludes Year 15 pupils not zero-rated.

- Pupil element: 60 per cent of the funding is distributed on a per pupil basis (£111.43 per pupil in 2006/07).

Table 6.2 shows how the Premises Factor distributes funds to schools according to the number of pupils in 2006/07.

Table 6.2: Allocation of Premises Factor by Pupil Size Band, 2006/07

Full-time Equivalent Banding	Total Number of Schools	Total FTE	Total Funding Allocated under Premises Factor (£)
Primary schools			
< 51	114	3,871	759,463
51 – 100	219	16,265	2,811,010
101 – 200	254	37,738	6,517,921
201 – 300	123	30,318	5,030,680
301 – 400	90	31,517	5,036,846
401 – 500	40	17,528	2,764,737
> 500	46	28,185	4,300,232
Post-primary schools			
< 201	18	2,878	929,296
201 – 300	19	4,875	1,288,628
301 – 400	23	8,191	1,971,897
401 – 500	26	11,848	2,579,609
501 – 550	13	6,782	1,385,031
551 – 600	10	5,733	1,248,636
> 600	121	113,938	22,415,249

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations, 2006/07.

6.23 The *TSN Factor*, according to which £48.1m (5 per cent) of the ASB is distributed in 2006/07, has two elements:

- A social deprivation element, which recognises the additional costs faced by schools in educating children from socially deprived backgrounds, regardless of ability, and the particular challenges faced in schools with high proportions of children from such backgrounds.
- An educational need element, which allows for educational underachievement and low attainment. It is designed to assist schools in meeting the needs of those pupils who do not have a formal statement of SEN, but nevertheless have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of their age (regardless of social background) and who require additional support.

6.24 Table 6.3 shows how TSN allocations are made using these two elements in 2006/07. The calculations under both elements of the TSN Factor are determined using 'cash values' associated with appropriate weightings, based on the proportion of pupils with assessed needs. These calculations skew funding towards those schools that draw large proportions of their pupils from the more disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland.

Table 6.3: Allocations Under the Targeting Social Need Factor, 2006/07

Social Need Factor	Funding 2006/07 (£)	% of Total Targeting Social Need
Nursery^a		
School social deprivation funding	908,366	1.9
Class social deprivation funding	858,660	1.8
Total	1,767,026	3.7
Primary		
Social deprivation funding	11,425,518	23.8
Educational need (based on FSME)	5,821,160	12.1
Educational need (based on Warnock)	6,365,826	13.2
Total	23,612,504	49.1
Post-primary		
Social deprivation funding	11,394,685	23.7
Educational need (based on Key Stage intakes)	11,361,429	23.6
Total	22,756,114	47.3
Total Targeting Social Need funding in 2006/07	48,135,644	100.0

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations, 2006/07.

Note:

^aThe social need factor for nursery-age pupils applies both to stand-alone nursery schools and to nursery classes within primary schools.

6.25 For primary and post-primary schools, the measure currently used as a proxy for social disadvantage is Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) and this element of funding is allocated in three bandings, with appropriate weightings applied to each band to determine the associated per pupil funding. There is a baseline band

for schools that have an average or below-average number of pupils with FSME, and two further bandings for schools with an above-average number of pupils with FSME. Although there is extensive research that demonstrates a link between entitlement to free school meals and social disadvantage, there are concerns that parents are reluctant to establish their children's entitlement to free school meals because of the stigma felt to be associated with it. DE, therefore, continues to keep under review its arrangements for allocating TSN funding.

- 6.26 For primary schools, funding under the educational need element is distributed using two indicators of need: FSME (reflecting the close correlation between social disadvantage and educational underachievement) and the Warnock Factor, which assesses the likely proportion of pupils who require additional support for learning. The latter factor derives from the Warnock Report (1978), which suggested that at any one time, 20 per cent of the full range of pupils would have a special educational need, including 2 per cent who require a "formal statement" of this need. Funding under the educational need element for TSN in primary schools, therefore, uses 18 per cent of the total primary-age pupil enrolment at each school (that is 20 per cent, less the 2 per cent assessed as stated, as they will be funded separately based on their statement of SEN; see Chapter 7). Funding is distributed by calculating the 18 per cent proportion and multiplying that number by a cash value (£223 in 2006/07).
- 6.27 For post-primary schools, funding under the educational need element is distributed on the basis of "entrant" year-groups' Key Stage assessment results for English and Mathematics as these are accredited measures of the educational attainment of individual pupils. This method is to be reviewed urgently, however, given the recent decision that Key Stage 2 assessment should no longer be compulsory.
- 6.28 For nursery schools and nursery classes attached to primary schools, the TSN Factor consists only of a social deprivation element. Funding is allocated on an incremental basis (using the banding methodology referred to in Paragraph 6.25) according to the proportion of pupils at a school listed in the School Census as having a parent in receipt of Income-based Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support.
- 6.29 The *Small Schools Support Factor*, according to which £30.2m (3 per cent) of the ASB is distributed in 2006/07, recognises that small schools are a feature of

education provision in Northern Ireland because of the sparsity of the population and the diversity of school provision. This factor is included within the CFF because the remaining factors within the formula are largely based on pupil numbers and, therefore, do not provide sufficient financial resources for small schools to enable them to deliver the full curriculum while containing expenditure within budget. This factor targets additional support towards smaller schools to facilitate the effective delivery of the curriculum and, in the case of primary schools, to provide some support to principals to enable their release from a full-time teaching commitment in order to undertake management and administrative responsibilities.

- 6.30 The high proportion of smaller schools in Northern Ireland (see Chapter 7) creates a significant funding requirement for small schools (particularly small primary schools). Over 72 per cent of all funding under this factor is directed to primary schools with enrolments of 200 or less, and a further 18 per cent to post-primary schools with enrolments of 400 or less. Maximum funding support is provided to those schools below certain thresholds: in primary schools the maximum level of support (£40,915 in 2006/07) is provided to schools with primary enrolments of 100 or less, tapering to zero for schools with 300 or more pupils; at post-primary level, maximum funding (£115,927 in 2006/07) is allocated to those schools with post-primary enrolments of 200 or less, tapering to zero for schools with 550 pupils or more. Table 6.4 shows how this money is distributed by school size in 2006/07.
- 6.31 There is some indication that despite the support provided to small schools, they face greater challenges in containing expenditure within budget. An analysis of ELB-controlled schools' budgets at the end of the 2005/06 financial year showed that of the 691 primary schools with 300 pupils or less, 304 (44 per cent) of them were in deficit (i.e. expenditure was in excess of their budget allocation). This compares with the 38 per cent (57 out of 151) of primary schools with between 301 and 600 pupils that were in deficit. At post-primary level, 36 of the 85 schools (42 per cent) with 550 pupils or less were in deficit compared with 26 of the 78 (33 per cent) of the schools with more than 550 pupils. Clearly, the extent to which individual schools manage their budgets effectively is also a factor in such deficits.

Table 6.4: Funding Under the Small Schools Support Factor, 2006/07

FTE Banding	Total Number of Schools	Total FTE	Small Schools Factor
Primary schools^{a,b}			
< 51	114	3,871	4,664,345
51 – 100	219	16,265	8,960,452
101 – 200	254	37,738	8,207,405
201 – 300	123	30,318	1,776,133
301 – 400	90	31,517	72,216 ^b
401 – 500	40	17,528	
> 500	46	28,185	
Total			23,680,551
Post-primary schools^{b,c}			
< 201	18	2,878	2,086,681
201 – 300	19	4,875	1,893,248
301 – 400	23	8,191	1,508,372
401 – 500	26	11,848	853,551
501 – 550	13	6,782	149,380
551 – 600	10	5,733	
> 600	121	113,938	
Total			6,491,232

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations 2006/07.

Notes:

^aSmall schools support factor funding tapers to zero for primary schools of 301 or more pupils.

^bEnrolments include nursery class and primary-age pupils. Funding is based on primary-age enrolments only, i.e. excluding nursery-class pupils.

^cSmall schools support factor funding tapers to zero for post-primary schools of 551 or more pupils.

6.32 Once the money distributed under the AWPU Factor, the Premises Factor, the TSN Factor, and the Small Schools Support Factor is accounted for, then, as Figure 6.1 illustrated, £41.6m (4 per cent) of the ASB remains. This money is being distributed in 2006/07 using eleven smaller factors (approximately 3 per cent or £33.5m) and the "Transition Fund" (approximately 1 per cent or £8.1m). The eleven smaller factors, and the monies allocated according to them in 2006/07, are detailed in Table 6.5. The £8.1m allocated under the Transition Fund relates to the 2006/07 transitional arrangements (see Paragraph 6.17) that were put in place for the first two years (2005/06 and 2006/07) of operation of the CFF to help schools, particularly those with financial reductions, to manage the move to their new funding allocations.

Table 6.5: Breakdown of Allocations Under Other Factors, 2006/07

Factor	Amount (£m)	% Aggregated Schools Budget
Landlord maintenance	9.0	0.90
Administrative costs	7.5	0.75
Sports factor	4.8	0.48
Teacher salary protection	3.9	0.39
VAT costs	3.7	0.37
Children with English as an additional language	2.5	0.25
Children of the travelling community	0.6	0.06
Irish-medium schools and units	0.6	0.06
Children of service personnel	0.5	0.05
Special units	0.5	0.05
Transitional fund	8.1	0.81
Total	41.7	4.19

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations, 2006/07.

6.33 The other smaller factors by and large reflect certain sectoral needs and a variety of pupil needs. An important exception, however, and one related to a point that has emerged in this Review's consultation, is the *Teachers' Salary Protection Factor*. This factor recognises that funding allocated largely on a per pupil basis will not account for the degree to which staff costs can, in some schools, account for a greater proportion of their delegated funding than in other schools. Under the LMS Scheme, schools are responsible for determining their own staff numbers (teaching and non-teaching) and, consequently, their staff costs. These costs can typically represent 80 per cent or more of the school's overall budget. Although schools of all sizes can experience above average teaching costs, larger schools with more staff are more likely to have a balanced range of salaries. Even if larger schools do have relatively high salary costs – due to having, for instance, a large number of staff further advanced along the pay scale – they will have greater scope to deal with this within their proportionately larger delegated budget.

Smaller schools, by contrast, will be more likely to have an unbalanced range of salaries and, within their smaller delegation, less scope to accommodate them.

- 6.34 Where a school has above average teacher salary costs, the Teachers' Salary Protection Factor provides a compensatory amount, taking account of the number of teachers employed and the extent to which the school's salary bill is above average. Currently, compensation is payable at 80 per cent of the above average costs for schools of 4 teachers or less, tapering to zero for schools of 30 teachers or more. Table 6.6 illustrates how this factor allocates funds in 2006/07.

Table 6.6: Teachers' Salary Protection Factor Funding, 2006/07

Type of School	Amounts (£)
Nursery schools	189,935
Primary schools	3,480,970
Post-primary schools	259,029
Total	3,929,934

Source: Common Funding Formula allocations, 2006/07.

Observations on the Local Management of Schools Scheme

- 6.35 Consultation with stakeholders highlighted that the LMS funding formula should be a major area of consideration for this Review. The first issue, which overarches many of the others, is the extent to which Northern Ireland's individual schools' budgets should be delegated to those who manage schools.
- 6.36 A range of views were expressed on the current level of delegation (roughly 69 per cent in 2006/07). Some thought that any reduction in the level of delegation would be a retrograde step, effectively increasing the centralisation of school funding and disempowering those managing and delivering services at the front line. Some urged an increase in the level of delegation to give schools more scope to manage their own affairs. At the same time, however, the difficulties that some schools have in managing their own budget led some parties to urge that a substantial part of an individual school's delegation – resources to cover teachers'

salaries and other staff costs – should be removed from the delegation and allocated on a different basis.

- 6.37 This last point was considered to be of particular relevance for smaller schools. The high proportion of schools' delegated budgets that is spent on staff costs means, for instance, that there is little scope for local management decisions in smaller schools. Despite the Teachers' Salary Protection Factor, DE acknowledges that there is a need to ensure that the CFF's methods of calculation distribute resources equitably and accurately across all schools and reflect their needs.
- 6.38 The crucial point, however, is that the LMS scheme and the CFF are currently applied to a school system with a great range of characteristics. To some degree, this will always be the case given that there will always be a need to have schools of different sizes and characteristics and in different parts of the community. But as we will see in Chapter 7, the Northern Ireland school system has too many schools for its pupil numbers. This is important context for this Review's consideration of the LMS scheme and the CFF. Small school budgets, for instance, are clearly more difficult to manage than those of larger schools – particularly because of the dominant pressure of staff costs. The cause of these difficulties, however, is not the principle of delegation or of autonomy in these smaller schools. It is the greater costs and pressures faced by those providing education on a small scale.
- 6.39 There is not a strong case, therefore, for reducing the level of delegation within individual school budgets or for removing any aspect of that delegation. Those at the front-line of service delivery are best placed to decide their priorities. Because staff costs for many schools – particularly small schools – account for all but a small fraction of their delegated budget, and leave them little scope for flexibility and decision-making, there is a strong case for an increased level of financial delegation in the interests of enabling more genuine discretion at school level. The comparison with England's levels of delegation (in excess of 80 per cent) suggests that there is considerable scope for such an adjustment.
- 6.40 Indeed, increasing the level of delegation, granting more autonomy to individual schools and empowering them further, may also facilitate and support collaboration among schools and help them to realise economies of scale and mutual benefits through partnership. A further point emerging from this Review's consultation was the perception, among some, that the CFF fosters competition

between schools, due to the large degree to which it is based on enrolments. The ELBs, for instance, considered that the CFF should be amended to reduce schools' reliance on the AWPU Factor.

- 6.41 The CFF and its effects need to be considered in the context of a multi-sectoral education system with too many schools and too many school places. Given the largely pupil-weighted nature of the CFF, schools are keen to maintain or increase their enrolments. Their success in doing so – increasingly in a situation of falling pupil numbers – depends to a large extent on the perception of the school by its prospective parents in an environment of parental choice, open enrolment, and current school transport arrangements. Choice and the more efficient and even distribution of resources would, however, be more likely to coincide if there were a rationalised schools' estate of fewer, and larger schools, in which each received a greater share of funding, each had greater scope for making their own decisions, and each was more capable of realising economies of scale. In the transition to such an estate there is, therefore, a need, alongside the CFF, to encourage schools and, where appropriate, colleges of further education to co-operate and collaborate in order to achieve economies of scale comparable to those possible in larger schools.
- 6.42 The CFF must, therefore, continue to ensure that funding follows the pupil, but it should be complemented by funding and incentives that lead schools to work in partnership and gain access to and share one another's resources. In addition to the government, philanthropic bodies could also usefully support developments in this area. The need for this is not just to offset some of the effects that a largely per pupil funding system will have on the various types and sizes of schools. It is also because the current package of major educational reforms – not least the introduction of the Entitlement Framework, the "Shared Future" agenda, and the development of a fit-for-purpose schools' estate – bring with them a new imperative for schools to work in partnership and develop mutually beneficial arrangements, not only to reduce costs but also to promote integration and ensure that all children have access to the full range of their entitlement. The ways in which funds are distributed to schools need to be in harmony with this imperative.
- 6.43 Equity must continue to be at the heart of this distribution. For this reason, the part-funding of fee-charging preparatory departments in grammar schools (described in Paragraph 6.21) is anomalous. This aspect of delegation subsidises

provision that can only be accessed by children whose parents can pay the requisite fee. This would seem to be an inequitable use of public funds and counterintuitive in a funding system simultaneously managing the pressures of a high level of surplus capacity (see Chapter 7). The rationale for this aspect of schools-related current expenditure should be reviewed and its continuation considered with regard to equity and in the context of the significant pressures on the education budget.

Accountability

- 6.44 There exist, alongside these arrangements for distributing public funds to budget-holders, a series of mechanisms designed to hold them to account and monitor and evaluate their performance. DE's Permanent Secretary is the principal Accounting Officer with overall responsibility for the education budget. He is accountable to the Minister and is personally answerable for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which he is responsible, and for the efficient and effective use of all the resources available to DE. The bulk of the budget is allocated to the ELBs, either for delegation directly to controlled and maintained schools or to fund the core services provided centrally by each ELB (for example, transport, meals, special education services). As designated Accounting Officers, ELB chief executives are also personally responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective use of all public funds allocated to them.
- 6.45 Under current arrangements, the amounts "passported" via ELBs to controlled and maintained schools under LMS arrangements (determined through the funding formula and ring-fenced for use by schools) cannot be diverted to fund other areas of activity. Under legislation, ELBs can incur expenditure only in accordance with an approved Resource Allocation Plan (RAP). It is through these RAPs that ELBs are held to account both for the use of resources and for the outcomes and performance delivered through those resources. The RAP provides details of how each ELB has chosen to allocate its non-delegated budget across its key functional areas as well as performance targets that are directly linked to the outcomes and targets contained in DE's Public Service Agreement (PSA) and the Strategic Plan for Education. Those targets include specific targets relating to educational performance.

- 6.46 Similar, though not identical, arrangements apply to CCEA, CCMS, the Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). DE approves an annual work-plan and budget for each of the four bodies and holds each of them accountable for the achievement of their work-plan objectives within the resources they have been allocated. There are not the same accountability relationships in place between DE and individual schools. As noted above, ELB chief executives bear overall accountability for the public funds provided to schools and for educational outcomes in their areas. School Boards of Governors are accountable for their use of resources to the relevant funding body. Schools are now required by law to have School Development Plans, and decisions on the use of financial resources at school level should be guided by the desired educational outcomes set out in these plans.
- 6.47 In addition, a vital part of maintaining rigour and accountability within the system is played by Northern Ireland's independent Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), which inspects, evaluates and reports on the quality of education, training and youth provision in Northern Ireland. Normally, the inspection programme for Northern Ireland's schools follows a seven-year cycle with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where necessary, need being identified by information from school performance indicators and contacts with schools by inspectors at local level. The inspection programme for each year may be adjusted to meet the particular needs of the three departments served by ETI (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Department for Employment and Learning, and DE) and to provide up-to-date advice on the implementation and development of policy. There are a number of key areas of focus for inspection, including ethos, learning and teaching, leadership and management, and the standards achieved by the pupils, including literacy, numeracy and ICT. Provision for SEN is emphasised as is the quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection.
- 6.48 These accountability arrangements are subject to the major changes that will take place before 2008 under the Review of Public Administration (RPA). These will amalgamate and simplify the education landscape into a smaller number of bodies, including a central government department focused on policy, strategy, monitoring and accountability, supported in the delivery of services by a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA). A full account of these structural changes is given in Chapter 2. If these changes are accompanied by an increase in the levels

of delegated funds within school budgets (as recommended by this Review), then it will, of course, be important to ensure that this further empowerment of school budget managers is matched by a corresponding strengthening of the means by which they are held to account.

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.49 This chapter has described how the education budget is distributed to the education system. It has focussed, therefore, on the LMS Scheme and the CFF and given an account of how these are designed to allocate delegated funds to individual school budgets in a manner that is fair, transparent and responsive to need. This account has identified four areas to be taken forward in recommendations. First, the overall level of delegation within school budgets and its importance in delivering real autonomy to schools and increasing their ability to make decisions, manage their own particular needs, and explore the potential of collaboration with other schools. This argues against the exclusion of school staff costs from individual schools' delegated budgets. Second, the calculations within the CFF should be as sensitive to individual schools' needs as possible. Third, schools should receive, in addition to their CFF allocation, financial incentives to collaborate with other schools, and Further Education Colleges, in order to realise benefits and to overcome difficulties collectively in a way that would not be possible individually. Fourth, in the context of a funding system seeking fairness and sensitivity to pupil need, the continuation of the part-funding of fee-charging preparatory departments in grammar schools is inconsistent.

6.50 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:

1. The degree to which schools have control of their own budgets should be maximised, with appropriate arrangements for accountability put in place.
2. In addition to a delegated budget, schools should receive financial and other incentives to share resources and deliver improved provision in collaboration with other schools.
3. The budgets delegated to schools should continue to include resources for teachers' salaries and other staff costs.

4. The methodology used to distribute resources to schools through the Common Funding Formula should be reviewed to ensure that delegations under the formula reflect the costs of the main needs of schools.
5. The rationale for funding preparatory departments in grammar schools should be reviewed.

- 7.1 This chapter examines how effectively and efficiently the Northern Ireland education system uses the public funds allocated to it as set out in Chapter 6. Consideration is first given to the effectiveness of the education system as demonstrated in the performance of those who teach in it, the performance of those it serves, and the degree to which it prepares pupils for the world of work. This is done, in the main, by comparing the attainment levels of Northern Ireland's pupils with those of other countries. The efficiency of the education system is then considered, particularly those features – pupil/teacher ratios, the schools' estate, the multi-sectoral system, and surplus capacity – that would appear to add costs or reduce effectiveness, or both, and which have a significant bearing on the issue of school sustainability. The performance of the system, together with the extent to which it presents opportunities for improvement, allows for an overall assessment of its effectiveness and efficiency.

Performance of the System

Teachers

- 7.2 The efficiency and effectiveness of an education system are substantially determined by the quality of its workforce. Taking schools managed by the ELBs as a considerable sample, approximately 84 per cent of the resources distributed to schools in 2004/05 was spent on teachers, non-teaching staff, and other staff pay costs. The effectiveness of this investment is the single most important factor in the quality of education provision.
- 7.3 The findings of inspections conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in the period 2004-06 reported positively on the quality of lessons in Northern Ireland. Of the 3,324 primary school lessons charted in Figure 7.1, 90.5 per cent were judged by ETI to be either "good (ranging to outstanding)" – the 1256 lessons (37.8 per cent) charted under Category 1 – or "satisfactory (ranging to good)" – the 1753 lessons (52.7 per cent) under Category 2. Of the remainder, the 299 lessons (9 per cent) under Category 3 were considered to be "fair (ranging to satisfactory)", and the 16 lessons (0.5 per cent) under Category 4 were considered to be "poor".

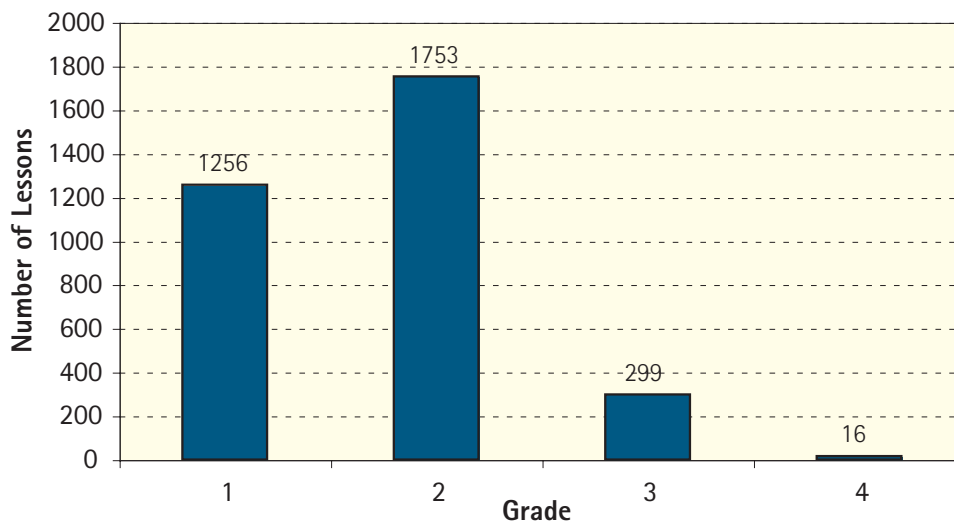


Figure 7.1: Lessons by Grade, Primary Schools in Northern Ireland, 2004-2006

Source: ETI.

Figure 7.2 shows a similarly positive profile for lessons in post-primary schools where, for instance, 83 per cent of lessons (i.e. the Grade 1 and 2 lessons) were judged by ETI to be either "good (ranging to outstanding)" or "satisfactory (ranging to good)".

