



# FUTURE POST-PRIMARY ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Advice from the  
Post-Primary Review Working Group



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Introduction

- 1.1 As a Group, we count it a privilege, as well as a heavy responsibility, to have been asked to contribute to the resolution of issues of vital importance to the young people in this and future generations. We were conscious of what had gone before and under no illusions about the difficulty of the task. There has been a high level of interest and debate over several years, but little unanimity about the way forward. It is evident that some points of view, though sincerely held, remain far apart.
- 1.2 There is, however, strong agreement that the interests of the pupil should be paramount. We therefore considered it important to establish first what should be a reasonable educational entitlement for each pupil across Northern Ireland at post-primary age, and to build into it sufficient choice and flexibility to take account of each young person's needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations and to respond to the needs of a fast-changing world.
- 1.3 Only then did we consider the implications this might have for school structures and for the arrangements for transfer from primary to post-primary education. The transfer arrangements will inevitably be a key focus of public attention but have to be seen in the wider context of the range and choice of educational opportunities to which pupils should have access in order to fulfil their potential in a changing world. In short, the transfer arrangements should serve the system rather than drive it.
- 1.4 The aim of this document is to set out as succinctly and clearly as possible the issues we considered and the conclusions we reached. It is not an academic treatise, nor does it attempt to reflect every issue the Group discussed as part of its deliberations.
- 1.5 We were greatly assisted in our work by inputs from a number of organisations and individuals who provided information and presentations to the Group on a wide range of topics. We express our appreciation in particular to those shown in Appendix 1. We also want to pay tribute to the professional expertise and support of the Department's Post Primary Review Team, without which our task would have been much more difficult.



- 1.6 The handling of the Group's advice is entirely a matter for the responsible Minister. However it is the Group's view that what is now needed is a clear and early decision on the future direction of post-primary education in Northern Ireland. A further period of general consultation would merely revisit old arguments. Our proposals for implementation do, however, provide for consultation where it will be most meaningful – in relation to the specific needs of local areas and the potential contribution of individual schools. The Department would also consult in the normal way about any associated policy or legislative changes.
- 1.7 As a result of our work, we concluded that the status quo is not an option. The changes already taking place for demographic reasons alone will have a major impact on future provision. But change must be managed strategically in order to ensure that educational quality is protected and enhanced. The current arrangements serve some well, but do not meet the needs of all pupils. The educational provision on offer is patchy and at times lacking the necessary breadth and choice. Standards are high, but not world class.
- 1.8 Against that background, we did not see our role as providing merely some sort of compromise solution between opposing positions. Rather we believe that our recommendations point the way to a much enriched, flexible and more relevant post-primary education for all our young people. Achieving this will present challenges to all parts of the education service, and a need to work together in a culture of real partnership as never before. We owe our young people no less.

## Terms of Reference

- 1.9 The Right Honourable Jane Kennedy MP, the Minister with responsibility for Education, established the Working Group to provide advice on options for future arrangements for post-primary education.

The Group's remit was:

*“To take account of the responses to the consultation on the Burns Report, including the diversity of views on academic selection, and provide advice on options for future arrangements for post-primary education.*”

*The advice should provide for:*

- *development of alternative transfer procedures with a view to the current Transfer Tests being withdrawn as soon as practicable;*
- *development of a Pupil Profile to inform parental and pupil choice;*
- *access for all young people to a broader curriculum providing greater choice;*
- *flexible arrangements that can meet the developing needs of young people;*
- *greater cooperation and collaboration among schools and with the further education sector; and*
- *the development of local arrangements that meet local needs, wishes and circumstances.*

*The Working Group should also advise on:*

- *guiding principles and measurable outcomes for future post-primary arrangements;*
- *criteria for the development and assessment of proposals together with measures to encourage and support their development and implementation; and*
- *outline arrangements for the planning and implementation of future post-primary arrangements.”*

1.10 The Group carefully considered these terms of reference and noted some key points:

**Requirement to take account of the responses to the consultation on the Burns Report, including the diversity of views on academic selection.**

1.10.1 Throughout the Group’s deliberations, account was taken of the responses to the Burns consultation. The consultation showed broad support for a number of the Burns recommendations including the guiding principles, the Pupil Profile, and the need for better cooperation and collaboration among schools (but not for



Collegiates). There was very strong support for ending the Transfer Tests but, as the remit notes, a diversity of views on academic selection.

