

Open Letter

Issued on behalf of CCMS/CSSC/GBA/CSTS/TRC

Dated: 03.03.22

Critical time for Education- over 90% of children across Northern Ireland set to be disadvantaged.

We believe that children and young people should be educated together in diversity-respecting, inclusive schools and that no child should be disadvantaged or left behind. We would be failing the children and young people of Northern Ireland if we did not share our significant concerns about the impact of the Integrated Education Bill on their education. These concerns echo responses to the Bill made by the Education Authority (EA) and the Department of Education (DE).

The legal and financial implications of this Bill need to be understood by all elected representatives and taken seriously. The issue is neither integrated education nor integrated schools. We believe this flawed legislation is not fit for purpose and will educationally disadvantage over 90% of children and young people.

In their response to the NI Assembly Education Committee, DE said “The Bill treats integrated education differently, not equitably, as has been suggested, but differently, to the extent that integrated education would be elevated above all other sectors”.

EA called the Bill “ill-timed and unhelpful” and added “the requirements set out in the draft Bill, appear to be demanding and potentially discriminatory, in view of the preferential treatment implied for one sector as compared with all others. There is a concern regarding the resources which would be required”.

A proposed amendment to the Bill: “The provisions and funding commitments included in the Integrated Education Strategy must be made without detriment to other sectors” which would have addressed significant concerns, was alarmingly rejected.

Collaboration in education is critical. Prioritising one group of schools above all others will undermine efforts to provide an equitable environment. Those expressing concerns about the unintended damaging outcomes of the flawed legislation have been characterised as self-interested and standing in the way of progress. That view is as inaccurate as it is unfair.

Legitimate concerns regarding the consequences of the Bill for the quality of education provided to all our children and young people, must be given due consideration. We question what funding will be available, given the scale of investment required for the enactment of this Bill. Investment which will have to be directed to one sector.

For this reason, we are unable to support the Bill, we remain committed to working together to ensure children and young people meet their full potential.

Yours sincerely



Gerry Campbell
Chief Executive
The Council for Catholic
Maintained Schools



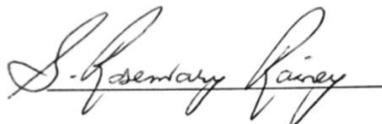
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