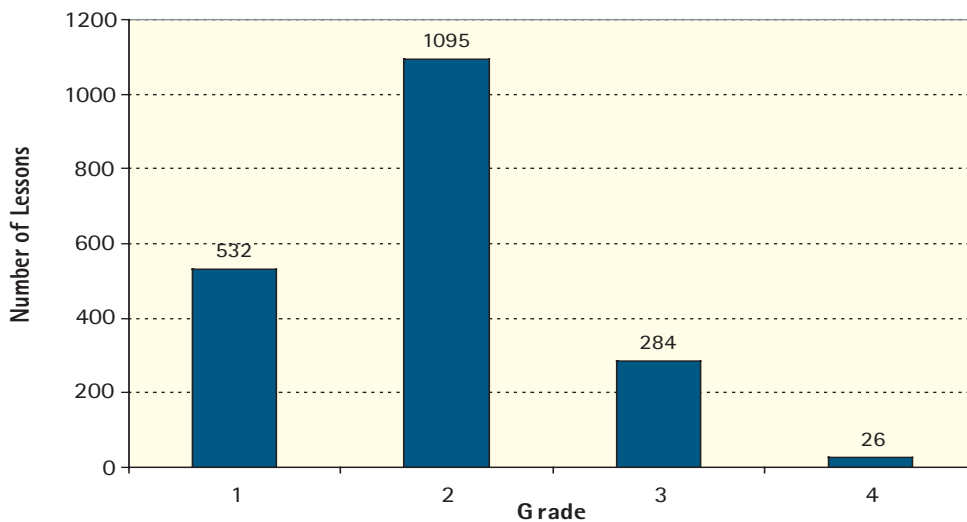


Figure 7.2: Lessons by Grade, Post-primary Schools in Northern Ireland, 2004-2006

Source: ETI.

- 7.4 In terms of evaluations of schools as a whole, of the 301 schools inspected, 12 per cent (36 schools) were categorised as Grade 3 (weaknesses outweigh strengths) or 4 (significant weaknesses). The inspectors also observed that, in the best practice, relationships at all levels were very good and there was a collegiate approach to the work of the school. Teachers used a wide range of teaching strategies to meet the individual learning needs of pupils, made good use of available data to improve standards, and provided a broad and balanced curriculum. Areas for improvement were identified in a minority of schools, and these included the better dissemination of good practice, the need to ensure that children of all abilities are challenged, that teachers' planning is improved, and that teaching strategies in literacy and numeracy are reviewed.
- 7.5 Clearly, the current teaching workforce performs well and, looking to the long-term, the flow of future teachers would suggest the continuation of that strong performance. Competition for places on initial teacher education courses in Northern Ireland remains intense and, unlike England, Northern Ireland has generally not experienced difficulties over teacher supply and recruitment. All the courses offered by Northern Ireland's four main initial teacher education providers (Stranmillis University College, St Mary's University College, Queen's University Belfast, and the University of Ulster) are heavily over-subscribed, with up to eight times more applications than places. Thus the calibre of successful candidates remains high: for example, the average GCE A-level points score for successful applicants for Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College is 325 (equivalent to 1 'A' and 2 'B's').

Educational Attainment

- 7.6 The ultimate measures of the effectiveness (and, to some degree, of the efficiency) of the Northern Ireland system are the achievements of its learners and the extent to which they are equipped for employment and a fulfilling life. As Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4 show, Northern Ireland attainment levels at all of the important stages in a child's and young person's learning (ages 11, 14, GCSE, and GCE A-level) were, at the beginning of the last seven years, ahead of those in England, Wales, and (where comparisons can be made) Scotland.
- 7.7 Table 7.1 shows that over the seven-year period, and within a picture of general improvement for all four of the United Kingdom countries, Northern Ireland's

Table 7.1: United Kingdom Key Stage 2 Attainment, 1998/99–2004/05

Attainment Group	Country	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04 ^a	2004/05
% of pupils achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2 English (Age 11)	Northern Ireland	69	72	73	74	76	n.a.	77
	England	68	70	72	73	72	74	75
	Wales	67	70	73	76	76	77	79
% of pupils achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2 Maths (Age 11)	Northern Ireland	74	75	76	77	78	n.a.	79
	England	69	72	74	74	74	75	76
	Wales	69	71	75	75	76	78	80

Source: DE, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), National Assembly for Wales.

Note:

^aNorthern Ireland data for Key Stage 2 are not available for 2003/04 because of industrial action.

levels of attainment at Key Stage 2 (KS2) have largely remained higher than England's but, in 2004/05, were marginally lower than those of Wales (there are no Scottish equivalents to KS2 and Key Stage 3 (KS3) results). Table 7.2 shows a similar pattern of improvement for all countries, within which Northern Ireland, in 2004/05, has maintained higher levels of attainment than those of Wales, but in recent years has levels marginally lower than those of England. In KS3 Mathematics, as highlighted above, Northern Ireland's attainment levels have increased only marginally (by 1 per cent) over the period, whereas attainment levels in both England and Wales have increased more substantially, albeit from a significantly lower baseline.

Table 7.2: United Kingdom Key Stage 3 Attainment, 1998/99–2004/05

Attainment Group	Country	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
% of pupils achieving Level 5 at Key Stage 3 English (Age 14)	Northern Ireland	68	69	72	73	72	72	73
	England	64	64	65	67	69	71	74
	Wales	61	59	62	61	63	65	67
% of pupils achieving Level 5 at Key Stage 3 Maths (Age 14)	Northern Ireland	70	67	69	73	71	72	71
	England	62	65	66	67	71	73	74
	Wales	60	61	62	62	68	71	71

Source: DE, DfES, National Assembly for Wales.

7.8 From age 14 onwards, however, the attainment rates (as measured by the results of public examinations) have increased more evenly across the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland's relatively higher attainment levels at the start of the period have, therefore, largely remained in place. Table 7.3 shows that Northern Ireland's strong comparative performance is particularly evident at GCSE. All four countries have a relatively stable attainment rate in terms of 5+ GCSEs (A-G), and all are within a narrow range for this measure. In terms of the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs (A*-C), however, Northern Ireland has the highest attainment levels of the four United Kingdom countries. At the same time, the largely unvarying proportion of young people leaving school at 16 with no GCSEs is the lowest of all the United Kingdom countries.

Table 7.3: United Kingdom Attainment at Age 16, 1998/99-2004/05

Attainment Group	Country	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
% of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs (A*-C)	Northern Ireland	56	57	57	59	59	60	61
	England	48	49	50	52	53	54	57
	Scotland ^a	57	59	58	59	58	58	58
	Wales	48	49	50	50	51	51	52
% of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs (A*-G)	Northern Ireland	87	87	87	87	87	88	89
	England	88	89	89	89	89	89	90
	Scotland ^a	91	90	90	90	90	90	89
	Wales	83	85	85	85	85	85	85
% of pupils achieving no GCSEs	Northern Ireland	3	4	4	4	4	4	3
	England	6	6	5	5	5	5	4
	Scotland ^a	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Wales	8	8	8	8	7	7	7

Source: DE, DfES, National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Executive.

Note:

^aComparisons with Scotland are not straightforward because of the different examination systems. Scottish pupils take National Qualifications' (Standard Grades, Intermediate 1 and 2, and Higher Grades) exams. Highers are usually taken one year earlier than A-levels.

The GCE A-level results in Table 7.4 show that Northern Ireland's attainment levels are higher than those of England and Wales. A comparison between Northern Ireland's recent and past performance further reveals the progress that has been made: the proportion of Northern Ireland school-leavers achieving 2+ GCE A-levels (A-E) has increased from 30.8 per cent to 44.3 per cent between 1994/95 and 2004/05.

Table 7.4: United Kingdom Attainment at A-level, 1998/99-2004/05

Attainment Group	Country	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
% of pupils achieving 2+ A-levels (A-E) ^a	Northern Ireland	92	93	93	95	95	96	97
	England	86	87	89	93	93	94	95
	Wales	91	92	93	94	94	95	94

Source: DE, DfES, National Assembly for Wales.

Note:

^aThe percentage expressed here is the proportion of pupils in the final year of an A-level course.

- 7.9 Looking further afield, Northern Ireland also fares well in studies comparing the educational performance of children across the world. The 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study of educational performance in forty-one countries, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), indicates that, among 15 year-old pupils, only three countries (Finland, Korea and Canada) had a significantly better mean score in reading literacy than Northern Ireland; in terms of mathematical achievement, children from only six countries significantly out-performed children from Northern Ireland.
- 7.10 Country-level indicators of pupil attainment by their nature mask a broad range of educational attainment. This is not unusual and the OECD report mentioned above has found the gap between high and low performers in Northern Ireland to be typical. It remains, however, an important characteristic of increased educational attainment in Northern Ireland (as in other countries with recent improvement, such as England) that the upper ranges of attainment are less likely to be achieved by children from certain groups. Recent increases in attainment, for instance, are more likely to reflect improvements in the attainment of higher

performers. The recent Northern Ireland Audit Office report, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (March, 2006), concluded that "there has been only limited improvement among lower performing pupils in both primary and post-primary sectors". The 2005 Literacy results for KS3 suggest that approximately 6000 14 year-olds were at risk of leaving school unable to read at the expected standard (Level 5). The attainment of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, as measured by Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME), is also significantly below that of those who do not qualify for FSME. Using the qualifications of school leavers in 2004/05, Table 7.5 shows that FSME children were only half as likely to have at least 5+ GCSEs (A*-C) and were four times more likely to have no qualifications.

Table 7.5: Qualifications of School Leavers, 2004/05

Attainment Group	% Entitled to Free School Meals	% Not Entitled to Free School Meals
5 A*-C GCSEs or higher ^a	35.6	70.3
No formal qualifications ^b	8.4	2.1

Source: School Leavers Survey, DE.

Notes:

^aIncludes A-levels.

^bIncludes only those with no qualifications of any kind.

Employability

7.11 The employability of school-leavers is a key indicator of the effectiveness of an education system. Schools have a direct influence on the employability of the workforce and on overall economic wellbeing. Those with no qualifications are at greater risk of unemployment and social exclusion. The qualification levels of those in employment in Northern Ireland have been increasing over time, and the proportion of those who now leave school without a qualification (3.5 per cent) is smaller than in any other country of the United Kingdom. The legacy of underachievement is such, however, that the current overall working-age population of Northern Ireland has a much higher proportion (24 per cent) of people with no qualifications than England (13.6 per cent) and Wales (17 per cent).

Efficiency of the System

7.12 Although the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland school system can, at least in part, be seen in its performance, a complete picture of its efficiency *and* its effectiveness requires performance to be set alongside costs. In particular, consideration needs to be given to those characteristics of the system that potentially provide opportunities for improving cost-effectiveness and that would, at the very least, maintain the current level of the system's performance. The most visible indication that such opportunities exist is the increasing level of surplus capacity in Northern Ireland's schools in a period in which enrolments are falling. Surplus capacity overlays or coincides with a number of other features that have a bearing on efficiency and effectiveness: pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs), the schools' estate, and the multi-sectoral nature of the school system.

Pupil/Teacher Ratios

7.13 Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme, teacher numbers and, therefore, PTRs are determined by individual schools within the constraints of their budget. The average PTR for Northern Ireland reflects those decisions. Table 7.6 gives average PTRs in Northern Ireland between 2003/04 and 2005/06 and shows they have been stable over this period.

Table 7.6: PTRs in Northern Ireland, 2003/04-2005/06

School Type	Year ^a		
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Primary ^b	20.0	20.0	20.5
Post-primary	14.6	14.3	14.4
All schools ^{c,d}	16.6	16.5	16.7

Source: DE.

Notes:

^aFrom 2003/04 the PTR figures were compiled on a new, improved basis: the figures, extracted from the Teachers' Payroll System, were sent to schools to be verified. Hence figures before 2003/04 are not comparable with those from 2003/04 onwards.

^bIncludes pupils and teachers in nursery classes but excludes preparatory departments.

^cIncludes nursery, primary, preparatory, secondary, grammar and special schools.

^dRefers to all grant-aided schools, i.e. excluding the small number of independent schools.

7.14 The different educational structures (e.g. nursery classes in Northern Ireland primary schools) mean that comparisons of PTRs across United Kingdom countries are not straightforward. Table 7.7 shows PTRs for primary, post-primary and all schools for the four United Kingdom countries. Northern Ireland's average PTR is higher than Scotland's, marginally lower than England's, and lower still than Wales'. This interpretation needs to be regarded with caution, however, since the four countries do not collect and hold information on PTRs on a comparable basis.

Table 7.7: PTRs in the United Kingdom, 2005/06

School Type	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales ^{a,b}	England ^c
Primary	20.5	17.1	20.7	22.0
Post-primary	14.4	12.3	16.7	16.6 ^d
All schools	16.7	14.1	18.0	17.2 ^d

Source: DE, DfES, National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Executive.

Notes:

^aFigures relate to 2004/05.

^bFigure for all schools excludes pupil referral units.

^cAll-schools' figure excludes special schools.

^dTeachers and students in sixth-form colleges in England are not included.

7.15 Table 7.8 illustrates the distribution of PTRs across the various school types in Northern Ireland. The percentiles (columns two and three) show how PTRs range around their average and the extent to which there are extreme PTRs within the system: for example, the average PTR in the 10 per cent of nursery schools with the lowest PTR is 25, and the average in the 10 per cent of nursery schools with the highest PTR is 26.5. In terms of their PTR, therefore, 80 per cent of nursery schools are between 25 and 26.5 and the variance around their average is minimal. By contrast, in primary schools, the average PTR in the lowest 10 per cent is 14.74, while in the highest 10 per cent it is 23.49; 80 per cent, therefore, of Northern Ireland's primary schools have PTRs across this nine point range.

7.16 The terms of reference for this Review require consideration of the "optimum educational need compared to current provision" in relation to PTRs. Substantial international research demonstrates that levels of pupil attainment, particularly

at the foundation stages of education and particularly among low-achieving groups, increase when high PTRs decrease. Some of this research suggests that any apparent benefits start to disappear once the PTR is reduced beyond a certain size (often between 15 and 20). Although there is no consensus on this point, this is the closest that current research gets to the notion of an optimum PTR in terms of educational need. Compared to the large body of work on reducing high PTRs, there is relatively little research on the maximum level to which low PTRs could be increased before educational benefits start to disappear.

Table 7.8: PTR Distribution by School Type in Northern Ireland, 2005/06

School Type	Percentiles		Minimum	Maximum	Northern Ireland Average
	10 th	90 th			
Nursery	25.00	26.50	18.98	27.00	25.5
Primary ^a	14.74	23.49	4.00	27.93	20.5
Preparatory	14.81	21.14	13.88	21.22	17.5
Post-primary	11.49	15.23	6.67	16.26	13.9
Grammar	14.24	16.14	13.49	17.38	15.3
Special	3.87	7.92	0.63	8.75	5.8

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes pupils and teachers in nursery classes.

7.17 The main conclusion that can be drawn, therefore, is that the optimum PTR, in terms of educational need, may exist within a range. There can be a point at which high PTRs result in reduced attainment and adversely affect teaching styles and pupil behaviour. There can also be a point at which low PTRs may be associated with negative effects on aspects of the curriculum and pupils' social development. This is recognised in the case for raising enrolment thresholds for schools (discussed in Paragraphs 7.33-7.35) and is supported by evidence from ETI (see Paragraph 7.31). Given that PTRs will always be conditioned by factors such as resources, the nature of the estate and demography, and given that an optimum PTR cannot be identified absolutely (and without reference to context), the best available course is to seek greater equity in the distribution of teachers. A small variance around a school systems' average PTR must, in terms of equality,

efficiency and effectiveness, be better than the current wide variance (see Table 7.8) in Northern Ireland's primary schools.

Small Schools

7.18 The size and nature of the schools' estate in Northern Ireland have been influenced by sparsity, the selective system, and the existence of five different school sectors. Chapter 3 briefly described the major result of this, the large number of small schools in Northern Ireland.

7.19 This feature of the Northern Ireland school system can be further highlighted by comparison with school sizes in the other three United Kingdom countries. Table 7.9 shows the average sizes of Northern Ireland's primary and post-primary schools and compares them with the average sizes in England, Scotland, and Wales. It demonstrates that the average size of Northern Ireland's primary schools is marginally larger than that in Scotland and Wales, but substantially smaller than in England. For post-primary schools, however, Northern Ireland's average is only 67 per cent of the English average (Scotland and Wales average post-primary school size being 84 per cent and 96 per cent respectively).

Table 7.9: Number of Schools, Pupils and Average Size of Schools in United Kingdom Regions, 2005/06^a

School Type		England ^c	Scotland ^c	Wales ^c	Northern Ireland ^{d,e}
Primary ^b	Numbers of schools	17,642	2,217	1,572	903
	Numbers of pupils	4,204,500	398,100	270,300	169,946
	Average size of school	238	180	172	188
Post-primary	Numbers of schools	3,385	386	227	230
	Numbers of pupils	3,316,100	318,100	214,600	151,840
	Average size of school	980	824	945	660

Source: Information on England, Wales and Scotland from *Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom 04/05*; Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aSchool size on a pupil headcount basis.

^bEnrolments for primary schools include pupils in nursery and reception classes, except for Scotland.

^cEngland, Scotland and Wales data relate to the 2004/05 year.

^dPost-primary figures for Northern Ireland include voluntary grammar schools.

^eThe count of primary schools in Northern Ireland includes preparatory departments attached to grammar schools.

7.20 Table 7.10 shows that Northern Ireland has the largest proportion of small schools, in both primary and post-primary (albeit only marginally in some instances). Unsurprisingly, given the considerably smaller average size of Northern Ireland's post-primary schools, this characteristic is most marked in the post-primary sector.

Table 7.10: Schools with Fewer than 100 and 200 Pupils (Primary), 200 and 300 Pupils (Post-primary), 2005/06^a

School Type		England ^c		Scotland ^c		Wales ^c		Northern Ireland ^{d,e}	
Primary ^b	Number of schools	17,642		2,217		1,572		903 ^b	
	Number and % of schools with fewer than 100 pupils	2501	14%	755	34%	484	31%	336	37%
	Number and % of schools with fewer than 200 pupils	7224	41%	1326	60%	994	63%	598	66%
Post-primary	Number of schools	3,385		386		227		230	
	Number and % of schools with fewer than 200 pupils	27	1%	31	8%	2	1%	18	8%
	Number and % of schools with fewer than 300 pupils	83	2%	39	10%	4	2%	37	16%

Source: Information on England, Wales and Scotland from *Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom 04/05*; Northern Ireland School Census.

Notes:

^aSchool size on a pupil headcount basis.

^bEnrolments for primary schools include pupils in nursery and reception classes, except for Scotland.

^cEngland, Scotland and Wales data relate to the 2004/05 year.

^dPost-primary figures for Northern Ireland include voluntary grammar schools.

^eThe count of primary schools in Northern Ireland includes preparatory departments attached to grammar schools.

7.21 This analysis can be developed further by a more detailed picture of where Northern Ireland's schools are located across the spectrum of school sizes found in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Using enrolment bands of twenty pupils, Figures 7.3 and 7.4 profile the schools' estates of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland according to the degree to which they are composed of schools of

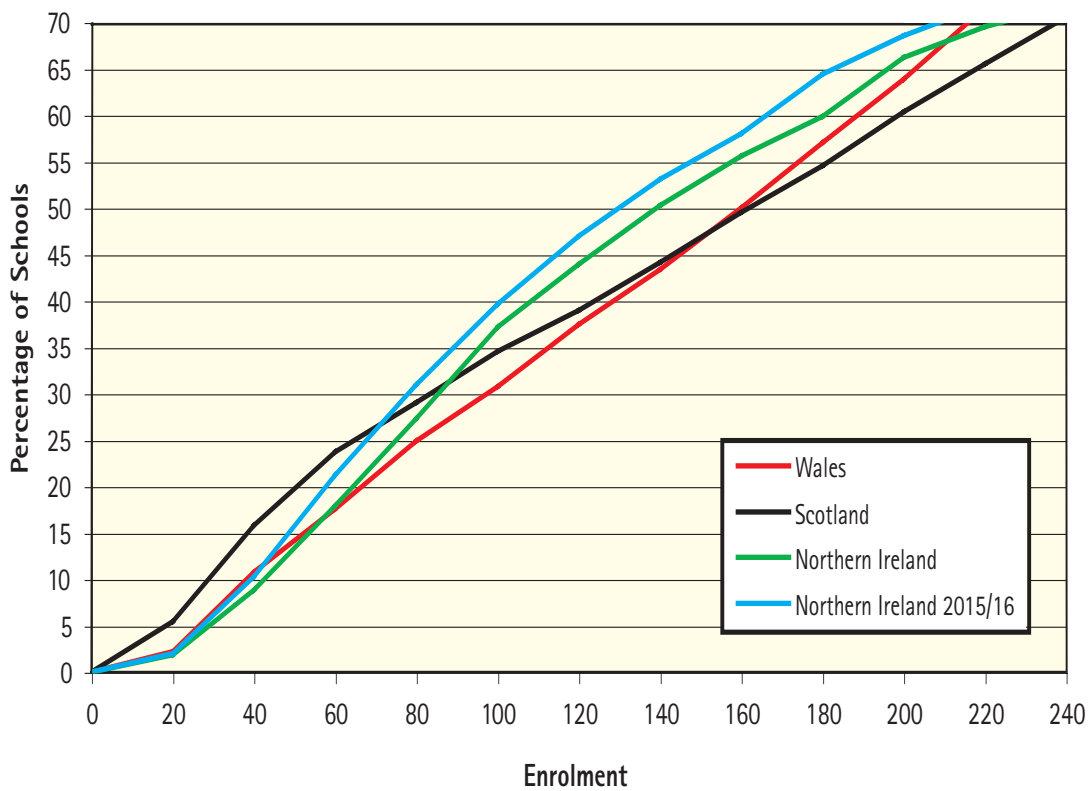


Figure 7.3: Cumulative Frequency Distribution of Primary School Enrolments in Northern Ireland^a, Scotland and Wales, 2005/06

Source: DE.

Note:

^aThe "2015/16" line profiles the projected 2015/16 pupil population against the 2005/06 schools' estate.

differing sizes. The steepness with which the graph's lines ascend expresses the extent to which the different estates are characterised by smaller school sizes. The generally sharper incline of the Northern Ireland profile reflects the greater emphasis on smaller schools within its schools' estate. This is particularly true of schools with between 60 to 100 enrolments (the green line ascends much more sharply through these bands than the red or the black line): approximately 22 per cent of Northern Ireland's primary schools are within these bands, compared with only about 11 per cent in Scotland and 12 per cent in Wales.

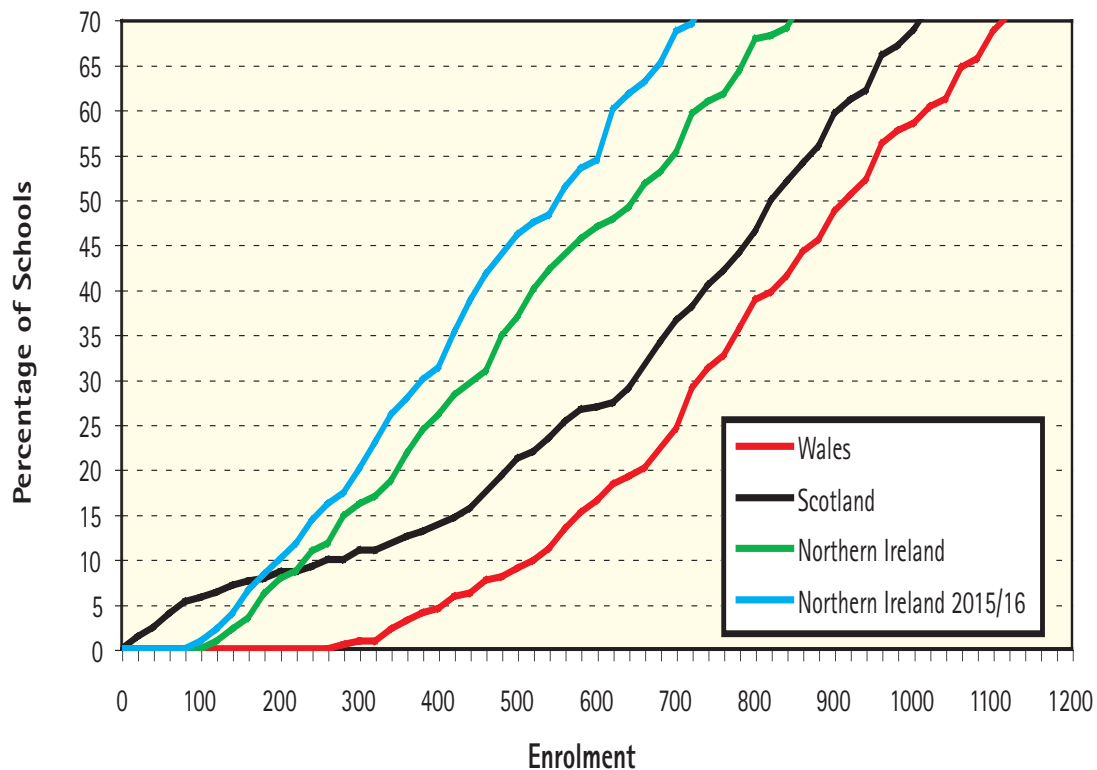


Figure 7.4: Cumulative Frequency Distribution of Post-primary School Enrolments in Northern Ireland^a, Scotland and Wales, 2005/06

Source: DE.