- 1.10.2 We recognised that these divergent views on academic selection and the views that the tests should be abolished but academic selection retained would be problematic and not easily reconcilable. We concluded however that these issues could only properly be considered after we had reached a view on curricular entitlement and how this could best be provided in the interests of all pupils.

### **Plurality of options and possibility of local arrangements.**

- 1.10.3 Our remit required us to provide advice on options for future arrangements, and on the development of local arrangements that meet local needs, wishes and circumstances. This provided scope for proposals which could involve different arrangements in individual areas. Our remit did not require us to specify options for a single uniform system across Northern Ireland; rather that schools and their managing authorities at local level could be able to develop arrangements for their areas which meet local needs. Whilst such flexibility is welcomed, we recognised the importance of having some degree of consistency so that young people would have access to the same range and quality of education regardless of where they live. We agreed that the options which we would determine, and any local arrangements brought forward in due course by school managing authorities, would need to be developed within the context of a clear framework that would guarantee an educational entitlement for all pupils.

### **Requirement to advise on planning and implementation.**

- 1.10.4 We welcomed this dimension of the remit because it would provide a crosscheck of the feasibility of our proposals and require us to consider a realistic timeframe for implementation.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CASE FOR CHANGE

### Context

- 2.1 The education service has a vital role to play in equipping the young people of Northern Ireland with the knowledge, skills and values to be the citizens, parents, employees, entrepreneurs, or civic leaders of tomorrow. The task has never been more challenging.
- 2.2 We live in a society still emerging from conflict, where the hurt of recent history is still acutely felt. At an individual level, the life-chances of many young people are constrained by social disadvantage, which often results in educational underachievement, thus perpetuating the cycle. The challenge for our education service in this changing world is to ensure that each young person, irrespective of social background or circumstance, is given the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential and make a positive contribution to life and work in a modern pluralistic society.
- 2.3 Our economy has changed dramatically in recent years, with the decline in the traditional industries and a shift towards service-based and knowledge-based economic activity. This presents a clear challenge to educators, to ensure that young people emerging from our schools have the skills and personal attributes necessary for the modern work environment. Swift advances in technology are accelerating these changes and our young people will need to be adaptable and have the necessary ICT/ILT competence. This will impact too on the way education itself is delivered, in making use of facilities such as e-learning, and will present challenges for our teachers, who will need the support of the education service behind them to help make these changes.
- 2.4 Our education service enjoys a good reputation in many quarters, but a closer examination identified a number of challenges which it faces today and in the years ahead. The Group considered a range of statistical and other information relating to the impact of factors such as demography, curriculum, the performance of our current system relative to other countries, and the effect of existing policies and practices on our system.

## Demography

- 2.5 By 2010, the number of pupils in post-primary schools is projected to fall by some 8% or 12,600 pupils, and population projections predict that by 2040, our age 11-18 population will have reduced by a quarter (Appendix 2). The demographic downturn is having an impact on the existing post-primary school estate, where there is already substantial over-capacity. In 2002, 32 post-primary schools had less than 300 pupils. Popular schools continuing to fill to capacity at a time of falling numbers will result in an increased number of small schools.
- 2.6 Grammar schools are highly regarded by parents in many areas, and can be expected to continue to fill to capacity. This, together with a declining school population, has two knock-on effects:
- The ability range of pupils admitted to grammar schools will widen. An increasing number of pupils with Transfer Grades C and D are being admitted to grammar schools (Appendix 2). Under the current transfer and open enrolment arrangements, this trend is likely to continue and will result in further widening of the ability profile of pupils admitted to these schools. This will raise questions about the appropriateness of the curriculum offered and the teaching approaches needed for a much broader ability range of pupils in these schools.
  - A smaller proportion of pupils will transfer into non-grammar schools. This decline in non-grammar school enrolments, coupled with the growth in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors, will increase the number of schools with low enrolments, and raise questions about their future viability. It will also lead to a greater concentration of socially and educationally disadvantaged pupils in non-grammar schools.

## Educational Provision and Performance

### Choice and Flexibility

- 2.7 In the majority of cases, the current system is inflexible and provides negligible opportunity for pupils to change school before the end of Key Stage 4. It cannot respond to pupils' changing needs and circumstances, and many pupils are disadvantaged by having their options closed down at

a very early stage in their post-primary education. This has a negative impact on the life chances of many children and ultimately on the wider society and economy.

2.8 At present, the educational provision and choice available to pupils depends on where a pupil lives, and the type and size of school attended. Small post-primary schools, even with additional funding to address the diseconomies of their size, cannot provide their pupils with access to the same breadth of curriculum choice or enrichment opportunities as their peers in larger schools:

- the number of GCSE subjects on offer at post-primary schools ranges from 6 to 33 subjects, with 127 schools (55%) offering less than 20 subjects; and
- 21 schools (9%) offer less than 15 subjects.

2.9 These concerns apply equally to the provision for pupils above compulsory school age:

- the number of GCE subjects available to post-16 pupils in schools ranges from 1 to 27 subjects;
- almost a quarter of the schools providing GCEs, offer less than 10 subjects; and
- of the 177 schools that have 6<sup>th</sup> form provision, 69 have less than 80 post-16 pupils.

Such schools can provide only a very limited range of subject choices, denying their post-16 pupils many of the opportunities available to pupils in schools with larger sixth forms (Appendix 2).

## **The Curriculum**

2.10 All pupils in post-primary schools, irrespective of the type of school they attend, currently follow a common curriculum which offers an essentially academic diet, albeit at different paces from school to school. Many pupils, including those in grammar schools, do not see the relevance of much of what they are learning and do not find the curriculum as stimulating, enjoyable or as flexible as it might be (ref: NI Cohort Study). Employers responding to the consultation on the Burns proposals reported that



children leaving school are not equipped with the skills necessary for work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In the 2002 Skills Monitoring Survey, employers reported a gap between the skills of their current workforce and those needed to meet their business objectives. Particular skills lacking included computer literacy/knowledge of IT, practical skills, customer handling skills, interpersonal skills and general communication skills.

- 2.11 CCEA is addressing many of these issues in the context of its proposals for a revised statutory curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4. However, the additional flexibility offered by these proposals will be of little benefit to pupils if it merely allows for more options within an essentially 'academic' menu. As indicated earlier, in many schools the range of courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16 is very limited, with the result that pupils' choices are constrained by what is available rather than enabling them to pursue courses that are relevant to their needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations.
- 2.12 There are also issues regarding the credibility and assessment of vocational qualifications. Many universities and employers do not give vocational qualifications the same status as their academic equivalents, and there is often poor public perception about the level and value of some vocational qualifications.

## **Performance**

- 2.13 Northern Ireland has a reputation for producing more pupils with qualifications at the top end of the achievement scale than in England. Compared to England, Northern Ireland has a higher proportion of pupils achieving 'A' levels, and at GCSE level we have more pupils achieving 5 or more good grades (A\*-C). However, we also have too many young people leaving school with few or no qualifications. At GCSE, the average performance of pupils (in the form of a GCSE point score - see Appendix 2) is lower in Northern Ireland than in England. In overall terms, therefore, our young people are not doing as well as in England. Whilst the high achievement of our top performers is praiseworthy, we must address the issue of too many of our young people leaving school with low, few or no qualifications, which has direct implications for their future employment prospects and for their life-chances generally.