Note:

^aThe "2015/16" line profiles the projected 2015/16 pupil population against the 2005/06 schools' estate.

7.22 In Figure 7.4, the conclusion to be drawn is more obvious. Other than the early step in Scotland's profile – which presumably reflects the estate's inclusion of very small post-primary schools in isolated, small communities – Northern Ireland's steeply ascending line reflects the greater predominance of small post-primary schools within its estate.

7.23 An important factor here is sparsity of population. Large areas populated by small communities need a dispersed estate of smaller schools. Towns and cities tend to be served by larger schools. Levels of sparsity, when read against the number of schools, can help identify the degree to which the estate represents an efficient

use of resources. Tables 7.11 and 7.12 compare sizes and numbers of schools with parts of the United Kingdom of varying levels of population density.

Table 7.11: Comparison of UK Primary School Numbers and Sizes According to Population Density, 2005/06

Territory	Persons/km ²	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils ^a	Average Enrolment	Schools/1000 pupils
England ^b	385	17,642	4,204,496	238	4.20
England (<125 per km ²) ^b	92	1,849	292,432	158	6.32
Scotland ^b	65	2,217	398,100	180	5.57
Wales ^b	142	1,572	270,300	172	5.82
Northern Ireland	126	903	169,946	188	5.31

Source: Information on population size and density is from *Regional Trends* (2006). Schools and pupil information is from *Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom* (2005).

Notes:

^aFigures for primary schools relate to all children in primary schools, including children in nursery classes, where applicable. Figures for Scotland refer only to children in Year 1–Year 7.

^bEngland, Scotland, Wales data relate to 2004/05.

7.24 Table 7.11 shows that, in terms of primary schools, Northern Ireland does not, in respect of its sparsity, have a relatively large number of schools: when compared with areas of England that are broadly comparable in terms of population density, and when compared with Wales (which has a level of population density 12 per cent greater than Northern Ireland's), Northern Ireland's number of schools per thousand pupils is significantly lower. Scotland has a slightly larger number of primary schools per thousand pupils but serving a much sparser population. Northern Ireland has significantly more schools per 1000 pupils than England (taken as a whole) but this is not surprising considering that England has an overall population density (385 people per km²) three times Northern Ireland's (126 people per km²).

7.25 If the range of school size and proportion of smaller schools in the primary estate is masked by aggregation, the picture is different for the post-primary estate. As

Table 7.12 shows, Northern Ireland has a greater number of post-primary schools per thousand pupils than all other parts of the United Kingdom.

Table 7.12: Comparison of UK Post-primary School Numbers and Sizes According to Population Density, 2005/06

Territory	Persons/km ²	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Average Enrolment	Schools/1000 pupils
England ^a	385	3,385	3,316,050	980	1.02
England ^a (<125 per km ²)	92	318	262,196	825	1.21
Scotland ^a	65	386	318,065	824	1.21
Wales ^a	142	227	214,600	945	1.06
Northern Ireland	126	230	151,840	660	1.51

Source: Information on population size and density is from *Regional Trends* (2006). Schools and pupil information is from *Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom* (2005).

Note:

^aEngland, Scotland, Wales data relate to 2004/05.

7.26 The key point to emerge here is that the Northern Ireland school estate contains too many schools. There are levels of provision in the primary sector that in terms of scale cost and quality, vary greatly and there are, in relative terms, more schools and more small schools in the post-primary sector than in the other three countries of the United Kingdom. Given the sharp decline in enrolments predicted for Northern Ireland, the proportion of small schools within the estate will grow unless changes are made. Returning to Figures 7.3 and 7.4, the blue line shows how, when applied equally to each school, the projected fall in enrolments between now and 2015/16 will increase the incidence of smaller schools within the Northern Ireland estate. Currently 22 per cent of primary schools have enrolments between 60 and 100. If the pupil numbers projected for 2015/16 were to be served by the current schools' estate, then approximately 30 per cent of the estate would have enrolments between 40 and 100; in the post-primary estate, the enrolment level at or below which the smallest 55 per cent of the schools' estate could be described would have dropped from approximately 700 to 600.

Multi-sectoralism

- 7.27 The different types of school within Northern Ireland significantly contribute to the number of schools and add to the complexity of any evaluation of the system's efficiency. The sectors are described in detail in Chapter 3. It is sufficient to say here that as the physical, demographic and geographic realities of Northern Ireland bear upon the efficiency of its school system, so do the diversity of and relationships between its communities. This is reflected in the number of distinct school sectors. The obvious example is that, although all schools in Northern Ireland are by law open to all pupils regardless of religion, in practice the majority of Protestant children attend controlled schools and the majority of Catholic children attend maintained schools.
- 7.28 In addition to this, DE currently has legislative obligations in relation to the provision of integrated education and Irish-medium education. These are two distinct and growing school sectors within the Northern Ireland school system. The establishment of new Integrated and Irish-medium schools in response to parental demand increases the number of schools at a time of falling pupil numbers and, therefore, contributes to the incidence of small schools and the level of surplus capacity. Supporting five sectors (i.e. controlled, maintained, Voluntary Grammar (VG), Integrated and Irish-medium schools) incurs significant costs. These additional costs are further increased by the rural nature of Northern Ireland, which in many areas results in the provision of at least two types of school (controlled and maintained) within each locality. For example, within the WELB area, there are currently 184 primary and 33 post-primary schools, excluding VG and Grant-maintained Integrated (GMI) schools. Of the 184 primary schools, 74 (40.2 per cent) have an enrolment of 80 pupils or fewer and of the 33 post-primary schools, 15 (45.5 per cent) have an enrolment of 400 pupils or fewer. There is a social argument for integration within Northern Ireland's multi-sectoral system, but there is also a significant economic and educational argument.

Sustainable Schools

- 7.29 The significance of having a large number of relatively small schools is fundamental to the issue of school viability. All schools in Northern Ireland should be sustainable in terms of the educational experience they provide to children, their enrolments, finances, school leadership and management, accessibility, and

links to the community. School sustainability is, therefore, about effectiveness and efficiency: the quality of the educational experience provided to children and the value for money that that experience represents.

7.30 Costs per pupil in small schools tend to be higher. The Small Schools Support Factor of the Common Funding Formula (CFF), described in Chapter 6, is recognition of this: 82 per cent of Northern Ireland's primary schools and 43 per cent of its post-primary schools receive support through this factor. And as we have seen in Chapter 6, despite the extra support, these schools are more likely to be in deficit. Figures 7.5 and 7.6 provide a graphic depiction of the additional costs of small schools by plotting, for both primary and post-primary, the level of per pupil costs according to schools' pupil numbers.

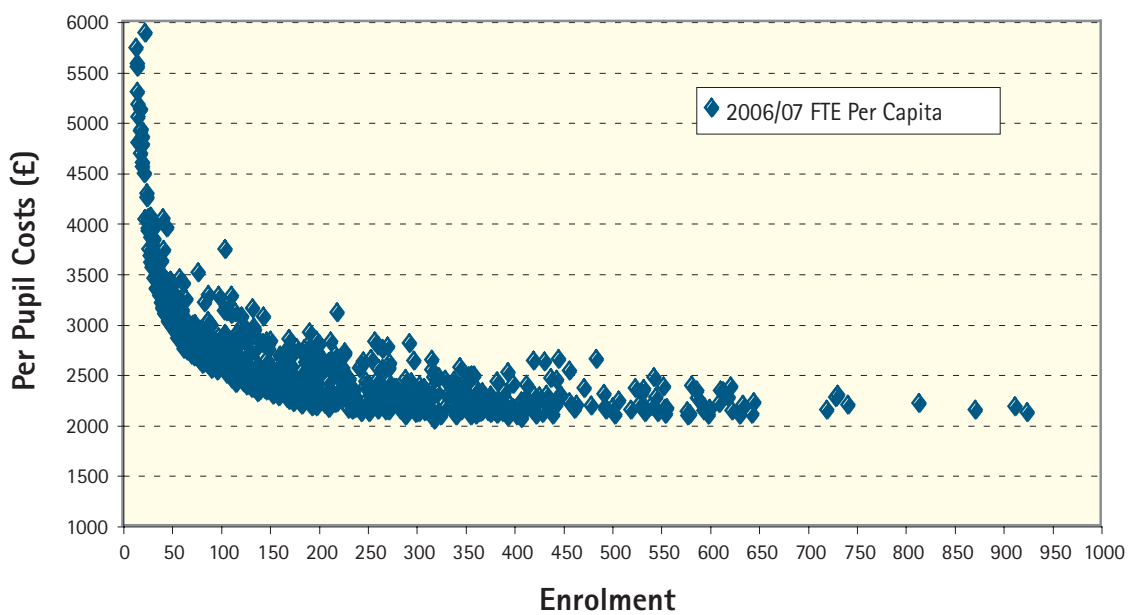


Figure 7.5: Primary School Costs per Full-time Enrolment, 2006/07

Source: DE.

Per pupil costs begin to rise when primary and post-primary schools dip below roughly 200 and 500 respectively and rise more dramatically the further enrolments drop significantly below these levels. (The variety of per pupil costs in

schools of the same size also illustrates the complexity of judging efficiency and the need to consider the full range of characteristics discussed in this chapter.)

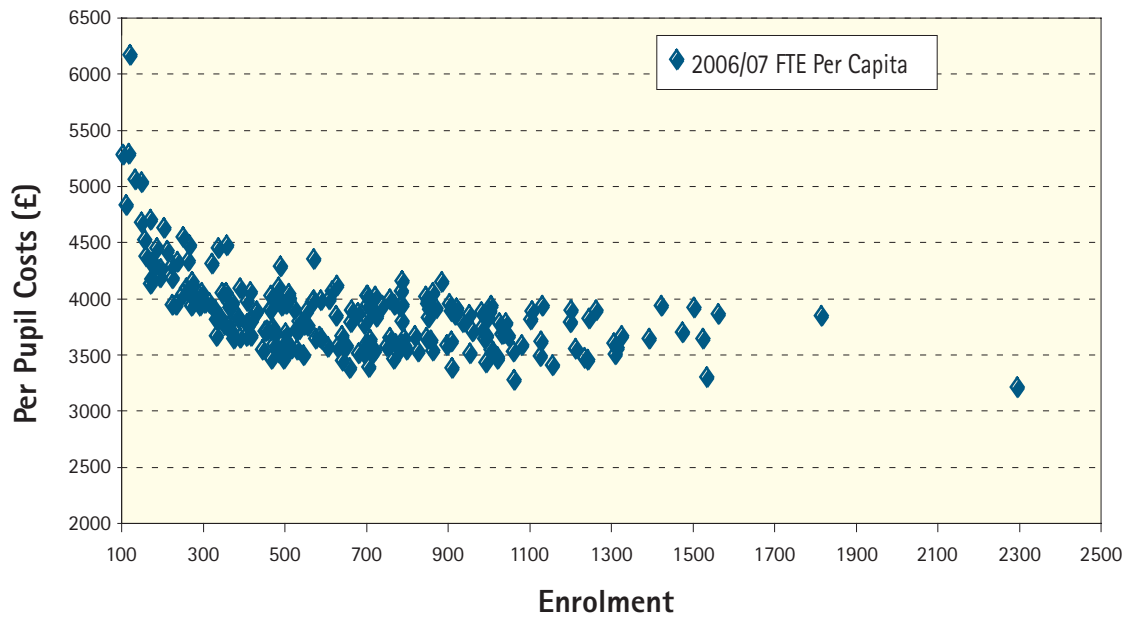


Figure 7.6: Post-primary School Costs per Full-time Enrolment, 2006/07

Source: DE.

7.31 Educationalists have long argued that larger schools are more effective than smaller schools as they are better able to offer a comprehensive curriculum with more specialised teaching at a lower cost per pupil. In a sample of small, rural primary schools, ETI found that although small school size had certain advantages, in terms of personal attention and focus on individual pupils, small schools struggled with a range of challenges. These included the demands of preparing a differentiated programme for classes with mixed-age groups, of ensuring adequate SEN provision, and difficulties in securing substitute cover for teachers. Also reported was a higher administrative burden on teachers (including teaching principals), leaving them less time for the preparation of lessons. Small schools had more difficulties than their larger counterparts in recruiting and retaining

principals and, overall, they experienced a considerable degree of financial pressure and uncertainty.

- 7.32 A clear policy statement on the viability of schools is urgently needed and some principles are outlined below. Policy must be driven by the overriding importance of the quality of educational experience and be cognisant of value for money. It should ensure that schools are sustainable in terms of their leadership and management, accessibility, and the strength of their links to the community. It should be applicable across existing schools, to schools resulting from rationalisation, and to new schools. It should incorporate the principle of equality of educational opportunity for all pupils, at all stages of their education, regardless of where they live.
- 7.33 Central to policy, and a key factor for a school's educational and financial viability, should be its enrolment level. The long-term future of a school should be called into question when the enrolment is falling and projected to reach a point where the quality of the educational experiences of the pupils is likely to be adversely affected, not least because the school's budget, corresponding to pupil numbers, will have reached a level where it lacks the financial capacity to provide the staffing and other resources necessary for a good quality, broadly-based education. The following paragraphs focus in more detail on enrolment levels, and suggest particular levels as starting points for reviewing the position of a school.
- 7.34 ETI has provided views to this Review on the issue of school sizes. These have been considered and generally accepted as minima ensuring that all children have access to an educational experience that is at least satisfactory. When enrolments in existing schools or school sixth forms fall below these minima, their future should be reviewed. The minima should also help determine the enrolment levels necessary for the establishment of new schools. These thresholds are not optima; nor do they imply that all schools at or above the threshold do not share the obligation of all those below the threshold: to pursue the highest possible quality of provision for children through means such as collaboration with other schools. The proposed approach is that:
- Primary schools should ideally have a minimum of seven classes (one for each year group). If each classroom were full to capacity this would indicate a school of some 200 pupils. As a minimum, however, an urban school should have around 140 pupils (or an average of 20 pupils per year group).

The minimum enrolment for rural areas should be 105 pupils (or an average of 15 pupils per year group) in recognition of population levels in rural areas.

- For post-primary schools the minimum enrolment should also take account of pupil access to a broad and balanced post-primary curriculum and the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified teachers. Under current arrangements, post-primary schools are normally reviewed when the enrolment falls below 300, and a minimum annual intake of 50 is required to secure capital funding for new post-primary schools. On educational grounds alone, ETI advises that these criteria cannot in the future be regarded as appropriate for the needs of pupils. ETI recommends that post-primary schools should be capable of maintaining an enrolment of 500 pupils in the 11-16 range. There are arguments that this enrolment should be higher in anticipation of the full implementation of the Entitlement Framework, and in view of experiences in other countries. The optimal size of a post-primary school is higher than 500 but, nevertheless, an enrolment of 500 should provide a suitable basis for delivering the curriculum at KS3, and for allowing the school to provide access to the Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4, especially if it collaborates with other schools and Further Education institutions.
- Establishing a minimum size for sixth forms is more complex, not least because of the range of subjects that should be available in post-16 provision. ETI advises that sixth forms should be self-financing and should not draw resources away from pupils in much lower age groups. They also recommend that sixth-form classes should normally have a minimum of 12 pupils, although there would need to be flexibility for some subjects. In agreement with the "Extended Courses" circular from DE, ETI, during this Review's consultation, endorsed the establishment of a minimum and accepted as a useful guide the level of 80 specified in the circular (as the minimum enrolment necessary to establish a new sixth form). In subsequent discussions, ETI has agreed that a minimum threshold of 100 would be of greater value as this would better ensure that sixth forms were of sufficient size to deliver the post-16 curriculum. The need to collaborate in pursuit of the highest quality provision would, of course, still apply.

- 7.35 These enrolment levels, and the minima of funding and educational quality that they seek to maintain, would be highly significant for the schools' estate: 357 (40 per cent) of Northern Ireland's primary schools have enrolments of fewer than 105 pupils; 85 (37 per cent) of post-primary schools have enrolments of fewer than 500 pupils; and 72 (40 per cent) of the 178 post-primary schools with sixth forms have a sixth-form enrolment below 100. (Not one of these is a grammar school sixth form, of which there are 69.) The implication for the smaller school is not that closure or amalgamation should be automatic but that there is a strong expectation that such schools will face greater difficulties in providing the curriculum than larger schools. Some of these difficulties, as indicated above, could be addressed through collaboration to ensure that schools can deliver to their pupils a high quality of education. The importance of collaboration is discussed further in Parts C and D.
- 7.36 In the application of these minima to existing, new and replacement schools and school sixth forms, the key issue should be the quality of education provided. Economic considerations should not be the only reason determining that a school should either close or stay open. Efficiency is only part of sustainability and, across a school system, what constitutes efficiency will vary according to differing needs: in exceptional circumstance, where it is demonstrated that there is no alternative but to maintain a small school (i.e. in cases of small, isolated communities), then efficiency would demand that additional finance should be made available to ensure that the school is educationally sustainable. Educational sustainability, by contrast, should be of common application, and if the quality and breadth of the education that a school provides is less than satisfactory then, regardless of its financial position or any other services that it may provide to its community, the school should close.
- 7.37 Where school closure is proposed by a review, and when rationalisation brings significant change to individual schools (e.g. replacement or amalgamation), resources should be made available to ensure that satisfactory education is provided throughout the transition. While the transition affecting existing schools is managed, the opportunities available in establishing new schools must be taken. In particular, there must be a strategic approach to planning new schools. This is discussed in Chapter 9.

Surplus Capacity

- 7.38 Unused teaching space in classrooms is clearly an inefficient use of resources. At a system-level, the amount of surplus capacity broadly indicates the value for money that a school system represents and the degree to which resources are used efficiently and effectively. Northern Ireland's high level of surplus capacity has been caused mainly by the combined effects of its many sectors and falling pupil enrolments. PTRs and Northern Ireland's smaller school profile are, in part, expressions of surplus capacity (although to what degree it is hard to identify). This report has, therefore, already been discussing surplus capacity to some extent. It is something of a headline indicator of opportunities for rationalisation.
- 7.39 There is not a precise methodology for calculating surplus places as accommodation across the schools' estate can be used in different ways. Classrooms, particularly in the older primary schools, vary in size; and classrooms in small rural schools can be much smaller than the recommended size of 60 square metres, which is intended to accommodate 29 pupils. In both primary and post-primary schools, the estimate is based on an assessment of the overall capacity of the school in terms of teaching space, less the actual enrolment. In producing an estimate of surplus places for primary schools, DE attempts to make allowance for non-teaching spaces such as libraries and rooms for SEN provision. DE has concluded that the estimation of surplus places should be based on total floor area entitlement in the school rather than classrooms as at present. The replacement methodology is dependent on the school area information being available for all schools across the estate. It is currently being compiled by the ELBs.
- 7.40 The primary school population in 2005/06 (excluding reception classes and nursery units) was 161,143 pupils and the post-primary school population was 151,840 pupils. In the same year there were an estimated 53,000 surplus places in schools in Northern Ireland, some 15 per cent of the total capacity within the estate: 34,400 in primary schools and 18,700 in post-primary schools. Tables 7.13-7.14 below show the number of surplus places in both primary and post-primary schools based on the 2005/06 enrolments for the various school sectors.

Table 7.13: Surplus Places in Primary Schools by ELB Area, 2005/06

Sector	Belfast	North Eastern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Totals
Controlled	5,600	3,400	4,300	1,600	1,350	16,250
Maintained	4,050	2,700	2,300	3,000	4,900	16,950
Other maintained ^a	330	0	10	40	0	380
Integrated ^b	60	580	150	10	40	840
Totals	10,040	6,680	6,760	4,650	6,290	34,420

Source: DE.

Notes:

^aIncludes Irish-medium maintained and other non-Catholic maintained schools.

^bIncludes controlled integrated schools.

7.41 The Report, *New Procurement and Delivery Arrangements for the Schools' Estate* (March, 2005), conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers and using 2003/04 pupil and school numbers, provides more detail on the nature of Northern Ireland's surplus capacity. It found that in the primary sector, nearly half of the schools (436) had surplus capacity and almost a third (291) had more than 20 per cent surplus capacity. Ninety-five primary schools had more than 50 per cent surplus capacity and twenty-seven primary schools had more than 70 per cent surplus capacity. In the post-primary sector, there was a greater spread of surplus capacity across the system: approximately two-thirds of the schools had surplus capacity, and a quarter had surplus capacity of more than 20 per cent. There were twelve post-primary schools with more than 50 per cent surplus capacity, and two with over 70 per cent. Some of the schools with very high numbers of surplus places were two-stream primary schools (that is with 14 classes), and post-primary schools with a capacity of more than 500 pupils.

7.42 A level of surplus capacity is essential for the effective and efficient running of a school system. Some is needed to meet parental choice, some will be required for planning purposes and to allow for demographic change, and some will always be deemed an inevitable and acceptable by-product of providing education services in certain areas (e.g. in small and isolated communities). The 53,000 places

Table 7.14: Surplus Places in Post-primary Schools by ELB Area, 2005/06

Sector	Belfast	North Eastern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Totals
Controlled	2,000	2,550	1,500	2,000	700	8,750
Maintained	1,800	2,000	750	2,000	2,000	8,550
Voluntary Grammar	260	400	130	50	250	1,090
Integrated ^a	10	50	70	60	150	340
Other maintained ^b	5	0	0	0	0	5
Totals	4,075	5,000	2,450	4,110	3,100	18,735

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes controlled integrated schools.

^bIncludes Irish-medium maintained and other non-Catholic maintained schools.

estimated to be surplus in 2005/06, however, represent 15 per cent of the 2005/06 capacity and the benchmarks available suggest that this level of over-provision is excessive. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance for local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales gives a benchmark of 25 per cent unfilled places for an individual school, but offers no guidance on what level of surplus is tolerable across all of the schools within one LEA estate. The Audit Commission, in its January 2006 response to the DfES White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils*, reiterated its view that the benchmark should be 25 per cent in individual schools but, when distributed across a school system, surplus capacity should not exceed 10 per cent.

7.43 In this Review's consultation with stakeholders, a 10 per cent maximum level of surplus capacity, when distributed across the Northern Ireland school system, received support. As a high-level focus for school rationalisation there is no reason apparent to this Review why a maximum of 10 per cent at system-level would not be beneficial in Northern Ireland. Reducing surplus capacity and providing sustainable schools with viable enrolments would mean a more efficient and effective use of educational resources.

- 7.44 Substantial over-capacity is a significant issue for managing authorities and they should consider the future of individual schools in order to reduce the level of surplus places while delivering a fit-for-purpose schools' estate. The different school sectors, academic selection, and sparsity add to the complexity of addressing the problem of surplus places. The problem exists in both primary and post-primary schools and in both the controlled and maintained sectors. Small schools are part of the problem – in that their capacity (surplus and occupied) will tend to cost more – and they are a "parallel" problem in that they also present an opportunity for rationalisation and improvement. But the majority of surplus places are, in fact, in larger schools. If no action is taken, then over the next ten years the number of surplus places is predicted to increase to over 80,000 (more than a quarter of the current school population), further reducing cost-effectiveness. By contrast, moving to a system sustaining no more than 10 per cent surplus capacity, and consisting of fewer and larger sustainable schools, would eventually release resources for investment elsewhere in the system. As the number and size of schools that would be needed will be known only after detailed planning, however, these savings cannot be calculated now.