2.14 There is a strong social differential in educational achievement in Northern Ireland. Pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds do significantly less well than other pupils:

- they constitute only 7% of enrolments in grammar schools;
- the most disadvantaged pupils are only one third as likely to achieve a grade A in the Transfer Test; and
- they are only around half as likely to achieve 5 or more high grade GCSEs (A\*-C) as the least disadvantaged pupils.

The various initiatives introduced to tackle disadvantage and underachievement, while improving performance in schools with high levels of disadvantage, have not yet had a measurable impact on closing this gap in performance.

2.15 It is important to look beyond comparisons with England to assess how well Northern Ireland's education system is serving its young people. The PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2000 Research (ref: OECD Report), which assessed the ability of 15 year olds in the participating countries to apply their knowledge and skills in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy to real life problems, showed that:

- Northern Ireland's average performance was on a par with that of England;
- the performance of the UK as a whole was behind a number of other developed countries; and
- the gap between the highest and lowest scores in Northern Ireland was amongst the widest of the participating countries.

These findings reinforce the point that whilst our current system serves many young people very well, we must address the issue of those who do less well. Some broad conclusions drawn from the PISA results by OECD are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.16 The GCSE point scores show that many pupils at our grammar schools reach high levels of achievement but so do a significant number of pupils in our non-grammar schools. There is a considerable overlap between the two sectors, with some excellent performance in both grammar and



non-grammar schools, but also some poor performance in both sectors (Appendix 2).

## **Policies and Practices**

### **Transfer Arrangements**

2.17 Widespread concerns about the effects of the current arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary education were clearly evident in the responses to the consultation on the Burns proposals. The majority of respondents supported the abolition of the current Transfer Tests. Perceived shortcomings of the present arrangements included:

- the current Transfer Tests are seen as placing undue pressure on young children;
- preparation for the Transfer Tests in many primary schools has the potential to skew the primary curriculum;
- private coaching for the tests gives an unfair advantage to those pupils whose parents are prepared, and able, to pay for it; and
- many pupils who do not gain a grammar school place experience a sense of failure and lose confidence and belief in their ability.

2.18 Teachers in non-grammar schools spend a great deal of time seeking to address these feelings of failure but where they remain unresolved, pupils can become disengaged and disaffected with the education system (ref: Gallagher and Smith). In addition, the Transfer Tests, although providing a general indication of pupils' ability, have been shown to have the potential to misclassify pupils by up to three grades above or below their given grade (ref: Gardner).

2.19 Northern Ireland is one of only a few countries in Europe today that continues to have a selective system, where children are selected on the basis of ability at age 11 into particular types of schools.

### **Open Enrolment**

2.20 The current system of open enrolment has created competition between schools. While this was intended to drive up standards, the desire of

parents to gain places in what are perceived as “better” schools has created:

- a hierarchy of schools within each sector;
- a number of schools characterised by falling enrolments, low staff morale and low achievement; and
- a climate in which schools work in isolation from each other, thereby inhibiting cooperation which, if developed, could bring benefits to pupils, teachers and the wider community.

The declining post-primary population and the current open enrolment policy are expected to lead to an increase in the number of schools whose viability is in question.

## **Strategic Management of School Estate**

- 2.21 There is a lack of cohesive planning and management of the education estate, in part due to the diverse ownership responsibilities. The development planning process lacks a strategic approach, and developments in post-primary education are not planned in a holistic way that will make best use of resources and provide an efficient and effective service to local areas.

### **Summary**

- The status quo is not an option. Demographic trends alone mean that change is unavoidable.
- Current provision is inequitable: access and choice depends on where a pupil lives and the size and type of school attended.
- Employers report that young people are leaving school without the skills necessary for work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Our high achieving pupils perform well and it is important that this is sustained and further improved. However, our system is failing too many other pupils.
- Failure to address the issues facing our education system will have a significant impact on our ability to compete in what is becoming an increasingly global and technologically-driven world market.