Special Educational Needs Provision

- 7.45 In Chapter 6 we listed some of the services funded from ELB centre budgets and these included provision for children with SEN. Each ELB is responsible for pupils resident in its area who are in receipt of a statement of SEN. The ELB will meet the costs associated with the educational provision in SEN statements for pupils in maintained and controlled (including controlled integrated) schools. Special schools have partially delegated budgets, with all pupil-related costs being retained centrally by the ELBs. The cost of educational provision, outlined in SEN statements for children in GMI schools and VG schools, is met by DE as it has direct funding responsibility for these schools.
- 7.46 All SEN statements include separate sections outlining 'educational' and 'non-educational' provision. Educational provision can take the form of additional classroom assistance, input from advisors and peripatetic teachers, or specific classroom approaches. Non-educational provision can relate to specific transport costs, which the ELB in question is also responsible for funding, or to services

provided by the local Health and Social Services Trust (e.g speech and language therapy and occupational therapy).

7.47 Table 7.15 shows the funding that has been reported by each ELB as having been allocated to SEN provision in each of the last five years. The increase is dramatic: £80m in 2000-01 to £133m in 2004-05.

Table 7.15: Special Educational Needs Funding by ELB, 2000/01-2004/05 (£m)

Year	Belfast	North Eastern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	Total
2000/01	17	14	21	15	13	80
2001/02	19	16	23	17	16	91
2002/03	21	18	27	19	18	103
2003/04	26	21	32	22	23	124
2004/05	28	22	31	25	27	133

Source: DE.

7.48 This 66 per cent increase in funding partly reflects a significant increase in the numbers of pupils receiving statements of SEN. Table 7.16 shows that the extent of this increase between 2000 and 2005.

7.49 DE commenced a review of SEN in April 2006 that is scheduled to be completed by late 2006, for implementation in late 2007, subject to the legislative timetable. The aim of the review is to bring forward comprehensive recommendations for SEN having particular regard to continuity and quality of provision; equality of access; consistency of assessment and provision; delivery, funding and accountability; value for money; affordability; and monitoring arrangements.

7.50 The review is focusing on the following themes:

- the arrangements for the identification and assessment of SEN;
- the nature, quality, and extent of provision and support relating to assessed needs for children with SEN;

Table 7.16: Numbers of Statements of Special Educational Needs by ELB, 2000-2005^a

ELB	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Belfast	1,568	1,567	1,735	1,721	1,673	1,640
North Eastern	1,581	1,716	1,933	2,109	2,256	2,362
South Eastern	2,466	2,675	2,895	3,034	3,204	3,282
Southern	1,752	1,921	2,073	2,325	2,474	2,672
Western	1,449	1,496	1,690	1,796	1,915	2,005
Total	8,816	9,375	10,326	10,985	11,522	11,961

Source: DE.

Note:

^aThere are also 472 children who attend special schools but do not yet have a SEN statement (25 at Stage 1, 7 at Stage 2, 201 at Stage 3, and 239 at Stage 4).

- SEN information and advice, and disputes and appeals arrangements;
- early intervention/pre-school SEN assessment and provision;
- capacity building for teachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), and adult assistance;
- the role of special schools in providing support and advice to mainstream schools, and the role and expertise within the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS); and
- the inclusion of children and young people with SEN and/or disability in a mainstream setting, including the impact of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO).

7.51 There will obviously be areas within this report – for example, the planning of the schools' estate, the need for schools to collaborate in elements of their provision – where SEN provision will be the subject of recommendations. Given that this provision is the subject of a dedicated review, however, there will not be recommendations on the efficiency and effectiveness of SEN provision per se.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.52 This chapter has examined the effectiveness and efficiency of Northern Ireland's school system by considering performance alongside the scope for rationalisation and improvement. The major indicators of performance are the levels of attainment achieved by Northern Ireland's learners and, in comparison with those of the other United Kingdom countries, these levels are relatively high and indicate, therefore, that the Northern Ireland education system is performing effectively. There is, however, no room for complacency about Northern Ireland's attainment levels, because, first, when considering the working-age population as a whole, Northern Ireland is still seeking to remedy historic underachievement and, second (as with other countries), its overall attainment levels conceal degrees of underachievement.
- 7.53 The imperative remains, therefore, to seek out ways to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of the current system and this chapter has identified opportunities for improvement and rationalisation. Partly because of falling enrolments and partly because of the multi-sectoral nature of its school system, Northern Ireland has too many schools. This is most visible in its high proportion of small schools and in its overall levels of surplus capacity. The adverse affect of this over-provision is that some schools will be unsustainable both in terms of economic viability and in terms of the quality of the educational experience they provide. With enrolments predicted to fall, the situation, unless tackled, will worsen, exacerbating two serious effects: a mounting degree of sub-optimal education that is delivered with substantial inefficiency and financial pressure. In addition, the increasing number of children who have, in recent years, been receiving SEN provision has been placing rapidly rising pressure on individual schools.
- 7.54 There is a clear need, therefore, for policy to address school sustainability to ensure the quality of provision and to deliver value for money. This chapter has identified principles on which this policy should be based, including the governing principle of educational sustainability, enrolment minima, the importance of collaboration between institutions, the maintenance of adequate provision within schools in transition, and a reduction in surplus capacity.

- 7.55 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:
6. The policy for sustainable schools in Northern Ireland should ensure that all schools are sustainable in terms of the quality of the educational experience of children, enrolment trends, financial position, school leadership and management, accessibility, and the strength of their links to the community.
 7. The sustainable schools policy should ensure that regardless of the financial position of a school or the other services it provides, it is not considered viable if the quality and breadth of the education it provides is less than "satisfactory".
 8.
 - (a) The minimum (not optimal) enrolments for new primary schools, and for Years 8–12 in new post-primary schools should be (i) Primary: 140 pupils in urban areas, and 105 pupils in rural areas, and (ii) Post-primary: 500 pupils. When the enrolment in an existing school falls below the relevant level, the future of the school should be reviewed.
 - (b) The minimum (not optimal) enrolment for a new sixth form in an 11–18 school should be 100 pupils. When the enrolment falls below this level in an existing sixth form, the future of the sixth-form provision should be reviewed.
 9. Surplus capacity in the schools' estate should be no more than 10 per cent of the estate's total capacity, distributed across the system.
 10. Schools involved in rationalisation or closure should be given adequate funding to ensure that a satisfactory education can be provided for the remaining pupils during the period leading up to the rationalisation.

PART C

Strategic Planning of the Schools' Estate

CHAPTER 8: CURRENT APPROACH TO PLANNING

- 8.1 This chapter assesses the current approach to planning the schools' estate within the existing framework for the administration of education in Northern Ireland. It draws substantially on the report by PricewaterHouseCoopers (PWC), *New Procurement and Delivery Arrangements for the Schools' Estate* (March, 2005), commissioned by the Department of Education (DE) and the Strategic Investment Board Ltd (SIB).
- 8.2 The objective of an estate planning process is to provide the appropriate mix of schools, of the right size and quality, in the right location. The Review's consultation paper asserted that "communities need schools that reflect diversity of aspiration and choice, and which, taken together, are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, are educationally and financially viable, and are sustainable in the long-term." It is widely accepted that the problems inherent in existing planning arrangements are such that these goals cannot be achieved without a radically different approach.

Current Planning Processes

- 8.3 The current planning process is complex and requires significant involvement of branches within DE as well as the education authorities. In addition, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), provides advice on the educational implications of the proposals.
- 8.4 Seven key phases occur in the planning process:
- identification of possible capital schemes;
 - review and categorisation of schemes;
 - feasibility studies, if required, and economic appraisals to determine the preferred option;
 - determination of capital and other resources available;
 - selection of procurement route;

- prioritisation of schemes to determine which will receive funding; and
- decision and announcement of capital funding.

8.5 There are acknowledged inefficiencies and other weaknesses in the current planning process. The principal concerns are:

- the lack of integration, co-ordination and consistency between the planning activities of the education authorities, which can result in the overprovision of pupil places for an area;
- education authorities identifying their proposed schemes based on their knowledge of the sufficiency and condition of the accommodation, with suitability of accommodation being considered only at a later stage;
- the lack of robust and consistent information on the condition and suitability of the schools' estate across all sectors, which means that the schemes proposed by the education authorities may not necessarily be those with the greatest need;
- the differences between sectors as to how planning and development matters are resourced;
- the time taken to complete the planning process, and that there is only one announcement of capital projects each year, resulting in staff workloads that are cyclical and not evenly distributed throughout the year;
- the variable quality and reliability of deliverables submitted to DE as part of the planning process;
- the duplication of activity that occurs, with DE revisiting and re-assessing much of the planning work that is undertaken by the education authorities;
- the requirement for strict adherence to the *Building Handbook*, which is considered by some to restrict innovation in school design and delivery; and
- the very complicated process for taking forward minor works in the Catholic maintained sector, which makes the planning and delivery of schemes difficult to achieve within the financial year in which resources have been allocated.

Key Criteria: Sufficiency, Suitability and Condition

8.6 Planning of the estate and prioritisation of future investment requirements are based on three key criteria:

- the sufficiency of pupil places relative to local need;
- the condition of the school buildings; and
- the suitability of the school buildings for implementing the curriculum.

PWC identified significant problems in the assessment of sufficiency, suitability and condition. These are considered in the paragraphs that follow.

Sufficiency Assessment

8.7 Ensuring a match between the number of available pupil places and future pupil demand is one of the most challenging planning tasks. Chapter 2 of this report referred to the issue of surplus capacity in schools and provided some statistics on surplus places. Chapter 7 examined in detail surplus capacity within Northern Ireland's schools and demonstrated the significant planning challenge that this presents to managing authorities. The planning challenge is not just about managing down the surplus, but establishing a sound basis for anticipating the pattern of future demand in response to a highly complex set of dynamics.

8.8 There are a number of factors that influence pupil demand. The principal factors include:

Declining Enrolments: Chapter 2 has provided statistics on trends in the school population. Over the last ten years the number of pupils of compulsory school age has fallen by just under 10 per cent as part of a longer-term trend. This has had a significant effect on controlled and Catholic maintained schools, with the decline in pupil numbers in these sectors being exacerbated by the increase in enrolments in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors. Chapter 2 has also commented on the substantial projected decline in the number of pupils of compulsory school age in the medium and longer term.

Population Shifts: Other population characteristics also change over time. For example, there will be an oversupply of places in certain housing estates where

the population has matured. Oversupply also occurs as a result of changes in the religious balance of the population. In such circumstances, the total number of pupil places may remain relatively constant, but the demand for pupil places in each type of school may change significantly. More recently, inward migration from other countries has increased the demand for school places in certain areas. Finally, the long-term effects of new rural planning laws are unknown.

Economic Development: The distribution of population, and the consequent requirement for school places, will be influenced by the future pattern of economic development, especially job creation and housing starts.

Parental Choice: Under the policy of open enrolment, it is likely that popular schools will continue to fill to capacity. At a time of falling numbers, therefore, the result will be a greater number of small schools, some of increasingly questionable viability. The Costello Report considered that grammar schools would continue to fill to capacity, resulting in reduced enrolments in other post-primary schools. Statistics on admissions show that the grammar school sector, though not necessarily each school, by admitting pupils from an increasingly wide range of transfer grades is maintaining the level of enrolment within the sector.

Integrated and Irish-medium Schools: The effect of the emergence of Integrated and Irish-medium education on enrolments in controlled and maintained schools is likely to continue for some years. Specific planning issues associated with these schools are discussed later in this chapter.

Change of School Leadership: Finally, there are many examples of schools with declining enrolments that have been revitalised through change of leadership. This shows that long-term viability cannot be determined solely by looking at population factors.

- 8.9 The key figure in the analysis of future demand is the predicted long-term enrolment (LTE). The standard methodology for calculating LTEs is based on projected enrolments to be achieved in seven years for post-primary schools and five years for primary schools. In a context of declining demand for school places, projections based principally on current enrolments in existing schools will be generally higher than actual future enrolments. The forecasting method therefore tends to overestimate demand. For controlled schools, capacity planning is undertaken by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) for their own areas. A

common issue is that Board boundaries do not necessarily reflect the boundaries of pupil flows, but this inter-relationship is not explicitly addressed in the planning process, as capacity planning is undertaken independently by each Board. For maintained schools, the planning process is managed by CCMS on behalf of the Senior Trustees. A particular feature of its planning process is the use of baptismal records to predict future demand for Catholic maintained primary schools, although this method does not take account of parents who choose other types of school.

- 8.10 Whereas the need for controlled and maintained schools is based on projected demand, the planning and development of Integrated and Irish-medium schools is taken forward on a different basis. In these sectors, new schools are established in response to demonstrated parental demand. For Irish-medium schools, viability is demonstrated in terms of enrolment, while for Integrated schools it is demonstrated in terms of enrolment and religious mix.
- 8.11 As already stated, LTEs in the Voluntary Grammar sector are expected to be generally stable, even after revised arrangements for post-primary education are in place. The only exceptions might be in a few specific locations where shifts in the balance of Catholic and Protestant populations affect the level of applications to a local school. In the foreseeable future, therefore, the requirement for estate planning in the Voluntary Grammar sector is likely to be driven mainly by the need to replace or refurbish existing buildings for condition or suitability reasons. Projected enrolments, however, may have to be adjusted to reflect downward demographic trends and, in certain situations, rationalisation of provision may be necessary.

Condition Assessment

- 8.12 The ELBs are responsible for maintaining the controlled and Catholic maintained schools. The PWC report identified problems with the Boards' rolling programme of surveys of the condition of the schools' estate which constrained the potential usefulness of the data gathered. PWC commented specifically on difficulties in maintaining up-to-date data and on variations in the standards applied. Those schools that are proposed by the education authorities for inclusion in the Capital Priorities Planning List are also subjected to a separate condition survey, which is submitted to DE as part of the capital planning process. These surveys are reported

to be of variable quality. This second set of surveys would not be required if the cyclical surveys were conducted on a frequent and consistent basis to the required standards, so that there was robust, up-to-date condition data to support a case for a school's inclusion in the Capital Priorities Planning List. There are, therefore, concerns about the robustness of the existing condition data and their usefulness as a basis for the long-term planning of the estate.

Suitability Assessment

- 8.13 It is reported that the education authorities do not routinely collect information on the suitability of the accommodation within the schools' estate and, therefore, the schemes that are proposed by education authorities for inclusion in the Capital Priorities Planning Lists are usually identified on the grounds of sufficiency and condition. This means that schools with unsuitable accommodation, which are appropriately sized and in good condition, are unlikely to be considered for capital schemes. Given the importance of suitability of the accommodation for teaching and learning, it will be essential that future investment decisions take account of robust data on the suitability of the estate.

Issues with the Current Planning Processes

- 8.14 The existing planning arrangements more or less ensure that there will be surplus capacity in the system as a whole, and they are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that investment is directed at those schools with the greatest need. The principal causes of the current inefficiencies in the planning process are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

Independent Planning of the Estate

- 8.15 In the present system, the education authorities have lead responsibility for planning their segment of the estate and translating their plans into priorities for specific schools. The education authorities plan their estate independently, and therefore the Department's role is mainly to validate the analysis, consider the interrelationships between authority plans, and reconcile those areas of the estate where there is likely to be competition for pupil numbers. Although the controlled and maintained sectors have achieved a degree of rationalisation in recent times,

albeit within their sectors, planning has focused for too long on individual schools rather than taking a broader more strategic view of the need for provision.

- 8.16 The reconciliation of plans across the sectors suggests a difficult role for DE, particularly given that plans are often developed on different bases and to different timescales. This results in inequalities, inefficiencies, over provision and different approaches to implementing policy. While there is an emphasis within DE on identifying and addressing potential duplication of provision, the current planning processes, which do not address the overall investment needs of each area, continue to provide an oversupply of pupil places.

Inconsistent Planning of the Estate

- 8.17 As already stated, Integrated and Irish-medium schools are planned and established in response to demonstrated demand, whereas controlled and maintained schools are planned on the basis of projected demand. This inconsistency in planning approach is problematic, as it systematically contributes to the oversupply of pupil places in the schools' estate. For example, the controlled and maintained estates are currently planned, and validated by DE, on the basis of the known provision of pupil places within existing schools in an area. The plans do not usually take account of potential future provision in the Integrated or Irish-medium sectors, as planning for provision in these sectors is essentially responsive in nature, with schools being established according to an expressed level of local demand. Given that school buildings are currently designed to have a life of at least forty years, the unforeseen emergence of an Integrated or Irish-medium school will inevitably divert some pupils away from the controlled and Catholic maintained sectors, resulting in an oversupply of pupil places in schools that were previously believed to have a stable long-term future. Currently, the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors do not have a sufficiently sound methodology for planning on the basis of projected demand in specific areas. Expressions of parental interest in Integrated or Irish-Medium schools, for example through regional surveys, do not translate into reliable data for local planning purposes.

- 8.18 This chapter has provided an appraisal of the main features of the current approach to planning the schools' estate within the current arrangements for the administration of education in Northern Ireland. The task of ensuring a match between provision of, and need for, pupil places is all the more complex in a diverse system of schools faced with a declining demand for long periods of time. The various approaches and perceptions that exist in relation to planning the estate indicate that there is currently no agreed basis for balancing the competing needs of optimising the use of capital resources in the education system with enabling parents to access a school that embodies their preferred ethos. The main problem is the lack of integration, co-ordination and consistency between the planning activities of the education authorities. This problem, and other issues raised in the chapter, need to be tackled through a radically different approach. Chapter 9 addresses the issues and sets out a more strategic approach to planning the schools' estate.

CHAPTER 9: PLANNING: A STRATEGIC APPROACH

- 9.1 Chapter 8 provided an appraisal of the main features of the current approach to planning the schools' estate within the existing arrangements for the administration of education in Northern Ireland. It concluded that the problems inherent in these planning arrangements are such that a radically different approach is required. This chapter addresses those issues, explores key considerations in approaches to planning, and provides the basis for the Review's recommendations on strategic planning of the schools' estate. It also takes account of the impending changes in the administrative structures for education and the likely functions of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), to which reference was made in Chapter 2.
- 9.2 The stated goal of the capital investment programme is a "fit for purpose schools' estate, efficiently delivered and managed", where fitness of purpose is measured in terms of sufficiency, suitability and condition of accommodation. The objective of the estate planning process is to provide a sufficiency of school places through the appropriate mix of schools, of the right size, in the right locations. As stated in Chapter 2, there is widespread agreement that current planning, procurement, and delivery arrangements are inadequate to achieve this objective in a cost-effective manner and on the scale required within acceptable time frames. Nor, without a radical reconfiguration of the schools' estate, is it possible to fund improvements that will provide all schools with suitable accommodation and facilities that make for a stimulating, safe and healthy learning environment. The long-term development and maintenance of the estate need to be planned to ensure cost-effective use of public funds, and to avoid placing unsustainable demands on capital and recurrent expenditure to the overall detriment of schools. The challenge is how to make best use of funding to ensure that communities are well served by sustainable, educationally effective and efficiently functioning schools, optimising the use of their facilities for the good of all through, where appropriate, agreed models of collaboration and sharing. Capital investment and sustainable operational costs need to be considered together in any new build. It is also essential that any strategy for the schools' estate should take account of the Further Education estate since it too provides education and training for 14-19 year olds. The importance of preventing wasteful and avoidable duplication

in terms of curricular provision, teaching expertise, accommodation and resources is developed in Chapter 10.

Planning Principles

9.3 Our consultation paper set out a number of principles to underpin the planning of the schools' estate to ensure that communities are served by successful schools that:

- provide high quality educational experiences and outcomes for all pupils;
- reflect the pluralist nature of Northern Ireland;
- ensure equality, accessibility, diversity and parental choice;
- taken together, are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the community;
- are educationally and financially viable;
- operate cost-effectively, maximising expenditure on the things that really matter in respect of quality and standards;
- are affordable and sustainable in the long-term;
- optimise the use of their facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing; and
- represent good value in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure.

9.4 This set of principles, endorsed overwhelmingly in consultation, provides a foundation for planning. Some of the principles are in tension, but they are not contradictory. There is, for example, a trade-off between choice and diversity, and the notions of affordability and good value in respect of capital and recurrent expenditure through provision that is cost-effective and sustainable. This tension is magnified in the existing patterns of provision when there has been a reluctance to address the challenge of the implications of falling enrolments. Nonetheless, it is clear that there is considerable scope for reconciling these competing interests.

Area-based Planning

- 9.5 The concept of planning schools on an area basis within a strategic framework of vision, policy, principles and guidelines provided by the Department of Education (DE) was strongly endorsed in consultation. The creation of that shared vision is an essential prelude to giving direction to and harmonising strategic decisions and achieving policy connectedness. This is a vital leadership task for DE. DE's policy approach on "sustainable schools" will be a key element of an overall framework. The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) should have overall operational responsibility for the strategic planning of the schools' estate, within the framework established by DE. Until ESA has acquired the capacity to exercise its estate planning function, DE should act quickly and decisively to initiate, and take forward, area-based planning as soon as possible in the year 2007 with the full support of the relevant education authorities. DE should also establish a provisional timetable, to be refined and taken forward by the Education and Skills Authority, specifying target dates for key steps in setting up and implementing the area-based planning strategy. In view of the new approach to planning, future school building projects should only be approved after area-based planning is established, and previously announced capital projects which are currently underway should be reviewed for their consistency with the area-based approach according to their stage of development. With the establishment of ESA, DE should provide appropriate resources for each sector to ensure that they have the capacity to support the planning of the schools' estate.
- 9.6 A number of factors will influence the identification of suitable areas and that which distinguishes one area from another. Such areas might be referred to as local areas, with the term "local" having a relative meaning. Areas should comprise coherent sets of nursery, primary and post-primary schools, as well as accessible further education provision, and as far as possible lie within a single local council area to facilitate links between education planning and community planning. The locations of provision by the Special Schools Sector are additional factors to be taken into account in the specification of a particular area. Importantly, area-based planning of the schools' estate will facilitate an area-based approach to the planning of curricular provision. To ensure coherence and consistency in education policy, the planning of the schools' estate should harmonise with policy on the curriculum and with that in such areas as Extended

Schools, special educational needs, admissions procedures and criteria, and transport.

- 9.7 The PriceWaterhouseCoopers' (PWC) report took the view that, at local level, planning should focus on "education communities", defined by reference to the pattern of pupil flows in an area that normally centre on one or more post-primary schools with its associated feeder schools. Such flows are typically determined by physical geography, ease of travel and so on. From this perspective, an education community is a geographic area in which the majority of children living within the area go to school in the area and the proportion of children travelling outside the area to attend school is small (e.g. less than 5 per cent). Identifying such communities allows planners to anticipate the knock-on effects of school development plans within an area, while minimising cross-boundary effects. Some schools draw their pupils from a wide geographical area that crosses both local council and other boundaries, a factor that needs to be accounted for in the process of area planning through mapping patterns of enrolment and future expectations. Data are available at district council and at more local levels to identify areas and flows of pupils across area boundaries. In some instances an area might be defined simply by a rural town and its hinterland. There are many schools that are located at a removed site from the communities that they serve and consideration needs to be given to the concept of re-location of schools closer to their communities.
- 9.8 The concept of area planning is closely linked with the notion of community; thus the planning process needs to be based on a proper understanding of local communities. A community cannot simply be equated with the people who live in a geographical area. Communities are defined not just by geography, but are characterised by common bonds. Local communities may be distinguished by aspects of life that are not shared but find identity in what they have in common. The local school has been cherished as a very important element in any given community. The loss of such a school can be perceived as a major blow to people living there. The importance to local communities of the parish or village primary school or the school serving a distinctive rural community is well established. Government is committed to "rural proofing" all policies, that is assessing them for their potential to impact unfairly on rural populations in comparison with those living in urban areas, or for opportunities missed to utilise rural resources as part of policy thinking. Clearly, the planning of educational provision in rural

areas should be subject to rural proofing. For the Catholic sector, the parish school, together with the parish church, is the heart of the parish community, especially in a rural area. Such links are not confined to the Catholic sector.

Planning Process

- 9.9 The planning challenge is not just about managing down the over-capacity in the schools' estate, imperative though that is, but establishing a sound basis for anticipating the pattern of future demand in response to a highly complex set of dynamics in the context of the long-term decline in the school population. There needs to be a long-term strategic plan for the provision of school places in Northern Ireland that achieves the best practicable match of school places to the school population in each local area. Planning at local area level should ensure cost-effective use of capital funds to provide sustainable schools that, taken together, meet the expressed needs and projected requirements of each sector within the area, and the needs of the community as a whole. In the interests of value for money, school accommodation that becomes available through rationalisation and re-organisation should be appraised for its potential as an alternative to new builds to meet identified sector or community requirements. For example, the duty of DE to encourage and facilitate integrated education and Irish-medium education can militate against the most efficient use of the current schools' estate. Ways of accommodating such schools within premises or sites already in use, but that have suitable surplus accommodation and space, should be considered. As indicated in Chapter 7, some spare capacity will be required for structural reasons in a multi-sectoral system, to allow for parental choice, and to accommodate inevitable uncertainties in forecasting demand.
- 9.10 To ensure effective, efficient and participative procedures for area-based planning, ESA should establish, lead and co-ordinate planning groups that are representative of all the educational interests, and bring informed knowledge of local communities and circumstances to the planning process. The proposed approach to planning at area level acknowledges the established roles of the existing sectors, not in isolation from one another, as has been typical of past planning, but within a collaborative approach. Existing sectors should have the right to continue to represent the needs, expectations and ethos of their sector, and their understanding of the dynamics of local communities throughout the planning process. Increasingly, however, sectors should consider not just their

contribution to that part for which they have responsibility but their contribution to the system as a whole. A *Shared Future* calls for proposals on new schools and re-organisation or rationalisation of schools, to demonstrate that options for collaboration and sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and explored fully. Collaborative approaches to the sharing of facilities and resources should be standard practice, while ensuring that the particular identity or ethos of an individual school is preserved wherever possible. Although the sectors will play their part in ascertaining demand for provision within the sector, and can bring such information into a collaborative planning process, there is a case for consulting directly with the community on a set of possible options for schools in the area, for instance in the context of rationalisation of provision. It would be imperative for such a process to be free from manipulation and exploitation and to avoid the politicisation of educational planning. Such an approach opens up the possibility of establishing schools of new management types to serve all the pupils in a community, for example a community school or a jointly managed school, including a jointly managed church school. Cross-sectoral collaboration and cross-community sharing will be central to protecting local provision through cost-effective proposals. Whatever the consultation process, the outcomes in terms of proposals need to conform to the principle of parental choice, coupled with due regard to the cost to the public purse.

- 9.11 There should be an agreed system-wide set of parameters within which strategic planning of the schools' estate should take place and for assessing the likely demand for schools of different types. This will involve DE, ESA and other key stakeholders, including the various school sectors. DE and ESA should establish quality indicators and other criteria and use them consistently in conjunction with a sustainable schools policy, to assess the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of the educational provision in an area; the sufficiency, suitability and condition of the schools' accommodation and facilities; the nature and quality of the connection between the schools and the community; and the extent to which the provision reflects value for money. Using the specific quality indicators and other criteria, ESA should undertake a detailed area-based audit of provision (including that in Further Education) and, having done so, it should maintain and regularly update the data. Moreover, ESA should be proactive in monitoring and reviewing provision. Planning should be on a whole-system basis, so that the interactions between proposals for contiguous areas are fully worked through before investment decisions are made. Planning should take account of

the projected needs of all sectors based on a consistent approach to estimating long-term enrolments (LTE). This means planning for anticipated rather than demonstrated demand in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors. Forecasts should consider all the relevant determinants of demand to the greatest practicable extent, including demographics, pupil movements, population shifts, economic development, parental choice and changes in school performance and sustainability.

- 9.12 The proposals that result from the local area planning process – involving intra-sectoral, cross-sectoral and cross-community approaches – will need to be reconciled and rationalised at central level into a coherent plan for the area. Evidence to the Review was divided on which body should exercise this role. Some see it as a function for ESA. The Catholic sector, however, has concerns that such a role for ESA could be in conflict with its ownership of the controlled estate. Their view is that the body which makes the ultimate decisions on proposals should have no ownership role for schools. The Review is of the opinion that ESA should exercise this function, but that it will be important to allay the concerns expressed through arrangements that ensure fairness and consistency and for which ESA are accountable, in the knowledge that the ultimate decision lies with the Minister.

Rationalisation

- 9.13 The number of schools in Northern Ireland that are too small to be educationally viable, or to be reasonably cost-effective, makes rationalisation inevitable. Deficiencies in the suitability and condition of the accommodation add urgency to the need for improvement. In the primary phase, where there are many small schools, often in close proximity, ESA should take a proactive approach and encourage, prompt and facilitate streamlining and rationalisation at area level. Rationalisation should be based on firm principles and conditions. As an overarching principle in assessing the long term-term future of a school, the quality of the education of the pupils should be paramount, examined alongside social and community needs and benefits, and financial considerations. The significance of enrolments for school viability was considered in Chapter 7.
- 9.14 It is understandable that governors, families, teachers and others develop loyalties to specific schools and work or lobby to support and preserve them, but in the interests of the children, such loyalties need to be tempered with both realism and

an understanding of the benefits that alternative provision can offer. Timely measures need to be implemented to address the continued operation of a school that falls below a viability threshold without any sign of likely increase in numbers. It is critical for all those involved in rationalisation to foster a climate in which rationalisation and re-organisation, through the construction of new schools, will be welcomed and not rejected within communities. It is important that the focus is not on the deficits in the current position but rather on the real benefits that alternative and better provision can bring for the children, and indeed for the community. When considering the long-term future of a school, ESA and the appropriate sector, should not take into account short-term, and uncertain, funding arrangements (such as those contingent on certain initiatives) that can distort or conceal the financial viability of a school.

- 9.15 There should be early intervention and investigation when there are signs that a school's enrolment is falling and there is a budgetary difficulty. The causes of these should be identified and, if possible, addressed, and a long-term strategy put in place – for example, closure, amalgamation, 'integration' into/use of another school's premises or, in certain circumstances, a form of federation/confederation with another school – rather than leaving decisions to a reach a crisis or for the school to wither away. Not to do so, places inordinate stress on the staff; puts the parents in an unenviable position (loyalties being divided between staying with the school or moving on), and, most of all, it fails children and young people. In the light of submissions to the Review, DE should review existing procedures with the aim of accelerating the rationalisation and procurement process.

Schools and Community Planning

- 9.16 The planning of the schools' estate should, as far as possible, be co-ordinated with planning in such fields as health; social services; adult education; youth provision; sports, arts and recreation; and community regeneration and development. Moreover, planning of educational provision will need to take account of community planning in the new local government system. Although there is currently some use of the schools' estate for other activities – such as adult learning or non-formal learning, including youth work – the practice is uneven and facilities are generally underused, not least during the long vacation. The use of the schools' estate in more versatile and creative ways has the potential to develop further a school's core functions and those services that extend to other

schools, the community and service providers. Opportunities could be created to develop learning communities, foster increased parental interest in education (for parents themselves and for their children), particularly in areas of social deprivation, and to encourage education to be more highly valued in such communities. For example, following an audit of community needs, there might be a focus on family support and development of all aspects of family learning (including parenting skills), citizenship (complementing the provision in the revised curriculum), community awareness, health and well-being.

- 9.17 The Extended Schools initiative (funded through the Children's and Young People's Package) has considerable potential in developing a wider community role for schools. Government has stated its commitment to reducing social, health and educational differentials through the Package by providing funding for extending the role of schools to become centres of the community by offering services and learning opportunities before and after the traditional school day. DE will soon assume responsibility for all early years' provision; there is an opportunity (and reason), therefore, to explore the possibility of establishing children's centres (as has been done in England) based on the nursery schools already 'in situ'. In England, the Sure Start Children's Centre programme is based on the integrated provision of education, care, family support, and health services as key factors in determining good outcomes for children and their parents. The concept itself is not new. Sure Start Children's Centres are about building on existing good practice rather than starting afresh. A natural follow-on from the Government's commitment to reducing social, health and educational differentials would be the establishment of Children's Centres in Northern Ireland. For the most part, nursery schools in Northern Ireland traditionally draw from all traditions and already act as very sound 'hubs' for the broader use of communities, and hence could play a pivotal role in this respect.
- 9.18 Extending school provision into these new areas of service has major implications for the types of buildings, for the range of accommodation needed, and for funding. There needs to be joined-up planning at central and local government levels to ensure that these new policy directions are recognised fully within any review of the schools' estate, including effective funding mechanisms.
- 9.19 A strategic approach to planning the schools' estate provides a fresh opportunity for co-ordinated planning of sports facilities, involving the bodies providing sports

facilities at central and local level. In their submission to the Review, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland advocated a co-ordinated approach to the provision of new sports facilities and the refurbishment of existing facilities in the schools' estate, taking account of provision at other schools in close proximity; other provision in the area (district council facilities, sports clubs etc.); the sports offered by the school; and travel time, and usage patterns. With regard to specification and design, the Council urged that the provision of new sports facilities and, where practicable, the refurbishment of existing facilities within the schools' estate, should meet the specification and design standards for the respective sports, and follow industry best practice. School facilities should be made available to outside groups at reasonable cost, with schools and other providers working together to share the provision and maintenance of sports facilities.

Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

- 9.20 Chapter 7 described the main features of the current review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion established by DE. Given the purpose and themes of the review and the framework for the identification, assessment and provision that may be proposed for supporting children across a wide range of special educational need, the outcomes of the review will have implications for the planning of the schools' estate. These include accommodating school-based support, collaboration between all schools, and the location of special schools, specialist services, and multi-disciplinary teams.

Planning Data

- 9.21 There is significant potential for good quality analysis to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of estate planning. ESA and DE should establish and maintain a data collection and analysis capability, availing of modern data-gathering technology, as a service to all the education partners to enable them to access and use up-to-date and relevant data to help take full account of the determinants of demand, and of the interactions between geographic areas and sectors. Submissions to the Review have highlighted the potential of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland's (OSNI's) Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System (NINIS) to improve the range

and quality of planning data. Not only are data available at local council level, they may also be accessed at sub-council level, for example at output and super output levels.

9.22 Data that appear relevant to schools' estate planning include:

- suitability and condition of each school;
- school capacities, sufficiency of places, and surplus capacity;
- school enrolments over a period of time;
- enrolment projections;
- population shifts and trends across a range of age bands;
- urban planning details and rural sustainability;
- levels of socio-economic deprivation;
- planned economic development;
- urban planning and rural sustainability;
- new housing developments;
- religious make-up of the area;
- home-to-school travel times and distances;
- potential impact of infrastructure investment;
- pupil travel-to-school patterns;
- pupil flows between educational communities;
- existing and future transport links;
- school transport costs;
- the potential for extended school services; and
- community needs analysis.

- 9.23 The Review supports the PWC advice that planning should be based on enrolments projected over a longer time period (PWC suggested fifteen to twenty years) to achieve a closer relationship between the planning of capital investment and projected pupil demand over the life of the school building. The inevitable uncertainty of long-term forecasts should be explicitly recognised by looking at ranges as well as central estimates of long-term enrolment, and by having, at least in outline, contingency plans for dealing with enrolments that are materially higher or lower than the central estimate. The accuracy of projections should be monitored to compare forecasted demand for school places with realised demand, as a basis for improving the quality of forecasting.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.24 This chapter has mapped out the main features of an area-based approach to planning the schools' estate within a strategic framework of vision, principles, policy and procedures, and established an important link between the planning of the estate and the planning of curricular provision in an area. It has identified key roles and responsibilities for the education partners working in collaboration, emphasised the important leadership role that DE must play, and highlighted the overall operational responsibility of ESA for the strategic planning of the schools' estate. It has drawn attention to the importance of joint planning of education and other services, not least in the context of community planning at local council level, and to a wider role for schools. The chapter has also addressed the sensitive but vital issue of rationalisation. Finally, it has highlighted the crucial significance of promoting a positive outlook on change at every level, with the focus not on the deficits in the current position but rather on the real benefits that alternative and better provision can bring for children and, indeed, to the whole community.
- 9.25 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:
11. The Education and Skills Authority should plan the schools' estate on a local area basis, within a strategic framework of vision, policy, principles, and guidelines provided by the Department of Education.
 12. Within the strategic framework established by the Department of Education, the Education and Skills Authority should have overall operational responsibility for the strategic planning of the schools' estate.

13. Until the Education and Skills Authority has acquired the capacity to exercise its estate planning function, the Department of Education should act quickly and decisively to take forward area-based planning as soon as possible in the year 2007, with the full support of the relevant education authorities.
14. The Department of Education should establish a provisional timetable, to be refined and taken forward by the Education and Skills Authority, specifying target dates for the following key steps in setting up and implementing the area-based planning strategy: (a) the Department of Education's strategic framework of vision, policy, principles, and guidelines; (b) the specification of local areas; (c) the review of local provision; (d) the initiation and conclusion of local planning; (e) the submission of area proposals to the Education and Skills Authority; (f) the finalised and approved area plans; and (g) the implementation of individual plans for the estate as a whole.
15. Future school building projects should be approved only after area-based planning is established, and previously announced capital projects that are currently underway should be reviewed, according to their stage of development, for their consistency with the area-based approach.
16. Local areas should comprise coherent sets of nursery, primary and post-primary schools, and, as appropriate, special schools, as well as accessible further education provision, and as far as possible lie within a single local council's boundaries.
17. Planning should ensure that proposals for contiguous local areas are considered together, and that their interrelationships are identified and taken into account, before investment decisions are made.
18. Area-based plans should ensure that each area is served by sustainable schools that provide high quality education for all pupils and that, taken together, balance the expressed wishes of parents and the projected requirements of each school sector, with the cost-effective use of capital and recurrent funding.

19. To ensure effective, efficient and participative procedures for area-based planning, the Education and Skills Authority should establish, lead and co-ordinate planning groups that are representative of all the educational interests and that bring informed knowledge of local communities and circumstances to the planning process.
20. The process of area planning should incorporate intra-sectoral, cross-sectoral and cross-community considerations, and aim to achieve maximum agreement at local level on the proposals that are to be submitted to the Education and Skills Authority.
21. Planning should be open to the possibility of establishing schools of new management types as a result of cross-sector or cross-community agreement to maintain local educational provision.
22. In accordance with *A Shared Future*, proposals for new schools, or re-organisation, or rationalisation of schools should demonstrate that options for collaboration and sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored.
23. In area-based planning, the Education and Skills Authority should have the option of consulting directly with communities to ascertain views on options for educational provision, with the information obtained being considered alongside the assessments of need made by the various school sectors.
24. With the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority, the Department of Education should provide appropriate resources for each sector to ensure that they have the capacity to support the planning of the schools' estate.
25. The Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority should establish quality indicators and other criteria and use these consistently, in conjunction with a sustainable schools policy, to assess the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of the educational provision in an area; the sufficiency, suitability and condition of the schools' accommodation and facilities; the nature and quality of the connection between the schools and the community; arrangements for

sharing and collaboration; and the extent to which the provision reflects value for money.

26. Using the specified quality indicators and other criteria, the Education and Skills Authority should undertake a detailed area-based audit of provision (including that in Further Education), and, having done so, it should maintain and regularly up-date the resulting data.
27. The Education and Skills Authority should regularly monitor area-based provision against the quality indicators and other criteria, identify factors that suggest a review of provision is required, promote innovative ideas for consideration, prompt and encourage linkages, initiate discussion with the sectors and community interests, and work with others to remove hindrances to desirable developments.
28. To ensure coherence and consistency in education policy, the planning of the schools' estate should harmonise with policy on the curriculum, and with policy in such areas as Extended Schools, special needs provision, youth provision, admissions procedures and criteria, and transport.
29. The planning of the schools' estate should, as far as possible, be co-ordinated with planning in such fields as health; social services; adult education; youth provision; sports, arts and recreation; and community regeneration and development.
30. The planning of the schools' estate and of the Further Education estate should be co-ordinated in order to optimise the use of accommodation and resources across the education system.
31. School accommodation that becomes available through rationalisation and re-organisation should be appraised for its potential as an alternative to new builds to meet identified sector or community requirements for additional provision.
32. The forecasting of enrolments should consider all the relevant determinants of demand to the greatest practicable extent, including demographics, pupil movements, population shifts, economic

development, parental choice, and changes in school performance and sustainability.

33. To inform the siting of new schools, maximum travel distances and maximum travel times for all pupils should be established.
34. A data collection and analysis capability, availing of modern data gathering technology, should be established and maintained by the Department of Education and the Education and Skills Authority, as a service to all the education partners, to enable them to access and use up-to-date and relevant data, and to take full account of the determinants of demand and the interactions between geographic areas and sectors.
35. As soon as there are signs that a school's enrolment is falling and there is a budgetary difficulty, the Education and Skills Authority should identify and address the causes and, if these can not be addressed, consider the options for future provision and implement that which is effective and efficient in the interests of learners.
36. When considering the long-term future of a school, the Education and Skills Authority and the appropriate sector should not take account of short-term funding arrangements (such as those contingent on certain initiatives) that can distort or mask the financial viability of a school.
37. The Department of Education should review the existing procedures with the aim of accelerating the rationalisation and procurement processes.
38. The approach to re-organisation should not focus on the deficits in the current position, but rather concentrate on demonstrating the gains and benefits that alternative and better provision can bring to learners and, indeed, to the entire community.
39. School design and schedules of accommodation should be amended to take account of such factors as: the changing nature of schools and their functions in local communities; the potential for using new technologies for teaching and learning; the requirement to ensure that the schools' estate is environmentally sustainable; and the provision of

areas within the school that are conducive to social interaction and individual study.

40. The planning, to quality standards, and the use of sports facilities in schools should be set within a co-ordinated strategic approach, involving bodies concerned with sports facility provision at central and local level.
41. School sports facilities should be made available to outside groups at reasonable cost, with schools and other providers working together to share the provision and maintenance of these facilities.
42. The planning of the schools' estate should take account of policy on Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, including such aspects as accommodation, school based support, and collaboration between all schools, specialist services, and multi disciplinary teams.

CHAPTER 10: COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FURTHER EDUCATION

- 10.1 This chapter focuses on collaboration between schools and Further Education, not as a separate development, but as a key component in arrangements for 14–19-year olds, involving collaboration between schools, and between schools, Further Education and training organisations. It examines the rationale for collaboration in the context of the Entitlement Framework and explores policy considerations and operational matters. It describes current initiatives by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to develop collaboration between schools and Further Education. It also describes consortia arrangements in a Local Educational Authority (LEA) in Wales. Finally, it comments on the quality of current links between schools and Further Education and identifies key policy issues that need to be addressed in developing effective collaborative arrangements in the interests of all 14–19 year olds.

Curriculum Entitlement Framework

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- 10.2 In December 2005, the then Minister for Education, Angela Smith MP, announced *New Post-Primary Arrangements*. Its reforms include a more flexible and less prescriptive curriculum at Key Stage 4 (KS4) and the concept of a Curriculum Entitlement Framework for 14–19 year olds, which has been referred to in previous chapters. The concept of the Entitlement Framework emerged from the work of the Post-Primary Review Group (also known as the Costello Group). It was developed to give pupils access to learning pathways that offer a broader and more flexible curriculum so that pupils could choose a blend of courses, including general (academic) and applied (vocational or professional/technical) courses that best meet their needs, aptitudes, aspirations and interests.
- 10.3 The anticipated timescale for implementing the Entitlement Framework requires schools, from September 2009, to provide access to a minimum of 24 courses at KS4, and schools with sixth forms, 27 courses at post-16. At least one-third of the courses must be general (academic) and at least one-third applied (vocational or professional/technical). All courses must be accredited within the National

Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Entitlement Framework will not require schools to offer a set list of courses, and schools may choose the 24 or 27 courses they consider the most suitable for their pupils. The introduction of the Entitlement Framework is intended to address inequalities in access to educational opportunities evident in the current arrangements for young people in the 14–19 age range. Detailed information on the Entitlement Framework, its introduction, and its development to full implementation is provided in a series of guidance documents issued by DE.

Current Curricular Provision

10.4 The Entitlement Framework is a response to the wide variation in schools' provision at KS4 and at post-16, and to the resulting inequality in the choices open to pupils. At present the educational provision, and choices available to pupils, depend largely on where they live and the type and size of school attended. The variations illustrated in the tables that follow exemplify the gap between the current provision of most post-primary schools in Northern Ireland and the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The information available does not permit analysis of the curriculum in terms of academic and applied subjects

Key Stage 4

10.5 For the purpose of the analysis of KS4 provision, schools with no KS4 pupils have been excluded, as well as schools subject to closure or amalgamation. For this key stage, the tables include subject entries for full GCSE courses, GCSE short courses, and GNVQ Part 1 qualifications. Analysis of Table 10.1 shows that one-quarter of the schools provide 17 or fewer subjects, half provide 19 or fewer subjects, and three-quarters provide 22 or fewer subjects.

10.6 The relationship between school enrolment and number of subjects provided is shown in Table 10.2. As expected, there is a marked contrast in the range of subjects offered by schools in the smallest band and those in the two largest bands. The most striking finding is the considerable variation in the number of subject entries by schools within the same band.

Table 10.1: Subject Entries for GCSE Courses^a, 2004/05

Number of Subject Entries	Number of Schools	Cumulative Number of Schools
6	1	1
9	1	2
10	2	4
12	3	7
13	3	10
14	5	15
15	12	27
16	20	47
17	15	62
18	19	81
19	24	105
20	21	126
21	19	145
22	24	169
23	22	191
24	17	208
25	8	216
26	6	222
27	3	225
28	1	226

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes subject entries for GCSE full and short courses, vocational double awards, and GNVQ Part 1.

- 10.7 Although based on curricular provision as reflected by subject entries in 2004/05, the preceding analysis highlights significant challenges for schools in providing their pupils with access to the Curriculum Entitlement at KS4.

Table 10.2: Range of Subject Entries at GCSE^a by Enrolment Band, 2004/05

Enrolment Band	Number of Schools	Range of Subjects
0-249	21	6-17
250-499	64	12-27
500-749	53	15-27
750-999	52	18-26
1000+	36	19-28

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes subject entries for GCSE full and short courses, vocational double awards, and GNVQ Part 1.

Post-16

- 10.8 For the purpose of the analysis of post-16 provision, schools with no sixth forms have been excluded, as have those subject to closure or amalgamation. For this key stage, the tables include subject entries for GCE A-levels, GCE A2s, and Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) six-unit and twelve-unit awards. Analysis of Table 10.3 shows that one-quarter of the schools provide five or fewer subjects, provision that represents a very restricted choice for post-16 pupils. Half of the schools provide 16 or fewer subjects and three-quarters provide 21 or fewer subjects.
- 10.9 The relationship between school enrolment and number of subjects offered is shown in Table 10.4. It highlights great disparity in the number of subjects provided by schools within the same enrolment band. The Review does not have the information necessary to explain these wide variations.
- 10.10 The number of pupils in the sixth form is a key factor in the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their pupils in the post-16 stage without disproportionate expenditure. Table 10.5 presents a distribution of sixth-form enrolments. The table shows that of the 109 secondary schools with sixth-form pupils, about one-fifth have sixth forms with fewer than 40 pupils and over half have enrolments of fewer than 80 pupils. The source data show that only one-third have sixth-form

Table 10.3: Subject Entries at A-level^a, 2004/05

Number of Subject Entries	Number of Schools	Cumulative Number of Schools
1	14	14
2	10	24
3	11	35
4	4	39
5	3	42
6	5	47
7	3	50
8	3	53
9	5	58
10	4	62
11	4	66
12	2	68
13	6	74
14	3	77
15	3	80
16	7	87
17	6	93
18	10	103
19	9	112
20	13	125
21	13	138
22	8	146
23	6	152
24	5	157
25	5	162
26	3	165
27	1	166
30	1	167
31	1	168

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes subject entries for A-levels, A2s, and Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education Six and Twelve Unit Awards.