## CHAPTER 3: VISION, OBJECTIVE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OUTCOMES

### Context

- 3.1 Against the background described in the previous chapter, we considered it important to set out our vision and broad objective for future post-primary education. We developed Guiding Principles which should govern all new post-primary arrangements, as well as outcomes that are to be expected from any new arrangements. These outcomes also provide a means by which the success of new arrangements can be measured.

### Vision

- 3.2 The Burns Report set out a vision for the education service and the subsequent consultation showed almost universal support for this vision. We agreed that this vision encapsulated the distinguishing characteristics for a modern education service and we agreed to adopt it:

The education service... *“will recognise the individual abilities and needs of all young people, and provide them with high quality education, enabling them to realise their potential, to lead fulfilling lives and to play productive and positive roles in society as persons whose learning and development have been holistic.”*

### Objective

- 3.3 Flowing from this vision, we agreed the following objective for post-primary education:

*“To provide high quality, flexible post-primary education that develops all young people, enables them to fulfil their potential and prepares them to participate actively in life and work in a diverse and changing world.”*

### Guiding Principles

- 3.4 Our remit asks for advice on guiding principles for future post-primary arrangements and also that we take account of the responses to the consultation on the Burns Report. The Burns Report set out twelve Guiding Principles to reinforce its vision and objective for an education system that has as its focus the needs of young people. It considered that these principles should influence and be at the heart of policy and practice at all levels of the system. We noted that in the responses to consultation, these Guiding Principles received widespread support, particularly the key principles that:

- each young person should be valued equally; and
- all young people should be enabled to develop their talents to the full.

3.5 The responses to the consultation included some criticism of, and suggested alternatives to, the Burns principles, including a perceived need to refine some of the language used.

3.6 We decided to build on the Burns principles, given the high level of support for them during the consultation, whilst also taking account of the criticism and comments made. We felt that there was scope to reduce the number of principles, and to express them more succinctly. We therefore identified the following 7 Guiding Principles, each with a key word to encapsulate its theme, on which a system of post-primary education should be based. The first four principles are pupil-centred; the others relate to the education service.

<b>EQUALITY</b>	Each young person should be highly and equally valued.
<b>QUALITY</b>	Each young person should enjoy education of the highest quality in all aspects of teaching, learning and wider educational provision.
<b>RELEVANCE</b>	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.
<b>ACCESS</b>	Each young person should have effective access, with appropriate support, to education which allows them to fulfil their potential and which fosters lifelong learning.
<b>CHOICE</b>	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.
<b>RESPECT</b>	The education service should promote tolerance and reconciliation through an understanding of, and respect for, diversity.
<b>PARTNERSHIP</b>	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.

## Outcomes

3.7 A change process requires clear measurable outcomes to be established in order to secure confidence in the changes; evaluate the effectiveness of the changes by demonstrating the gains made; and highlight areas where change has not had the desired effect. We considered that the future post-primary arrangements should provide measurable outcomes for:

- young people;
- parents; and
- society, the economy and the environment.



These are set out below:

**Each young person is:**

- Aware of personal strengths and unique dignity.
- Responsible for self and eager to make a positive contribution to society.
- Motivated to learn and to embrace life-long learning.
- Given opportunities and support to maximise potential.
- Valued and demonstrates respect for others.
- Recognised for individual abilities and achievements.
- Equipped with a wide range of knowledge, values and skills for life and work. \*

\* We agreed that the objectives in CCEA's proposals for the Key Stage 3 curriculum encapsulate what we believe are the essential knowledge, skills and values to equip each young person for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**In the education of their children, parents are:**

- Valued and welcomed as key partners.
- Informed and involved.
- Responsive and engaged.
- Supported and supportive.
- Confident that the education system will deliver a high quality service.