Table 10.4: Range of Subject Entries at A-level^a by Enrolment Band, 2004/05

Size Band	Number of Schools	Range of Subjects
0-249	4	1-3
250-499	35	1-22
500-749	44	1-24
750-999	50	1-26
1000+	35	10-31

Source: DE.

Note:

^aIncludes subject entries for A-levels, A2s, and Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education Six and Twelve Unit Awards.

enrolments of more than 100 pupils. The significance of sixth-form enrolments was considered in detail in Chapter 7.

Table 10.5: Number of Pupils in Sixth Forms, 2005/06

Sixth-form Enrolment Band	Number of Schools					
	Year 13		Years 14-15		Total	
	Secondary	Grammar	Secondary	Grammar	Secondary	Grammar
0 to 39 pupils	52	0	70	0	23	0
40 to 79 pupils	36	6	31	10	36	0
80 to 119 pupils	14	33	6	31	23	1
120 to 159 pupils	4	19	0	20	13	7
160 to 199 pupils	2	6	2	5	7	15
200 to 239 pupils	0	4	0	2	4	16
240 + pupils	1	1	0	1	3	30
Total number of schools with sixth forms	109	69	109	69	109	69

Source: DE.

- 10.11 Although based on subject entries for 2004/05, the preceding analysis poses serious questions about the feasibility of sixth-form provision in many schools. It also highlights the challenges for schools in providing their post-16 pupils with access to the Curriculum Entitlement.

Collaboration

- 10.12 From the preceding statistics on curricular provision it is clear that the implementation of the Entitlement Framework will require co-operation and collaboration between schools, and between schools, Further Education and approved training organisations. Furthermore, the analysis also reinforces serious questions, already raised, about the educational viability of smaller schools, and of smaller sixth forms. Collaborative arrangements cannot be regarded as an alternative to avoiding the decisions that must be taken to re-organise Northern Ireland's post-primary schools into a system of sustainable schools, well placed to maximise the mutual benefits of partnership but also capable of managing the professional, organisational and financial issues involved. Moreover, the benefits of collaboration must be weighed against the costs and the manageability of the arrangements.
- 10.13 Submissions to the Review endorsed the value of partnership and collaboration in providing increased choice and opportunity for young people of all ages, but particularly those aged 14-19. The need for collaboration is further strengthened by the requirement that at least one-third of courses on offer by a school should be of an applied (vocational or professional/technical) nature. Developing the quality of collaboration that is crucial to providing a high standard of education to learners in the 14-19 years age range is a fundamental task for all the partners. Although this chapter concentrates on collaboration between schools and Further Education, partnerships between schools and Further Educations needs to be viewed as a component of a coherent plan for 14-19 provision, involving all schools, Further Education and training organisations in local areas.
- 10.14 The Costello Group outlined its vision for education for 14-19 year olds based on the following principles:
- pupils should be central to planning of provision;
 - all pupils should have access to a wide, balanced and flexible mix of educational provision;

- schools are of varying types and should be seen as of equal value; and
- schools should operate in collaboration with neighbouring schools and further education institutions and other providers, for the benefit of their own pupils and of all pupils in the locality.

The Costello Group appreciated that realising this vision would require engagement and commitment at local level and strong leadership and co-ordination at area and strategic (regional) level, together with the necessary human and financial resources. It urged that all the parties concerned should be involved from the outset, as equal partners, in helping to determine how services should be provided, and considered this especially important if multi-sector solutions are to develop.

- 10.15 The Review endorses this view and also the Costello Group's advice that schools should remain at the centre of a system to develop new arrangements at local level. The Review also agrees with the Costello Group's emphasis on the development of collaboration locally, but within a framework of operational and strategic planning and development, to ensure consistency and coherence in provision, so that young people, regardless of where they live, will have access to the same range and quality of education. There should also be a strategic dimension to planning at local level, in terms of both curriculum provision and institutional roles, to ensure that all learners have access to an appropriate curriculum and that organisations optimise the use of their resources. It would be unacceptable to have a series of loosely coupled arrangements between individual schools and colleges of further education (the generic term college of further education is taken to include institutes of further and higher education). Enrolment and, for those schools offering provision at post-16, the size of the sixth form, are important factors in determining the extent of collaboration a school may "require" to meet the Curriculum Entitlement. Regardless of their relative "self-sufficiency", however, it is important that all schools should take part in local collaborative arrangements for mutual and common benefit.
- 10.16 Collaborative arrangements are much more difficult in sparsely populated rural areas with poor public transport services. Not only in such circumstances, but also more generally, alternatives to pupils travelling from their school should be developed. Possibilities include college lecturers travelling to schools, and the use of educational technologies to facilitate online learning communities.

Partnerships that involve crossing sensitive community boundaries are likely to encounter obstacles, so any proposals involving crossing such boundaries will require considerable careful preparation and greater resources to attract local champions and active community support, and to minimise any sense of threat.

- 10.17 The quality and standard of courses depends on the quality of teaching, the suitability, quantity and use of resources, and the viability of the teaching group. All courses require suitably qualified and experienced teachers, including, for some courses, teachers with appropriate industrial experience. Some courses require specialist equipment and facilities, including industry standard resources. All of these factors need to be taken into account in planning for the optimum use of the human and material resources in schools and in Further Education to support curricular provision for 14-19 year olds.
- 10.18 Chapter 9 emphasised that the strategy for planning the schools' estate should take account of the Further Education estate since it too provides education and training for 14 –19 year olds. To date, however, there has been little strategic drive to plan learning opportunities, and accommodation and resource requirements across schools, Further Education and training sectors. Inspection findings show that more effective collation and sharing of information on the use of the school and college estates are needed to identify spare capacity and constraints. Planning should ensure that there is no wasteful duplication in schools of professional, technical and vocational facilities, when collaboration with a local campus of a college would be feasible. In practice, for example, schools make little use of colleges' specialist equipment and resources available within the Centres of Excellence – designated by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). There is concern that some schools are providing vocational (or professional/technical) programmes in areas where they have neither the pre-requisite capital equipment nor the vocational specialists to deliver the programmes effectively.

Vocational Enhancement Programme

- 10.19 Following the Governments' acceptance of the recommendations of the Costello Report, DE and DEL launched a pilot Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP). Now in its third year, the VEP involves all the further education colleges working with approximately 190 schools to provide professional and technical courses to

more than 14,000 pupils. The VEP is a transitional programme, the aim of which is to provide the two Departments with the opportunity to test models of effective collaborative working, to improve the quality and effectiveness of partnerships, and to disseminate good practice to schools and colleges.

10.20 An independent evaluation of the first year of the 2004/05 phase of VEP has been published and the report of the evaluation of the 2005/06 year is awaited. The first evaluation identified positive aspects of collaboration between schools and colleges, with tangible benefits for the relatively small number of pupils, schools and colleges involved. It also identified a number of obstacles to collaborative working, such as timetabling, pastoral care, difficulties with information and communication technology (ICT), and such structural issues across the two sectors as different funding systems and different qualifications of staff. For its part, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has noted reduced curriculum flexibility for young people when they opt to complete part of their programme at another school or a college of further education.

10.21 The VEP is evolving in the light of these evaluations and the changes deemed necessary by DE and DEL. For instance, DE and DEL are developing guidance on a range of matters, including pastoral care; progression routes and learning pathways; careers information, advice and guidance; different modes of delivery; service level agreements; and monitoring and evaluation of provision. In 2006/07, based on a college-led model of collaboration, schools are expected to take a more proactive approach to forming collaborative arrangements: for example, by grouping together to ensure that applications meet class size viability thresholds. The 2006/07 phase of the programme is promoting a purchaser/provider funding model within the VEP funding arrangements. The VEP funding arrangements, however, are such that part of an individual's programme is double funded; this is an issue that needs to be addressed in sustainable, normalised, collaborative arrangements.

Quality of Current Links Between Schools and Further Education

10.22 ETI has carried out a number of inspections relating to 14–19 provision. These comprise inspections of the VEP, Occupational Studies, KS4 Flexibility, Careers Education and Guidance, and two area inspections involving a sample of schools and Further Education provision in the area. These evaluations provide an

assessment of the current state of collaboration between schools and Further Education and identify issues that need to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of partnerships. Some of the findings have been incorporated into previous paragraphs. In ETI's judgement, collaboration works best when organisations are not in competition and the provision in an area is planned for strategically; when there is commitment from senior management teams; when the learners have access to good careers guidance and tutorial support; when the organisations are situated close together; when one organisation takes a lead in overseeing the provision; when there is adequate staffing; and when there is good communication to ensure that parents and learners understand the reasons for and the benefits of the arrangements.

10.23 ETI cites a few models of good practice locally on which to draw: for instance, examples of enriched provision being provided for post-16 pupils at colleges of further education – courses in computer-aided design, software development, business and marketing, employer and consumer law – or vocational qualifications for 14–16 year olds as part of a programme to provide greater flexibility at KS4. Good operational models include one in which the coming together of several small schools of different management types enabled the provision on offer at the local college of education to be wider and more inclusive; in another instance, a local forum of principals was established to consider common organisational difficulties.

10.24 Generally, however, ETI concludes that collaboration is at an early stage of development, a view supported by the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) which, while acknowledging some good links, considers that there is a considerable degree of disconnectedness in terms of planning and provision. Most of the existing partnerships in Northern Ireland are considered to be characterised by forms of co-operation in a competitive environment rather than demonstrating key features of co-ordination and collaboration. To some extent, partnerships take place almost despite an environment of competition, and are all the more commendable for that. Occasionally, though, ETI reports that co-operation is motivated more by the needs of the school rather than those of the young person, and schools and colleges may also have unrealistic, or unclear, expectations of themselves and one another.

- 10.25 The Review was interested to learn about the development of post-primary arrangements in the Neath/Port Talbot LEA. This LEA and the Swansea LEA were previously part of the larger West Glamorgan LEA, which had restructured post-primary provision by establishing a smaller number of much larger schools and introducing consortia of schools involving both small and large sixth forms. This arrangement had to be reviewed, however, in the face of the problems posed by the complex practical nature of the arrangements. A new structure for post-16 provision was created by many schools ceasing to offer sixth-form provision, while larger schools continued as 11-18 schools. The current structure in Neath/Port Talbot comprises nine 11-16 schools, most having between 800 and 1000 pupils, one 11-18 Welsh-medium school, one 11-18 Roman Catholic school, and a tertiary college based on three sites. At age 16, pupils have the option of attending an 11-18 school or a tertiary college. Most of the pupils in the 11-16 schools choose to join the tertiary college.
- 10.26 The schools and college are reported to work well as a consortium in developing a range of courses for pupils in the 14-18 age range, as well as offering comprehensive coverage of post-16 courses. Pupils at the 11-18 schools follow certain courses at the tertiary college, including GCE A-levels, and the college also provides vocational (or professional/technical) courses for the 14-18 year age range. This kind of partnership is said to have allowed maximum use of capital and recurrent expenditure over a period of years. Funding for all post-16 education is devolved from the Welsh National Assembly directly to consortia of this nature for joint decisions to be taken about the most appropriate ways to use the finance available, whereas funding for pre-16 education is provided through the LEA. Pupils have benefited from the arrangement in that they can be taught in classes of reasonable size throughout their time at school, have a full range of subject choice at KS4 and a considerably wider choice of post-16 courses and subjects. The geography of the area is such that the pupils travel only modest distances to school or college. Teachers have benefited in that they are secure in their specialist posts in relatively large schools and, with a stable structure, the LEA can pay proper attention to issues of quality and standards.

Key Issues

- 10.27 ETI identifies significant issues that need to be addressed in the interests of learners. A number of these issues were raised by other respondents in

consultation. The absence of a common and cohesive 14-19 education and training policy and strategy, linked to agreed economic plans that provide the economic and social structure for Northern Ireland, militates against collaboration and the most effective use of the schools and Further Education estate. Policy and strategy need to incorporate the key areas of curriculum, funding and teacher education. Although the Entitlement Framework is a step towards greater co-ordination and cohesion, there remains a sense of piecemeal planning that is not value for money or part of an overarching policy sufficiently focused on the needs of learners. There is a danger that the flexibility and breadth of choice inherent in the menu of subjects permitted by the Entitlement Framework could result in a fragmented curriculum as experienced by the individual learner. To guard against this, learners should be provided with well-informed curricular guidance, good tutorial support, and also impartial careers education, advice, information and guidance (CEAIG). Such support, all the more vital in collaborative arrangements, should help to ensure that the individual's learning is anchored into a learning pathway and provides progression. Each learner should have a host learning organisation that takes responsibility for overseeing the coherence of his or her learning programme, and their progression within it.

- 10.28 The provision in schools, Further Education and work-based learning should be more complementary and better co-ordinated, with each type of organisation capitalising on its distinctive strengths and capabilities, in terms of its provision, teaching expertise, and facilities. Progression routes within each type should be made accessible and clear to their respective users. Staff development is needed across the sectors to ensure high levels of mutual understanding about each others' provision and culture, to help those involved to value difference and diversity without the pressure of organisational self-preservation. There is a need, also, to revise and review current teacher education arrangements, and related in-service training, in order to take account of developments in provision for 14-19 year olds. Parents should be given well-founded assurance that collaboration is in the best interests of their children; for example, parents need to be better informed about the career pathways available through the Further Education and training sectors. And Further Education needs to continue to enhance its image and standing among parents and to develop further the pastoral support it gives to 14-19 year olds.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 10.29 This chapter has focused on collaboration between schools and Further Education, not as a separate development, but as a key component in arrangements for 14–19 years olds, involving collaboration between schools and between schools, Further Education and training organisations. It has described current initiatives by DE and DEL to develop collaboration between schools and Further Education in the context of the Curriculum Entitlement. It has also outlined structures for post-primary provision in Neath/Port Talbot LEA in Wales. Drawing mainly on evidence from inspection, it has provided an assessment of the quality of current links between schools and Further Education, and identified key policy issues and operational matters that need to be addressed in developing effective collaborative arrangements in the interests of all 14–19 year olds.
- 10.30 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:
43. To ensure that provision is consistent and coherent, and that all young people have access to the same range and high quality of education, the delivery of the 14–19 curriculum should take full account of the defined local areas and involve the collaboration of schools, colleges of further education, and training providers.
 44. The full potential of collaboration – through the innovative use of information technology and movement of staff – should be explored, particularly where it can contribute positively to the quality and range of provision available (e.g. in sparsely populated, rural areas where there are poor public transport facilities, or in areas involving the crossing of sectarian interfaces).
 45. The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning should progress urgently their current review of 14–19 provision, with particular reference to curriculum, funding, and planning of provision, and taking account of local and regional requirements, establish a common and coherent 14–19 education and training policy and strategy.
 46. The provision in schools, colleges of further education, and work-based learning should be more complementary and better

co-ordinated, with each type of organisation capitalising on its distinctive strengths and capabilities in terms of its provision, teaching expertise, and facilities. Progression routes within each type should be made accessible and clear to their respective users.

47. Learners should have access to high quality and impartial services to help them make informed choices based on sound careers education, information, advice and guidance.
48. In order to take account of developments in provision for 14–19 year olds, current teacher education arrangements (and related in-service training), including an examination of the desirability of a common set of standards for qualified teacher status across 14–19 provision, should be reviewed.
49. Staff development should be provided across the schools' and Further Education sectors to ensure high levels of understanding about each other's provision and culture, and to help those involved to value difference and diversity without the pressure of organisational self-preservation.
50. Each learner should have a "host" learning organisation that takes responsibility for overseeing the coherence, suitability, and development of his or her learning programme.
51. An urgent examination should be undertaken of the factors that contribute to a competitive rather than a co-operative environment, such as the open enrolment policy and differentials in funding mechanisms, with a view to removing or at least reducing impediments to collaborative work.

PART D

Integrating Education and Improving Collaboration

CHAPTER 11: PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

- 11.1 This chapter deals with integrated education and Irish-medium (IM) education, the two forms of education that the Department of Education (DE) has a legislative duty to encourage and facilitate. It traces the origins of integrated education, sets out the main features of integrated schools, and comments on the numerical strength of the integrated sector. Likewise, it describes the development of IM education, explains significant aspects of the provision for education through Irish, sets out the current level and forms of provision, and identifies the need for DE to develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for IM education. Finally it distinguishes between integrated education and integrated schools, and advocates a more pervasive and inclusive approach, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, in which sharing and collaboration are key features.

Integrated Education

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Background

- 11.2 To a greater or lesser extent the education system in Northern Ireland is linked historically to identity in many forms – religious, sporting, cultural and political – and to sense of nationality. Different schools and different types of school have played a role in supporting the specific identity of parts of society in Northern Ireland. There is a body of opinion that links the largely dual structure of the school system – Catholic schools, and controlled schools with their roots in the Protestant tradition – to societal division. This viewpoint perceives the current schools structure to be an obstacle to the development of reconciliation and the building of social cohesion. Others argue that the way forward to a better and shared future in Northern Ireland's pluralist society is to build relationships through acknowledging and celebrating diversity and bringing differences together for mutual benefit in a climate of openness, tolerance, trust and respect. Thus association between school and personal and community identity may be interpreted as a positive or negative influence on society, depending on the perspective held.

Origins of Integrated Education

- 11.3 Debate about educating together children from the two main religious traditions in Northern Ireland has punctuated the evolution of its system of schools, a process with a long and complex history. The term "integrated education" is a relatively recent addition to the language of education in Northern Ireland. The origin of integrated schools may be traced to a campaign in the early 1970s by a relatively small group of parents, under the motto "All Children Together " (ACT), to explore the idea of sharing their children's education with other families of differing religious affiliations and cultural traditions in the form of a new type of school, the "integrated school". Since then, integrated education in Northern Ireland has been synonymous with educating Catholic and Protestant children in integrated schools.
- 11.4 In 1978 an Act was passed to facilitate the establishment in Northern Ireland of "Shared Schools", that is schools likely to be attended by pupils of differing religious affiliations or cultural traditions. But no school invoked this legislation to transform to Shared School status. In 1981 ACT was instrumental in establishing, as an independent school, the first planned integrated school. This school received funding as a voluntary maintained school in 1984.

Legislation

- 11.5 The Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 established a new management type, Grant-maintained Integrated (GMI) schools. This legislation gave DE powers to provide recurrent and capital funding for GMI schools, provided certain conditions were met. The Order also placed a statutory duty on DE to encourage and facilitate integrated education, defined as "education together at a school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils". Under the 1989 Order, DE was also given powers to fund a body that had as an objective the encouragement or promotion of integrated education. As a consequence, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) has received funding from 1991.
- 11.6 The 1989 Order also incorporated transformation legislation, transformation being defined as the acquisition of Grant-maintained Integrated status or controlled integrated status by an existing school. The motive for transformation should be

a desire on the part of the school to provide an integrated school in an area. To encourage transformation, a policy document, *A Framework for Transformation*, was published by DE in February 1997. The policy requires schools wishing to transform to demonstrate reasonable prospects of achieving, over the longer term, a minimum of 30 per cent of their enrolment drawn from the relevant minority tradition. No pre-existing level of integration is necessary; but to ensure that transformation is well grounded from the outset, schools must attract at least 10 per cent of their first-year intake from whichever is the minority community (Catholic or Protestant) before final approval is granted. Changes to the composition of the Board of Governors are also necessary. The policy provides for reviews after five and ten years. DE provides transforming schools with some recurrent financial assistance to support the process. The option of transformation to integrated status has to be fully explored by the integrated sector before a new, Grant-maintained Integrated school would be considered for approval by DE.

Integrated Schools

- 11.7 NICIE articulate a rationale for integrated schools based on a belief that children as future adults in a plural and divided society should be educated in a context where they will come to know, understand, respect and appreciate those who differ from them – in creed, culture, race, class, gender and ability – and to recognise what they hold in common as well as what divides them. NICIE defines Integrated Education in the Northern Ireland context as:

Education together in school of pupils drawn in approximately equal numbers from the two major traditions with the aim of providing for them an effective education that gives equal recognition to and promotes equal expression of the two major traditions. The integrated school is essentially Christian in character, democratic and open in procedures, and promotes the worth and self-esteem of all individuals within the school community. The school as an institution seeks to develop mutual respect and consideration of other institutions within the educational community. Its core aim is to provide the child with a caring self-fulfilling educational experience which will enable him or her to become a fulfilled and caring adult.

11.8 NICIE sets out a number of underpinning principles and values for integrated schools. The main tenets are summarised as follows.

General considerations:

- Children attending integrated schools should be nurtured in their parents' religious, cultural and national traditions and identity, while respecting the identity and appreciating the traditions of others.
- The integrated school should be open in its relationships with schools of other management types and with the local community.
- The Catholic and Protestant communities within the schools should be accorded equal respect and standing.
- Commitments to equality should be fostered both structurally (ideally with the Catholic and Protestant traditions having at least 40 per cent of representation on Board of Governors, staff and pupil groups), and culturally through the curriculum of the school.
- Integrated schools should promote the learning of shared culture, beliefs and traditions, while nurturing within each pupil what is specific to his or her own tradition.
- Integrated schools should seek to secure and sustain deep parental participation in the life and work of the school – particularly in its government, in the formulation of its policy, in the creation of a working partnership with the teaching staff, and in the promotion of good relations with the local community.

With regard to religion:

- Children should learn together as much as can reasonably be expected.
- Where the school population includes significant numbers of children of a particular faith, separate provision should be made to accommodate parental wishes for specific religious instruction in aspects of that faith.

- The school should encourage ministers of religious communities to visit the school, take a pastoral interest in the children and get to know the parents and teachers.
- The worship dimension of the school should ensure equal prominence for the two major traditions and fair representation of other groups of significant size within the school community.

The curriculum should:

- reflect the all-ability character and integrative purpose of the school itself;
- make provision for a history syllabus that reflects the historical roots of the two major communities within Northern Ireland so as to illuminate both their separate and shared history;
- reflect the culture of both major traditions in music and dancing; and
- provide for the Irish language and Irish games (optional).

11.9 Over a period of more than twenty-five years, 37 GMI schools have been established and, since transformation legislation was introduced in 1989, 19 controlled integrated schools. The breakdown by primary and secondary type is shown in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1: Number of Integrated Schools, 2005/06

Sector	Primary	Secondary	Total
Grant-maintained Integrated	22	15	37
Controlled Integrated	15	4	19
Total	37	19	56

Source: DE.

11.10 In 2005/06 there were 17,558 pupils attending integrated schools, just over 5 per cent of the number of pupils in grant-aided schools. There were 393 pupils in nursery classes, 6652 in primary schools, and 10,513 in secondary schools.

- 11.11 The enrolments in the GMI primary schools that have reached the stage where they have Year 7 pupils enrolled are well above the thresholds recommended by the Review for assessing the viability of a primary school. Seven of the 15 controlled integrated primary schools have an enrolment of more than 105 pupils, but five have fewer than 60 pupils. Over the five-year period 2001/02 to 2005/06 almost all GMI primary schools have retained or increased their enrolments, some substantially. Over the same period, enrolments increased in about half of the controlled integrated primary schools and decreased in the others.
- 11.12 Of the 15 Grant-maintained Integrated secondary schools, 13 admit pupils from Years 8 to 14. The other two schools have not yet reached the stage where they have Year 12 pupils enrolled. Five of the 13 schools have Year 8-12 enrolments of more than 500 pupils, the threshold recommended by the Review for reviewing the viability of a post-primary school. All the 13 schools have pupils in Years 13 and 14; in 5 of the schools the sixth-form enrolment is more than 100 pupils, the minimum for a sixth form recommended by the Review. The enrolments of the 4 controlled integrated secondary schools are: 865 (sixth form of 75 pupils), 474 (sixth form of 30 pupils), 421 and 294.
- 11.13 Seventeen integrated secondary schools have opened since, or before, 2001/02. Over the five-year period 2001/02 to 2005/06, twelve of the schools have increased their enrolments for the Years 8 to 12 stage (ranging from 1 to 21 per cent) and in the other five schools enrolments for the Years 8 to 12 stage have decreased (ranging from 2 to 18 per cent).
- 11.14 DE sets thresholds for integrated schools to ensure a balanced representation of pupils from the two main faith traditions. For GMI schools, the threshold at opening is 30 per cent of pupils from the minority community, this figure to be maintained in the long term. For controlled integrated schools the threshold is 10 per cent of the first-year intake following transformation, building to 30 per cent in the longer term. Based on school census data, GMI schools achieve a generally reasonable balance between children from the two main faith traditions in Northern Ireland. In the controlled integrated schools, particularly in the secondary sector, the proportions of Catholic and Protestant pupils range more widely, with the proportion of the minority community falling below 10 per cent in a few instances. In interpreting the census data, differences, often substantial,

in the proportions of Catholics and Protestants in communities across Northern Ireland need to be borne in mind. Equally important is that pupils may belong to other Christian faiths, or non-Christian faiths, and some may have no religious affiliation or be of unknown religious affiliation.