**Society, the economy and the environment benefit from:**

- A learning society recognising the value and benefits of education.
- Informed and responsible citizens who participate in civic life, and value and enhance the environment.
- A creative and innovative workforce with a high level of entrepreneurial skills.
- A high quality and flexible work force with a wide range of skills, values and knowledge.



3.8 To achieve these outcomes the education service must also demonstrate a number of characteristics:

**To ensure these outcomes are delivered the Education Service must:**

- Be learner-centred, respect diversity and be supportive of each young person.
- Value and support everyone involved in the delivery of education.
- Recognise the key role of teachers and support their continuing professional development.
- Be flexible and cohesive, promoting active cooperation between all the key partners.
- Be well resourced, effective, efficient and focused on enhancing the learning environment.

3.9 These outcomes need to be measured to assess the success of new arrangements. This should be done as far as possible by careful analysis of data already being collected, so that schools and other providers are not overburdened with further demands for statistical and other information. An illustrative list of some mechanisms that might be used to measure the outcomes is contained in Appendix 3.

## CHAPTER 4: PUPILS' ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

- 4.1 In contrast to the very uneven provision that currently exists (see Chapter 2), we considered it important to establish a framework of educational entitlement which should be the right of every pupil at post-primary level.
- 4.2 The Entitlement Framework outlined below takes as its starting point the primacy of the needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs. Access to a wide, varied and flexible range of educational experiences and opportunities should be the entitlement of every learner so that they can reach their full potential. If we are to have actively engaged, motivated learners who are equipped for life and work in a diverse and changing world, the educational experiences of all pupils must be:
- relevant to the individual's needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations;
  - based on high expectations of what each individual can achieve; and
  - enjoyable.
- 4.3 This Entitlement Framework in turn provides the basis for the development of criteria against which options for new arrangements can be assessed. The Entitlement Framework does not in itself presume or require any particular model or structure of educational provision. It could be given expression in a variety of ways, taking account of the situation in individual localities, provided that it meets the needs of all pupils. Criteria and some examples of possible structures are discussed later in Chapter 6.
- 4.4 In light of the pivotal role of the Entitlement Framework, the Department should consider the extent to which the framework should be given statutory underpinning.

## The Entitlement Framework – Principles

- 4.5 The Entitlement Framework must have a clear focus on pupil needs, and take account of the curricular context in which schools will be operating. There must also be emphasis on the provision of high quality careers education and guidance.

### Pupil Needs

- 4.6 The Group believes that:
- each pupil is unique and individual;
  - each pupil's post-primary education should be tailored to meet his/her individual needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations as far as is practicable; and
  - each pupil should be motivated and enabled to reach his/her full potential.
- 4.7 The Group recognises that pupils:
- mature at different rates;
  - have different learning needs and interests and that these may change during post-primary education;
  - have a range of learning needs and require a range of teaching approaches;
  - learn at different paces; and
  - achieve in different ways.

### Curriculum

- 4.8 The Working Group notes and endorses the current CCEA proposals for a revised statutory curriculum. These aim to:
- reduce the present level of over-prescription of subject content in favour of a more holistic approach focused on the development of a range of pupil competences, including the key skills; and

- provide the opportunity to extend the range and variety of learning experiences available to pupils and to provide these experiences in a flexible way to meet individual learning needs.

- 4.9 We consider that the development of pupils' key skills is an important element of CCEA's proposals and should continue to be developed throughout the 14-19 phase. This should address the concerns of the business sector that pupils should be equipped with a range of key skills to prepare them better to contribute fully in employment. Assessment arrangements should be put in place to ensure appropriate recognition of these skills across the full range of pupils' experiences.
- 4.10 In particular, the Group endorses CCEA's holistic approach. The educational and personal experiences of pupils during their time at school should not be confined to the formal curriculum. They should be enriched by the ethos of the school as a community and by a wide range of enrichment activities that run in parallel with formal learning. Pupils should have the opportunity to follow non-examination courses to provide breadth, enrichment and enjoyment to their educational experiences. All of these are important in pupils' personal skills development and in increasing their self-esteem and confidence. The Working Group on 14-19 Reform chaired by Mike Tomlinson, is reviewing the qualifications structure. This offers the potential to create structures to recognise attainment at different levels and in different ways in order to engage and motivate pupils, enrich their educational experiences and make them more enjoyable.
- 4.11 The Group believes that each pupil should have access to a wide, varied range of learning pathways which have the flexibility to keep pupils' options open for as long as possible during their post-primary education. (A learning pathway is the combination of courses, learning opportunities or teaching approaches which an individual chooses to follow to meet his or her needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations). Recognising that pupils have different learning needs and learn at different paces, pupils should also have access to extension courses which widen and develop their interests in their courses. These courses go beyond the statutory core and will become more accessible at Key Stage 4 when the statutory core curriculum reduces.

### **Key Stage 3**

- 4.12 Many of the responses to the Burns proposals supported the view that there should be a common core curriculum to age 14, i.e. during Key Stage 3. The Group believes that in Key Stage 3, a sound general education, as proposed by CCEA, should occupy a majority of teaching and learning time. However, opportunities should also be provided for extension and enrichment courses and activities that contribute to broadening pupils' experiences and horizons and help to develop the range of key skills that pupils require.

### **Key Stage 4 and Post-16**

- 4.13 For 14-18 year olds, the statutory core curriculum reduces and this opens up the opportunity for increased variety and choice, from a broad range of curriculum options and assessment instruments, facilitating a variety of learning approaches to be enjoyed by pupils.

### **Careers Education and Guidance and Work-Related Learning**

- 4.14 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils will have begun to think about their career options. It is essential that their choices of learning pathways should be complemented by a coherent, ongoing programme of high quality Careers Education and Guidance. While acknowledging the significant contribution which careers teachers make to pupils' choices, it is important that all pupils should also have access to a wider range of advice, some of which should be provided externally from their school.
- 4.15 An essential dimension, particularly at Key Stage 4, should be the opportunity for pupils to gain some understanding and experience of the world of work, and of the education and training opportunities available outside the school sector. Recent experience in some schools (under the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Initiative) has demonstrated the enriching and motivating effect of exposure to work-related learning; this should be an option for all pupils.
- 4.16 The development of work-related learning provides opportunities for pupils to experience the business environment and should help to promote business and the creation of business opportunities as valid and acceptable career paths. This will help to secure the foundation for a business sector which supports a vibrant, developing Northern Ireland



economy. Work-related learning should also include public sector organisations given their significance as employers in NI. This must be a collaborative process involving the education and business/public sectors at all levels from local to national. There are already good examples of business education links, including opportunities for exchanges, but there is scope for significant further expansion. Schools and businesses need to work together in a better organised way to develop partnerships which can operate for the benefit of all. Consideration should be given to establishing a co-ordinating body for the development of such links.

## **The Entitlement Framework – Provision**

- 4.17 The minimum curricular requirements for Key Stage 3 will be the statutory curriculum proposed by CCEA. We considered what the minimum curricular entitlement should be in Key Stage 4 and post-16 in the context of providing a wide and varied range of educational experiences and opportunities for all pupils.
- 4.18 We reviewed the extent of the variety and choice of courses currently available (Appendix 2). While we concluded that this should be extended, in particular to ensure that all pupils have access to a range of academic and vocational options, we considered that the minimum should be set at a realistic level, capable of being provided in a locality. The purpose is not to require pupils to follow greater numbers of courses, but to ensure that they have choice from a wide range including a blend of academic and vocational courses.
- 4.19 The Group finds the ‘academic’ or ‘vocational’ labels unsatisfactory and to some extent misleading. Pupils who take, say, science courses with the aim of pursuing a career in medicine are taking ‘vocational’ subjects just as surely as those taking business studies or economics. Alternative descriptors such as ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ are felt to be inadequate for similar reasons. The terms academic and vocational are used here and elsewhere in this document as convenient, if imperfect, shorthand to denote on the one hand those subjects which have traditionally been the main focus of schools and, on the other hand, those subjects which are seen as having a more direct vocational, technical or occupational bias. The Group believes that both deserve equal status and recognition.