Schools in Other Sectors

- 11.15 Integrated schools are not the only schools that draw their pupils from across the community. Indeed, all grant-aided schools must be open to all pupils, whatever their religious affiliation. Non-denominational grammar schools, controlled secondary schools and controlled primary schools enrol pupils from the Catholic community, in significant numbers in some instances. A few Catholic managed schools have significant representation from the Protestant community, while other Catholic schools have small numbers of Protestant children. The community profile of the enrolments of these schools has evolved over time, presumably reflecting parental confidence in the schools.

Curriculum and Community Relations

- 11.16 The 1989 Order was not confined to school structures. The Order also introduced the Northern Ireland curriculum, which included the educational themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH), with four fundamental objectives: fostering respect for self and others and building relationships, understanding conflict, appreciating interdependence, and cultural understanding. Prior to that, in 1987, DE had introduced a voluntary inter-school Cross Community Contact Scheme (CCCS) with funds to support planned and long-term contact programmes between controlled and maintained schools. A good number of schools participated, although the numbers of pupils involved varied considerably from place to place. The introduction of the educational themes signalled a belief that the content of the curriculum, and the related teaching and learning, should contribute to the development of values, attitudes, understanding and knowledge conducive to learning to live with difference in a spirit of acceptance, fairness and mutual respect in a climate of tolerance and peace. The revised Northern Ireland curriculum also reflects the potential of the curriculum in educating young people for life in a democratic society. The area of Learning for Life and Work includes Local and Global Citizenship, focusing on four

key concepts that seem to be particularly apt to a Northern Ireland society embarking on the journey of building a shared future: diversity and inclusion, human rights and social responsibility, equality and social justice, and democracy and active participation.

Irish-medium Education

- 11.17 Under the Education (NI) Order 1998, DE has a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), the Council for Irish-medium education funded by DE, was established in the year 2000 to promote, facilitate and encourage IM education and schools in Northern Ireland, and to do this in a planned, educationally efficient, and cost-effective way.

Forms of Provision

- 11.18 IM education is provided in IM schools and in IM units accommodated in English-medium schools. The number of grant-aided IM primary schools increased from two in 1992/93 to eighteen in 2005/06 and, over this period, the number of pupils increased from 484 to 1849. There are also four independent IM primary schools. Nine of the grant-aided schools have enrolments of more than 105 pupils, and their average enrolment is 167 pupils. The enrolments of the other schools range from 18 to 82 pupils; the number of years for which these schools have been grant-aided ranges from 1 to 5 years, and the number of years since the schools were established ranges from 2 to 10 years. In the period 1998/99 to 2005/06, the number of IM units in primary schools increased from two to ten, and the number of pupils increased from 53 to 516. In the five units that have reached the stage where they have Year 7 pupils enrolled, the enrolment ranges from 38 to 110 and the average enrolment is 66. In the post-primary sector, there is one IM school and two IM streams in English-medium schools, with 2005/06 enrolments of 470, 64 and 36 respectively.

Irish-medium Education Sector Perspective

- 11.19 For CnaG, the strategic planning objective in relation to IM education is to meet the needs of IM education, while making optimum use of resources. In their

submission to the Review, the Comhairle specifies three fundamental needs of IM education:

- The socio-linguistic environment for pupils and staff must be successfully created, preserved and developed, both formally and informally, to allow for successful language acquisition.
- Those charged with managing the IM provision must recognise the purpose of IM education, which is (i) to facilitate the pupils' acquisition of Irish; and (ii) to facilitate the development of a bilingual community.
- IM education needs to have an organic link with its local community in order to facilitate the development of the community as a bilingual community.

In CnaG's view, DE's policy on IM education should be founded on an understanding and recognition that there is a dual language education system in Northern Ireland. The Comhairle also expressed its dissatisfaction with the current definition of an Irish-speaking school as set out in Part II of the Education Order (Northern Ireland) 2006. The essence of this definition is that a school is an Irish-speaking school if more than one half of the teaching of (a) religious education and (b) the minimum content of the areas of learning other than that called Language and Literacy, is conducted (wholly or partly) in Irish, and "school" includes part of a school.

- 11.20 CnaG emphasises that their approach to Irish language development, the immersion method, places a premium on a discrete linguistic environment as the appropriate sociolinguistic context for both pupils and staff. The stated aim is to facilitate the linguistic ability of the child in Irish and English through a process known as additive bilingualism. Consequently, the Comhairle expressed a strong preference for the provision of IM education in linguistically separate settings. In respect of IM primary provision, the Comhairle suggests several models – free-standing IM schools, multi-campus schools with a campus devoted to IM education, shared campus schools, a confederation of two or more schools, a shared campus model, and a satellite system in which IM satellite schools are supported by an established IM "mother" school. All of these models are aimed at strengthening the linguistic identity of IM schools, but in a way in which the

pupils learning through the medium of Irish are kept entirely separate from the other pupils for all their school day. The models would also entail management and governance arrangements sensitive to and supportive of the distinctive identity of IM schools. The Comhairle also supports the development of transformation legislation that would enable the status of a primary school to be changed from English-medium to Irish-medium. At the post-primary level, the Comhairle favours a satellite system, centred on Coláiste Feirste, or a shared campus between English-medium and Irish-medium schools. Because of its particular philosophical approach to language acquisition, the Comhairle expressed its strong reservations about the suitability of IM units accommodated in English-medium schools.

Planning

- 11.21 In considering the provision for IM education in the context of planning the schools' estate, the Review does so in the light of its recommendations on sustainable schools and the principles set out Chapter 9 of this report, emphasising: the quality of education; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; educational and financial viability of schools; optimum use of facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing; and good value in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure. This means recognising that IM schools are first and foremost educational institutions and that the role of IM schools in the context of language revival, while important, must be seen as secondary. Like other schools, the top priority for IM schools must be to provide a first-class education for their pupils. Consequently, the nature and structuring of the accommodation and facilities for IM education must, first and foremost, support high quality teaching and learning.
- 11.22 The accommodation needs of the IM sector should be met within the area-based approach to planning advocated by the Review in accordance with the principles summarised in the previous paragraph. As proposed by CnaG, and endorsed by the Review, options should be considered for reassigning and, where necessary, modernising accommodation that becomes available through rationalisation and re-organisation. The potential of transformation of school status, referred to in Paragraph 11.21, should also be considered. Consistent with the objective of making good use of existing accommodation, the Review considers that the

planning for the IM sector should also make more use of vacant and surplus accommodation in existing school premises, refurbishing and modifying it as necessary. Options such as the multi-campus or shared-campus arrangements – proposed by CnaG – where justified by demand, appear to be potentially practicable at the primary school stage. The untested satellite system appears to pose substantial difficulties and uncertainties in relation to providing curriculum breadth, ensuring a high quality of learning, management requirements, and logistics. The post-primary IM education phase faces intrinsic difficulties, not just in terms of enrolments, but also in relation to the recruitment and deployment of specialist teachers and in meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The weaknesses and disadvantages, inherent in the provision and operation of small schools – expressed in Chapter 7 – would apply equally to the IM sector. The Review, while acknowledging CnaG's views about IM units in English-medium schools, sees a definite role for such units in the spectrum of IM provision, based on educational, social and professional grounds, and on value-for-money considerations. As can be seen from subsequent paragraphs, the Review, in urging a more inclusive approach to integration in education, involving greater sharing and collaboration, believes that this should permeate the entire school system, with all schools and all sectors playing their part and making their distinctive contribution.

Issues

- 11.23 It is eight years since DE was charged with a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IM education. Since that time there has been significant growth in the number of pupils educated through the medium of Irish. There appears, however, to be a lack of consensus about aspects of the educational process in IM education and about the most appropriate environment: educationally, linguistically, socially and physically. There is a need for further debate to inform a rationale for an agreed model of immersion education, in keeping with international best practice. In view of the pattern of growth in the sector, the issues that need to be considered, and a radically changing planning context for education, the Review recommends that DE should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for IM education.

More Inclusive Approach to Integration

- 11.24 *A Shared Future* sets the goal of “a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust”, and it makes clear that education has a key role to play in achieving this goal. This role was clearly articulated in the report *Towards A Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education (TACOTIE)* (1998), endorsed by *A Shared Future*, which stated as a key principle that “it is a seminal purpose of the Northern Ireland Education Service to promote a culture of tolerance and reconciliation, and for schools to do so in keeping with the particular ethos and circumstances within which they operate. These different approaches should be valued and all schools should be encouraged to provide further opportunities to promote a culture of tolerance.”
- 11.25 The evidence submitted to the Review provides overwhelming support for this purpose of education, and acknowledges the potential of all schools to make their contribution. Building relationships through acknowledging and celebrating identity and diversity and bringing differences together for mutual benefit is a vital part of the process. Education, therefore, has an integrative function in society, through its capacity to help young people to develop values, attitudes, understanding and behaviours that are conducive to working towards the goal of *A Shared Future*. The future depends on motivated young people, proud to belong to our society, keen to develop their talents, and keen to contribute to the public good.
- 11.26 The previous paragraphs have focused on widely shared objectives for a better society in Northern Ireland and on the contributory role of the education system. What of processes and structures? Structures and processes are not ends in themselves but must be assessed in terms of the degree to which they enable good educational experiences and outcomes for pupils and, by extension, for the well being of community and society. Integrated schools, based on a clear rationale and sense of purpose, represent a highly significant and distinctive approach to integrated education, but only a small minority of the school population attend them. The goal of *A Shared Future*, and a commitment by all school sectors, and by each school, to play their part in working towards that goal, suggest a more pervasive and inclusive strategy, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system. The demographic downturn, the urgent need

to develop the schools' estate and to align it with the projected demand for school places through a system of viable schools, and, finally, the requirements of the curriculum, particularly at the 14-19 stage, provide a new context and a purposeful focus for schools to work in an integrated way by sharing and collaborating in the interests of their pupils.

- 11.27 Few would dispute that schools are lacking if they do not deliberately educate their pupils to be enlightened, critically thinking and well-balanced individuals, prepared for the responsibilities and obligations of life in a civilised and democratic society. Good schools are inclusive in nature – that is to say, they welcome all potential learners, and in a way that makes deliberate and well planned efforts to lead learners to be positively disposed to the inclusion of others in their social interactions. The good school, as an inclusive, civilised and tolerant learning community, gives witness to, and promotes, those values, attitudes, understandings and behaviours fundamental to the development of a healthy society. All young people should experience the best of what we currently have: communities of learning, based on respect and tolerance for one another.
- 11.28 Good schools are not isolationist and inward looking but reach out to other schools in mutually beneficial relationships. The quality of those relationships, and their success in developing mutual understanding, respect, trust and tolerance, may be judged on the extent to which they involve significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning, both by pupils and teachers, supported by governors and parents. Children should grow up to feel comfortable in their own uniqueness, and comfortable with difference. For that to happen they need to be able to work together, and "play" together, so that eventually they can assume a shared responsibility for their future. If education can both symbolise, as well as facilitate and make real, through its very structures and the quality of provision the message that learners' interests come first, that distinctiveness and diversity are valued and respected, that productive links with other learners and other providers are desirable, indeed natural, then the prospect of progress towards sharing the future will surely be bright.
- 11.29 The rationale for integrating education and improving collaboration and sharing is not confined to the role of education in promoting better community relations. The argument is more broadly based, resting on three fundamental and inter-related factors: the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of

the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money. The Review's thinking on the planning and organisation of the schools' estate, therefore, is focused on a cost-effective schools system with appropriate arrangements for sharing and collaboration that enhance the quality, range and coherence of educational experience in the broadest sense, to ensure that all learners have sufficient peer and social interaction to enable them to develop as rounded individuals, self-aware, accommodating of others and their beliefs, and confident in themselves as shapers and sharers of the future within and beyond their own community.

- 11.30 Submissions to the Review demonstrated strong commitment to the concept of integrating education and to sharing and collaboration: while celebrating and reinforcing what is strong, more needs to be done to provide a more integrated and effective education system. There was an appreciation that this process is a journey, in places a sensitive one, but one that all should embark on, and that must, of necessity, begin from where we are, sharing from the strength of distinctiveness and the richness of tradition and diversity. In this chapter the Review has attempted to set out a clear sense of purpose and direction. The journey will require enlightened and sensitive leadership at all levels and an appreciation not only of what is desirable, but what is possible, in particular communities in terms of the scope and pace of sharing and collaboration.
- 11.31 With the publication of *A Shared Future*, and the existing political climate, there is a new opportunity to re-examine the approaches that might be used to promote integration in the education service. The thinking developed in this chapter requires that, within the current legislation that obliges DE to facilitate and encourage integrated education, DE should make clear that, in discharging this duty, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging an inclusive strategy with a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools. Moreover, in undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, there should be a duty on ESA to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools. The Review sees merit in a forum to facilitate discussion about integration, to consider possibilities, to promote trust, mutual understanding and co-operation, and to

review structural, organisational and legislative impediments to creating a climate conducive to integrating education in meaningful ways.

Conclusions and Recommendations

11.32 This chapter has traced the origins of integrated education, set out the main features of integrated schools, and commented on the numerical strength of the integrated sector. Similarly, it has described the development of Irish-medium education, explained significant aspects of the provision for education through Irish, set out the current level and forms of provision, and identified policy issues. It has distinguished between integrated education and integrated schools, and advocated a more pervasive and inclusive approach focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system, with sharing and collaboration as key features in the interests of the quality of education, societal well being and economic efficiency. In light of this, it has advocated that DE should make clear that, in discharging its legislative duty in respect of integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools. The next chapter examines models of integration, sharing and collaboration and considers how these might be realised in practice.

11.33 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:

52. In undertaking its functions in relation to the planning of the schools' estate, the Education and Skills Authority should be required to maximise opportunities for integrating education within a system of sustainable schools.
53. To encourage and support a more inclusive approach to integrating education, additional funding – in the form of (a) an enhanced unit of resource, and (b) special funding for particular areas of work such as staff development – should be provided to schools that are actively engaged in sharing with other schools, or a school that is developing an inclusive environment in recognition of the diversity of its pupils' religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
54. Either through new arrangements under the Review of Public Administration, or through a dedicated strategic forum, the

Department of Education should help education stakeholders to discuss issues pertinent to integrating education and improving collaboration, promoting trust and mutual understanding, and working to develop collaboration and sharing.

55. The Department of Education should make clear that, in discharging its legislative duty in respect of integrated education, it is committed to facilitating and encouraging a variety of approaches to integrating education within a framework of sustainable schools.
56. The Department of Education should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium education.
57. The planning for Irish-medium education should make use of a variety of feasible options capable of providing the accommodation and facilities that support a high quality of education through the medium of Irish, including:
 - creating new sustainable Irish-medium schools through new builds, adapting existing surplus capacity in the schools' estate, and transformation; and
 - collaborating and sharing within the Irish-medium sector, and with English-medium schools, including the provision of Irish-medium units or streams in English-medium schools.

CHAPTER 12: MODELS OF COLLABORATION AND SHARING

- 12.1 This chapter explores practical models of sharing and collaboration, and considers the potential benefits. It focuses on sharing and collaboration between schools, either of the same or different management types, as part of a spectrum of approaches to integrating education. Other chapters of the report have commented on schools with a distinctive integrative function, not only integrated schools, but also schools which, through organic development, are inclusive in that they attract and welcome pupils from different cultures and faith traditions. In Chapter 9 the report has also identified the possibility of establishing schools of new management types with the potential to serve all the pupils in a community, for example a community school or a jointly managed church school. This chapter also reiterates the rationale for schools working in partnership, considers how incentives might be used to encourage and support collaboration, and examines practical issues that may arise. Some of the models are based on emerging practice in local areas of Northern Ireland, and others are influenced by approaches elsewhere.
- 12.2 In the course of consultation, it became evident to the Review that Northern Ireland's educational structure – based almost entirely on institutional independence, and its preservation, within a competitive system – is also at a significant cost to some children's and young people's experiences and opportunities; it is at a cost too, in certain contexts, to the well-being, effectiveness, all-round development and experience of teachers and principals; and last of all, it is at a cost to the efficient use of the schools' estate in terms of duplication and overlaps, empty places and inadequate accommodation. It follows, therefore, that it is a cost to the economic well being, and the integration and health of our society more generally.
- 12.3 There is no avoiding the fact that present arrangements, despite their strengths, are marred by missed opportunities – opportunities to broaden choices; to enrich provision for practitioners as well as learners and their communities; to capitalise on the expertise of teachers and lecturers, which is currently confined, for the most part, to their own sector; to lessen the tension and insecurity that are associated with issues such as budget management, staff deployment and class groupings in the context of falling rolls; and to address uncertainties – on the part

of staff, governors and parents – about the future viability of some schools. Above all, opportunities are missed to secure the best for more children and young people. The education system needs to do better by everyone, not just some, engaged in, or affected by, education, and what that means for a pluralist Northern Ireland in the Twenty-First Century.

Rationale and Principles

12.4 In Chapter 11 the Review presented a rationale for collaboration and sharing based on three fundamental and inter-related factors: the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; the social case – societal well being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that provides good value for money.

12.5 In Chapter 9 the Review set out a number of principles to underpin the planning of the schools' estate. For ease of reference these principles are presented again. Communities should be served by successful schools that:

- provide high quality educational experiences and outcomes for all pupils;
- reflect the pluralist nature of Northern Ireland;
- ensure equality, accessibility, diversity and parental choice;
- taken together, are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the community;
- are educationally and financially viable;
- operate cost-effectively, maximising expenditure on the things that really matter in respect of quality and standards;
- are affordable and sustainable in the long-term;
- optimise the use of their facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing; and
- represent good value in relation to capital and recurrent expenditure.

12.6 It is also pertinent at this point to recall that the first three-year action plan for *A Shared Future* sets commitments for the Department of Education (DE) in relation to planning the schools' estate:

- In decision making on new schools or re-organisation/rationalisation of schools, proposals will be required to demonstrate that options for collaboration/sharing on a cross-community basis have been considered and fully explored.
- On the basis of clear criteria to be developed, projects relating to new schools, re-organisation or rationalisation are more likely to justify receipt of financial support if they are shared or operate across the community divide.
- A shared model of schooling will be treated as the presumed option for new housing developments which are similarly shared.

12.7 The principles set out above, the three-point rationale for sharing and collaboration, and the requirements of *A Shared Future* provide a frame of reference or set of indicators for assessing proposals for area-based educational provision serving the whole community, including various forms of sharing and collaboration. The indicators may be grouped thematically: quality and effectiveness of provision; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; community well being and cohesion; economy and efficiency (including matching provision to need and reducing over-provision); and cross-community and cross-sector sharing and collaboration.

Collaboration Between Existing Schools

Current Developments

12.8 The Review acknowledges the success of local arrangements for joint work where sensitive, high level leadership has encouraged local initiatives in collaboration and has struck the right balance between realism and boldness. There are clear educational, community and financial benefits in self-reliant, and self-generated, arrangements, particularly when parents have been kept informed and made to feel involved. The Review would wish those initiatives to continue.

- 12.9 The Review has been interested to learn of a range of initiatives, some well developed and others offering smaller beginnings and taking more tentative steps, where post-primary schools of different management types are working together – without any compromise to their own distinctiveness – to provide learners in the 14–19 age range with a broader set of experiences and the flexibility to learn in more than one institution. Collaborative arrangements of this nature represent a significant broadening of partnership arrangements from that between schools of the same management type.
- 12.10 In its submission to the Review, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) described the establishment of “learning communities” at post-primary level, each at various stages of evolution. It is the Board’s view that in these promising developments the seeds have been sown in moving schools from a model of competition and isolation to one of collaboration, centred on the needs of the learner within the learning community. The example is cited of one town, where the four post-primary schools, representative of the different sectors, are working together to offer an extended range of choices at age 16+ to pupils in the area. It is reported that provision is planned jointly, marked collectively, and uses the expertise of staff in the four institutions. The Review concurs with the Board’s belief that the success of this model depends on visionary leadership and the commitment of the schools at local level, but also requires the active support of the employing authority.
- 12.11 In the context of collaboration between schools and Further Education, the Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP) is bringing another and important dimension to collaboration. As the VEP develops, schools are expected to take a more proactive approach to forming collaborative arrangements, for example, by grouping together to ensure that applications meet class size viability thresholds in colleges of further education. Such joint planning should set the pattern for the development of collaborative arrangements between schools and colleges of further education in the context of the Curriculum Entitlement.
- 12.12 The Education and Skills Authority, in consultation with schools, Further Education and training organisations, should have a role to play not only in supporting sharing and collaboration at local level, but in identifying opportunities and needs, developing and bringing forward innovative ideas for consideration, prompting

and proactively encouraging linkages, and working with others to identify obstacles and ways of mitigating them.

Incentives

- 12.13 Small beginnings can affirm and encourage. A first step could be to create and incentivise additional local "success stories" in collaboration that demonstrate the common benefits. These could be prompted, and promoted, by taking advantage of particular opportunities; for example, where two schools have established a track record in sharing facilities or staff, a next step may be building a new high specification common facility, for instance, in technology. In another scenario, advantage might be taken of the necessary re-organisation of secondary school provision caused, in particular, by requirements of the Entitlement Framework, and the criteria within a sustainable schools policy, to promote sharing of staff and facilities among or between schools. In this context, an incentive could take the form of an extra teacher to facilitate link arrangements and work across schools or between school and college. Furthermore, DE could review the accommodation norms and standards for new schools and major improvements – in which school size is a factor – to make it attractive for two or more geographically close schools to gain additional facilities which, if continuing to operate separately, would be inappropriate or less practicable. Consideration could be given to prioritising proposals for school builds and improvements that incorporate sharing and collaboration.

Formal Arrangements Between Schools

- 12.14 There are various forms of association that can provide the opportunity for schools, primary or post-primary, to collaborate on a range of curricular and other issues, to procure efficiencies, and to secure improvements in the quality of education provided. The form of association can range from voluntary coalitions and partnerships to a relationship involving formal management and governance structures. These arrangements can accommodate the need, and the desire, to preserve and maintain the ethos of individual schools, while making more efficient use of resources and avoiding duplication of provision, particularly when the arrangements include Further Education.

Confederation

12.15 In the confederation model, schools of the same, or different, management types in an area work together in arrangements involving the exchange of staff and pupils, or both. Pupils may be taught together for certain subjects, teachers may teach in more than one school, specialist facilities may be used by all the schools, and the schools may share administrative staff. Each school remains accountable to its own education sector and may retain its own principal and board of governors. A confederation is in effect a pool of expertise. The examples of local partnership referred to earlier in this chapter characterise aspects of confederation.

Federation

12.16 In its strict form federation involves small schools combining to form a single school in law, with one principal and one board of governors, but operating on two or more sites. The teaching arrangements would be similar to those described for the confederation model. This model would encourage a joint approach, which would facilitate future shared working on a single site at a later stage.

Co-location

12.17 Co-location, where schools are located within a short distance of each other, is another option, particularly where new builds for schools are involved. Co-location provides for schools to operate as distinct units, preserving their particular ethos and identity or pattern of provision, being well placed to collaborate with other schools specifically because of their geographical proximity. This collaboration could be particularly effective in respect of cross-phase collaboration, between a primary and a post-primary school within a single community, for example, as well as across sectors.

Shared Campus

12.18 This model has been developed in regions of Scotland, particularly in respect of primary schools in the North Lanarkshire Council, involving Catholic schools and non-denominational schools. The Review has been provided with a detailed account of the North Lanarkshire experience. The rationale for the development of

the shared campus approach to primary school design in North Lanarkshire is based on financial and best-value considerations; the integration argument played no part in the Council's decision to support shared campus schools. The building of schools with shared infrastructure generates savings and as a result more schools can be rebuilt or refurbished from the available resources. In addition, the model safeguards school individuality and autonomy, protects services by retaining local educational provision, particularly in rural areas, maintains denominational education, and enables the local community to access enhanced facilities.

- 12.19 The design and operation of the schools conform to agreed principles. The shared building infrastructure includes shared, or adjacent, administration/reception office, adjacent staff rooms centrally located, shared hall/gymnasium, library, multi-functional rooms, and playing fields. There are shared areas centrally located with independent access and a shared public entrance with separate interior entrance. There are physically separate teaching areas and management areas, separate pupil entrances, and community facilities separate from either school.
- 12.20 North Lanarkshire's capital costs analysis shows that the shared campus model costs 30 per cent less than two individual schools and 10 per cent more than a single school (figures based on two schools of 150 pupils each). In addition to capital savings, there are reduced property running costs and surplus sites are released. In terms of "save to spend", it is possible to fund additional schools and to provide enhanced facilities at each campus.
- 12.21 The introduction of shared campus schools in North Lanarkshire has had to be carefully planned. Communication and preparation are identified as essential to the successful operation of shared campus schools, in particular the development of a management protocol and the preparation of the head teachers and staff for the management and operation of a shared campus. The commitment, sensitivity and leadership of the head teachers are considered to be particularly vital.
- 12.22 The possibility of developing the shared campus model to include shared use of a wider range of accommodation and facilities, such as technology suites, merits consideration. Some members of staff could also be shared, including, for example, building supervisors, cleaners, catering staff and secretarial staff. It

should be possible also to share specialist teaching staff and responsibility for specific areas of curriculum development.

Extended Schools

- 12.23 The report has already commented on Extended Schools in the context of the strategic planning of the schools' estate. Extended Schools have the potential to contribute to greater integration and sharing by virtue of what they offer. Extended Schools should see themselves as the hub of the community, providing a range of services and activities, during or beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community. In so doing, Extended Schools engage in collaboration and partnership with neighbouring schools, and with statutory, voluntary, and community sector organisations operating in the community.

Evaluation

- 12.24 Paragraph 12.7 listed a set of indicators for assessing proposals for area-based educational provision serving the whole community, including various forms of sharing and collaboration: quality and effectiveness of provision; equality and accessibility; diversity and choice; community well being and cohesion; economy and efficiency (including matching provision to need and reducing over-provision); and cross-community and cross-sector sharing and collaboration. Each of the models of sharing and collaboration described in previous paragraphs, from the locally evolving partnerships to the more formally structured arrangements, can be evaluated against these indicators. The same indicators can be used to assess the advantages and disadvantages (benefits and costs) of local provision in the form of one or more types of schools: reorganisation within discrete sectors, new integrated school, transformed integrated school, community school, or jointly managed church school.
- 12.25 The following questions, neither an exhaustive list nor necessarily applicable in all circumstances, may be used to assess arrangements for collaboration and sharing.
- Do the arrangements:
- Help to maintain local provision?

- Provide the pupils with access to a wider range of educational opportunity?
- Allow the pupils to have good learning experiences and to achieve high standards?
- Enable human and material resources to be used more effectively and efficiently?
- Reduce capital costs, recurrent costs or both?
- Entail additional costs, and are these justified by the benefits?
- Address the issue of over provision?
- Result in practically feasible solutions in which the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of, for example, timetabling and travel?
- Involve significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning by pupils, and teachers, from the partnership schools?
- Involve both intra-sector and cross-sector sharing and collaboration?
- Have the confidence and support of governors and parents?

12.26 Arrangements for sharing and collaboration should be evaluated, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement. The manifestations and outcomes of the distinctive character of schools, and the contribution of schools to the spirit of *A Shared Future*, should be included in schools' annual reports, and in inspection reports, taking account of the community environment of the school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

12.27 This chapter has explored practical models of sharing and collaboration between schools, as part of a spectrum of approaches to integrating education; the models range from locally evolving partnerships to more formally structured arrangements. It has also identified indicators for evaluating not only the various models of sharing and collaboration between schools but also local provision in the form of one or more types of schools: reorganisation within discrete sectors, new integrated school, transformed integrated school, community school, or

jointly managed church school. Finally, it has discussed incentives that could be used to promote and facilitate sharing and collaboration. Change can seem radical – but even radical change can be gradual; it does not necessarily mean sudden chaos and upheaval. Change for the better, and most of all for the benefit of children and young people, both educationally and communally, can be achieved. It will require visionary, creative and open leadership, good communication at all levels, and an ability to develop and apply excellence in managing change systematically.

12.28 Given the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter, we recommend:

58. Local "success stories" of collaboration and sharing should be encouraged, identified, and used to disseminate good practice.

59. The Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Education and Skills Authority should develop a range of incentives to encourage and support local schools to build on existing levels of shared facilities and staff and to develop their partnership further. Examples of incentives that should be considered include:

- providing a new high specification common facility, for example, in technology;
- funding for an additional teacher to facilitate link arrangements and work across schools or between schools and Further Education;
- modifying the accommodation norms and standards to make it attractive for two or more geographically close schools to gain facilities which, if they continued to operate separately, would be inappropriate (due to school enrolment) or less practicable; and
- prioritising proposals for school improvements that incorporate sharing and collaboration.

60. Sharing and collaboration between schools should be evaluated, through both self-evaluation and inspection, in order to acknowledge success and to promote improvement.
61. The manifestations and outcomes of the distinctive character of schools, and the contribution of schools to the spirit of *A Shared Future*, should be included in schools' annual reports and in inspection reports, taking account of the community environment of the school.

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Conclusion

CHAPTER 13: THE WAY FORWARD

- 13.1 The Review has undertaken its work within a challenging timescale, and concurrently with the planning of radical and far reaching reforms in the arrangements for the administration of education in Northern Ireland and in aspects of education policy. This coincidence, while presenting the Review with an element of uncertainty about future structures and policy directions, has also given it an opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the educational landscape in Northern Ireland for a considerable period ahead.
- 13.2 We have consulted widely and listened carefully and critically, but with an open mind; this has been a vital part of our approach. The meetings held with the many educational interests proved to be extremely valuable in developing our understanding of substantive issues, and helping us to appreciate their perspectives. We acknowledge again the positive and constructive engagement with all those who contributed to our work. It was clear that they see the Review as an exceptional opportunity to transform key aspects of the education system for the benefit of children and young people.
- 13.3 The initial high-level terms of reference asked us to examine funding of education in Northern Ireland with particular reference to the planning and organisation of the schools' estate in the context of demographic trends and curriculum changes, notably for 14–19 year olds. It has been evident for some considerable time that Northern Ireland's unusually diverse school system has too many schools, and too many small schools, in an estate in need of substantial investment – investment already earmarked for a ten-year period. Surplus places, as a measure of over-provision, are symptomatic of intrinsic structural issues in the education system and of latent weaknesses in planning. There is mounting financial strain, and an increasing cost to many pupils in terms of limitations on their educational opportunity. The inefficiencies resulting from maintaining the existing educational provision, without radically changing the schools' estate, would be unacceptable in view of the excessive recurrent costs that arise from the current configuration of the system of schools.
- 13.4 From our consideration of funding for education in Northern Ireland, we concluded that the main issue is not the total amount spent in comparison with that in other countries of the United Kingdom. The central point is the scope that

exists for more effective and efficient use of the funding that is made available, in order to provide all pupils, irrespective of where they live in Northern Ireland, with an excellent education.

- 13.5 In all our considerations and recommendations we have been guided by the overarching principle that learners' needs and interests are paramount. Our analysis of the issues, taking account of the advice and views that we have received, leads us to the inevitable conclusion that if we are to concentrate financial resources on the quality and breadth of education for all pupils, then we need to transform the current school structure into a system of sustainable schools characterised by the features set out in this report. An excellent education in good schools must surely be the aim of any system of schools. Progress towards that goal begins with sustainable schools. At the same time, we take the view that, particularly in a re-structured system of schools in the context of the reforms of educational administration, there is a strong argument for enhancing the autonomy of individual schools by maximising their delegated budgets.
- 13.6 Area-based planning, led by the Education and Skills Authority within a strategic framework set by the Department of Education, is the bedrock for the strategic approach to planning detailed in this report. This approach is fundamental to our goal of communities served by a set of educationally effective and efficiently functioning sustainable schools which, taken together, meet the needs of all pupils in the community by optimising the use of their facilities for the benefit of all through sharing and collaboration. Importantly, area-based planning of the schools' estate will facilitate planning of curricular provision at local level, and it will also allow for co-ordination of educational planning with the provision of other services, including local government services.
- 13.7 We take the high level of support for the principles underpinning planning of the schools' estate, set out in the consultation paper, as a comprehensive endorsement of our thinking on the way forward to a new era in the approach to planning. The departure from the largely independent planning by each sector to a co-ordinated cross-sectoral approach, with the possibility of a cross-community dimension, represents a fundamental change in the approach to planning that we recommend. Existing sectors will still have the right to continue to represent their interests, needs and perspectives but, in the spirit and practice of the new approach, considering their contribution to the system as a whole.

- 13.8 The process of moving from the current number, size and location of schools to the sustainable schools envisioned for the future will take time, and careful, imaginative, sensitive planning. The change cannot, and should not, be achieved hastily. But it is an inescapable direction of travel, a journey that must be undertaken, and must begin without delay. That is why we are recommending that the Department of Education should proceed with area-based planning from early in the year 2007 until the Education and Skills Authority is established, and that it should draw up a timetable for the key actions and outcomes in establishing and implementing the new strategic approach.
- 13.9 In the course of consultation, and as our thinking developed, it became clear to us that to examine funding and consider planning of the schools' estate without reference to their ultimate function would be at best an incomplete exercise, and at worst a pointless undertaking. That is why we have devoted a chapter to issues of quality in education, the vital importance of good schools, and the priority that must be given to improvement, in order that the quality and standards of all schools are raised to those of the best.
- 13.10 We considered it important to bring together views, expressed in consultation, on the nature and purposes of education of pupils throughout their schooling. We wished to highlight the strong support for an education in the service of both the individual and society – an education concerned with all aspects of human living, contributing to personal fulfilment, civic well-being and economic prosperity. Within a framework of shared core values and principles, we acknowledge perspectives that make for distinctiveness in the educational experience provided by schools, manifest in their ethos, but with scope for each school to develop and maintain its own particular character.
- 13.11 We need hardly state that the aims and spirit of *A Shared Future* are unmistakeable features of the backcloth to this Review. We were asked explicitly to consider matters of integrating education and improving collaboration. Although recognising that integrated schools make a highly significant and distinctive approach to educating children and young people together, we are convinced that all schools, and all the educational interests, need to, and wish to, play their part in the journey towards the goal of *A Shared Future* – “a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust”.

- 13.12 That is why we advocate a more pervasive and inclusive strategy, focused on the dynamic process of integrating education across the school system. This begins with each school as an inclusive, civilised and tolerant learning community, building mutually beneficial relationships with other schools, and in the case of post-primary schools with Further Education, focused on learning and sharing together. Our argument for this more inclusive and pervasive approach is three-fold: first, the educational case – access for pupils to the full range of the curriculum, to high quality teaching, and to modern facilities; second, the social case – societal well-being by promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning; the economic case – through cost-effective provision that gives good value for money.
- 13.13 We believe that our recommendations taken together provide a realistic, achievable, yet challenging way forward to bring about the radical and long-term changes that are necessary if the children and young people of Northern Ireland are to be provided with an excellent education, in the broadest sense, in good schools with a secure future. Although we appreciate that rationalisation can be an emotive issue accompanied by a sense of loss, our consultation left us in no doubt that all the educational interests realise that the status quo cannot prevail, that difficult decisions need to be made, and that the time has come for a fundamentally different approach to planning the schools' estate. Building on promising beginnings at local level, the development of more widespread sharing and collaboration between schools and across sectors will require careful nurturing and encouragement. At the same time, the modernisation of the schools' estate presents opportunities for new shared schools and for a variety of approaches to optimising the use of new accommodation and facilities.
- 13.14 These new directions will require visionary, clear, yet sensitive skill and leadership in managing change. In presenting a case to the public for the changes we are recommending, it will be important that the focus is on the real benefits intended, and on how these can be realised, and on the opportunities inherent in sharing and working together, rather than on the difficulties. The public needs to be helped to see that there is a better way, and to take ownership of it. High quality communication regarding the Review's recommendations will be essential for all those, not least children and young people, and the professionals themselves, whose stake in the outworking of any decisions is indeed great.

Glossary

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Appendices

Glossary

ACT	All Children Together
ANIC	Association of Northern Ireland Colleges
ARNE	Assessment of Relative Needs
ASB	Aggregated Schools Budget
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
AWPU	Age Weighted Pupil Unit
CASS	Curriculum Advisory and Support Service
CCCS	Cross Community Contact Scheme
CCEA	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CEAIG	Careers education, advice, information and guidance
CFF	Common Funding Formula
CFR	Consistent Financial Reporting
CH	Cultural Heritage
CI	Controlled Integrated
CnaG	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELBs	Education and Library Boards
EMU	Education for Mutual Understanding

ESA	Education and Skills Authority
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
FSME	Free School Meals Entitlement
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GMI	Grant-maintained Integrated
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
GTCNI	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IM	Irish-medium
ISNI	Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
KS2	Key Stage 2
KS3	Key Stage 3
KS4	Key Stage 4
LEA	Local Education Authorities
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LTE	Long Term Enrolment
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board
NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
NINIS	Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System
NISM	Northern Ireland Schools Modernisation Programme
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSNI	Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland
PESA	Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRC	Premature Retirement Compensation
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PWC	PricewaterHouseCoopers
RAP	Resource Allocation Plan
ROI	Republic of Ireland
RPA	Review of Public Administration
RRI	Reinvestment and Reform Initiative
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND0	Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SR04	Spending Review 2004
TACOTIE	Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education
TRC	Transferor Representatives' Council
TSN	Targeting Social Need
VEP	Vocational Enhancement Programme
VG	Voluntary Grammar
YCNI	Youth Council for Northern Ireland

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INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC REVIEW OF EDUCATION

A Paper Prepared for Consultation

1. In March 2006, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced a Strategic Review of Education, led by Professor Sir George Bain, with the following terms of reference: ***“To examine the funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools’ estate, taking account of curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14-19 year olds, and also demographic trends.”*** Elaborating on the terms of reference, the Secretary of State asked the Review to look particularly at how new models of schooling can be developed, ensuring that resources are shared in the best way, giving young people the best environment in which to be educated.
2. In addition, the Review was asked to look at how best to encourage and facilitate integrated education as a vital building block towards creating the conditions necessary for long-term peace and stability in Northern Ireland. It was made clear that the particular importance attached to integrating education is not to imply limiting the different ethos that parents want to see in schools, but to focus attention on developing thinking about new ways to work together, and of envisaging approaches to schooling which share resources and guard ethos. The Review takes place against a backcloth of major strategic reforms in education in Northern Ireland and in the context of a future marked by a substantial demographic downturn.
3. The Review attaches great importance to an early dialogue with key stakeholders on a range of matters central to the particular focus of the Review, that is the strategic planning and organisation of the schools’ estate. As implied in the terms of reference, an examination of the funding provided for education in Northern Ireland falls within the remit of the Review. This paper, however, does not focus on funding per se but with that part of the remit concerning the strategic planning and organisation of the schools’ estate.
4. The purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for open discussion that will play a constructive and essential part in examining issues, considering views and perspectives and exploring possibilities for action to achieve a ‘fit for purpose’ schools’ estate that serves

communities well and represents an effective use of public funds for the common good.

5. Government has announced a 10-year programme of modernisation of the schools' estate to bring about much needed improvements. The Department of Education has consulted widely on the recommendations of the report 'New Procurement and Delivery Arrangements for the Schools' Estate' (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, March 2005). That report was commissioned in response to concerns that the scale of change required in the schools' estate, and the need to fund the long-term development and maintenance of the estate, cannot be achieved under existing arrangements without placing an unsustainable demand on capital and recurrent expenditure, with consequential impact on value for money and speed of delivery.
6. It is essential that long-term planning of the schools' estate, both in terms of capital investment and recurrent expenditure, takes account of highly significant factors such as the projected decline in demand for school places, the new curriculum for primary and post-primary schools, the Pupil Entitlement Framework at Key Stage 4 and at post-16, growing over capacity in the schools' system, the needs and aspirations of the various sectors, and the desire to use school facilities as wider community resources.
7. In taking account of these factors it is inevitable that the planning of the development of the schools' estate will entail rationalisation of provision in both primary and post-primary schools, the extent of rationalisation depending on circumstances pertaining in particular geographical areas. The case for rationalisation rests on strong educational and financial considerations. The outcomes of rationalisation could take many forms; various configurations of schools may be educationally and financially justified. The potential for optimising the use of facilities between schools is largely unexplored. In particular, the nature of the post-14 curriculum entitlement is such that collaboration among schools and between

schools and further education colleges would seem to be essential for most, if not all, schools.

8. The stated goal of the capital investment programme is a ***'fit for purpose schools' estate, efficiently delivered and managed'***, where fitness of purpose is measured in terms of sufficiency, suitability and condition of accommodation. Put succinctly, the objective of the estate planning process is to provide a sufficiency of school places through the right mix of schools, of the right size and in the right locations. All schools should have educationally suitable accommodation and facilities which make for a stimulating, safe and healthy learning environment.

9. It is argued that at present this objective is not being achieved, nor is it possible to be realised in a cost-effective manner under current planning arrangements. There is substantial agreement that to overcome the weaknesses in the current planning arrangements authorities will need to adopt a new strategic approach to the management and development of the schools' estate. A new strategic approach to planning on a system-wide basis is envisaged incorporating specific features. The features that appear most pertinent to the purpose of this paper may be summarised as follows:
 - Within the context of guidelines provided by the Department of Education, the planning process should have a specific sector dimension, with school authorities and sectors continuing to represent the needs, expectations and ethos of their sector, and their understanding of the dynamics of local communities, throughout the planning process.

 - High quality statistical data are required to help take full account of various determinants of projected demand and capacity and also to take account of the interactions between geographic areas and sectors.

- The objective of planning for specific geographical areas is the provision, through cost-effective use of capital funds, of a set of sustainable schools which, taken together, meet the expressed needs and projected requirements of each sector and each area.
- In order to achieve this objective, there is a need for mechanisms and processes, integral to all stages of planning, from early formulations to finalisation and agreement on proposals, to enable a critical consideration of the totality of the plans and proposals unfolding for the different sectors. This calls for a more interactive and collaborative approach to planning, a planning dialogue so to speak.

10. A critical examination of the funding of the education system generally and of the structure and organisation of the schools' estate in particular cannot be undertaken without reference to the fundamental purposes and principles of the system.

There is consensus that, in broad terms, the education system should:

- i. provide all pupils with high quality educational opportunities and experiences in terms of curriculum, learning and teaching, through which they achieve high standards in terms of their attainment, personal growth and social development and achieve their potential;
- ii. be vital to social and community well-being, contributing effectively and appropriately to broader social and economic goals and processes;

- iii. accommodate reasonable parental choice in relation to the values and ethos of schools, with due regard to the use of public funds; and
 - iv. provide equitable access for all pupils
11. Aim (ii) is reflected in the report “Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education” (TACOTIE) which advocated as a key principle that “it is a seminal purpose of the Northern Ireland Education Service to promote a culture of tolerance and reconciliation and, for schools, to do so in keeping with the particular ethos and circumstances within which they operate. These different approaches should be valued and all schools should be encouraged to provide further opportunities to promote a culture of tolerance.”
12. More recently the document, “A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland”, in endorsing the recommendations of TACOTIE, identified movement towards greater sharing in education as a whole as an overarching goal and stressed that “the state must be neutral between competing cultural claims (‘promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level’ and encouragement of ‘integrated education - in its widest sense’”).
13. An effective system of education requires adequate funding. Equally, the funding made available should be used to get the best for pupils, critically in terms of the quality of the education provided for them and the outcomes in terms of the standards they achieve. Consequently, in addition to and consistent with principles of quality, choice and access, questions arise in relation to use made of the funding for education. Fundamentally these questions centre on educational effectiveness but also, importantly, on the economic use of funding, on cost-effectiveness and efficiency. The issues of effectiveness and efficiency are interdependent since inefficiencies in certain aspects of the education system necessarily reduce the resources available for other areas and services of the system.

14. The argument for cost-effective and cost-efficient infrastructure and arrangements rests on the premise that the maximum proportion of expenditure should be directed towards those things that determine high quality and standards. At school level, it is recognised widely that the quality of learning and the standards achieved by pupils are dependent on key factors such as:
- ❑ the suitability of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs
 - ❑ the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and governance in schools (sufficient well qualified, effectively deployed, high performing and motivated teachers)
 - ❑ the quality of the learning environment: suitability and condition of the accommodation, facilities and resources for teaching and learning; an attractive, safe and well-maintained environment
 - ❑ the quality and effectiveness of support services
 - ❑ the confidence and support of parents and the wider community
15. Communities need schools that reflect diversity of aspiration and choice, and which, taken together, are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils, are educationally and financially viable, and are sustainable in the long-term. Working within a framework of the relative stability arising from sufficient and more assured enrolments, and freed from recurring concerns of managing on the edges of viability, headteachers, staff and support services, are enabled to direct their energies towards improving quality and raising standards. Basically, we need an enabling structure of schools which permits access by all pupils to an appropriate curriculum, assures financial stability through patterns of enrolment and empowers schools to concentrate on their core purposes.

16. To summarise, can we aspire to a school system which serves all pupils equally well, configured around key values, principles and goals:

- ❑ communities served by a set of educationally effective and efficiently functioning and sustainable schools, optimising the use of their facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing;
- ❑ high quality educational experiences and outcomes;
- ❑ equity, accessibility, pluralism, diversity and choice;
- ❑ educational and financial viability;
- ❑ sustainability;
- ❑ maximum expenditure on the things that really matter in respect of quality and standards;
- ❑ affordability;
- ❑ cost-effectiveness; and
- ❑ efficiency and minimisation of 'waste' in capital and recurrent expenditure?

17. How can we accommodate the values, principles and goals outlined above in the planning and use of schools at local level? How can all those with responsibility for shaping the future of education work together to agree a common vision for the school system and a strategy for working towards that vision? How is that vision to be realised at local areas level?

18. There is no underestimating the challenge of making best use of funding to ensure that communities are served well by sustainable, educationally effective and efficiently functioning schools, optimising

the use of their facilities for the good of all through agreed models of collaboration and sharing. Nor should the potential of the opportunity be undervalued.

19. Working and planning together in new ways for the common good will require visionary and courageous leadership, mutual respect, persistent commitment, innovative thinking and, perhaps most of all, skill in developing relationships and building confidence in new ways of working.

Respondents to the Strategic Review of Education

- *Advisory Council on Infrastructure Investment (ACII)
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Anne Odling-Smee
- *Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC)
- *Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)
- *Belfast Trust for Integrated Education (BELTIE)
- *Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland (Trustees)
- *Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG)
- *Community Relations Council (CRC)
Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)
- *Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
Deborah Girvan, Communications and Lobbying Manager, NICIE
- *Department of Education (DE)
- *Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)
- *Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)
- *Focus Learning Trust (Brethren Community)
- *General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)
- *Governing Bodies Association (NI) Ltd (GBA)
- *Greater Belfast Catholic Maintained Post-Primary Principals
- *Institute of Directors (IOD)
- *Integrated Education Fund (IEF)
- *Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (InaG)

*National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)

*North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB)

*NI Committee: Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICICTU)

*Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)

*Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC):

UTU (Ulster Teachers Union)

NASUWT (as above)

ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers)

NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers)

INTO (Irish National Teachers' Organisation)

Ronnie Hassard on behalf of the Governors of Ballymena Academy

*Rural Development Council (RDC)

*South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)

*Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)

*Sports' Council NI (SC)

*Strategic Investment Board (SIB)

*Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC)

*Unison

*Western Education and Library Board (WELB)

*Organisations and individuals who met with the Review Team.

All submissions provided by respondents have been posted on the website www.deni.gov.uk