4.20 The specific requirements of the Entitlement Framework are as follows:

### **Key Stage 3**

The Key Stage 3 curriculum should comprise:

- the statutory minimum as proposed by CCEA:
  - Learning for Life and Work - Education for Employability, Local and Global Citizenship, and Personal Development;
  - Skills and Capabilities - Personal and Inter-Personal (Self Management and Working with Others) and Critical and Creative Thinking (Creativity, Managing Information, Problem Solving/Decision Making, Communication, Application of Number and ICT); and
  - General Learning Areas - The Arts, English, Environment and Society, Modern Languages, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science and Technology, Religious Education;
- and, in addition, the following:
  - additional aspects of general learning – in order to reflect as far as practicable the individual needs and interests of pupils, including the facility to offer some extended learning opportunities to those pupils who are able to proceed at a faster pace;
  - a high quality programme of Careers Education and Guidance; and
  - a range of enrichment opportunities.

4.21 It is important that the level of enrolment at Key Stage 3 is sufficient to sustain a good range of enrichment opportunities including clubs, societies and sports opportunities which add to the vibrancy of the school for pupils at this level.

### **Key Stage 4**

4.22 The increased flexibility envisaged in CCEA's curriculum proposals for Key Stage 4 offers the potential for schools to provide a much more varied, relevant and enjoyable mix of educational experiences. Variety should

encompass the range of courses together with provision for different learning approaches ranging from theoretical to applied. It is important to widen the availability of all types of courses for all pupils and plans should be developed to promote their acceptability and parity of status.

### **Key Stage 4**

Key Stage 4 pupils should have access to a broad menu of courses consisting of a minimum of 24 courses of which at least one third must be academic and at least one third must be vocational.

Within this range, pupils will follow:

- a statutory minimum core (the key skills); and
- the defined range of areas of study, proposed by CCEA - including Languages, Science, Environment and Society, Creative and Expressive Studies, Vocational Learning, Work-related Learning, PE, RE.

In addition all pupils should have access to:

- a high quality programme of Careers Education and Guidance; and
- a range of extension and enrichment opportunities.

4.23 While it is envisaged that individual schools will provide the majority of these courses for their pupils, many schools may need to work in partnership with other schools, the FE sector or other providers to attain the specified minimum.

### **Post-16**

4.24 The range of options available to all pupils in this age group should be greater than those at Key Stage 4, incorporating a broad range of courses and accommodating a wide range of learning approaches.

## **Post-16**

Pupils should have access to a minimum of 27 courses of which at least one third must be academic and at least one third must be vocational.

Within this range, pupils will follow:

- programmes that continue to develop the key skills; and
- courses/learning pathways from the various areas of study available.

In addition, pupils will have access to:

- a continuing programme of high quality Careers Education and Guidance; and
- a range of enrichment opportunities.

4.25 While it is envisaged that individual schools will provide the majority of these courses for their pupils, many schools may need to work in partnership with other schools, the FE sector or other providers to attain the specified minimum.

4.26 Providing this range of opportunity for pupils post-16 is not compatible with the practice of some schools – and the aspiration of others – to run 6<sup>th</sup> forms with small numbers of pupils. Small 6<sup>th</sup> forms have the dual disadvantage of providing an inadequate curricular range for pupils and also potentially drawing much-needed teaching and other resources away from pupils in the lower part of the school. Future provision for 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils is likely to be secured via local collaborative arrangements which could, as one option, involve creating composite 6<sup>th</sup> form provision serving a number of schools, including schools of different management types. As a contribution to ensuring greater coherence in this area, it is recommended that the Department consider the re-introduction of the former 'Extended Courses' circular which set out the viability criteria for 6<sup>th</sup> form provision.

## **Special Educational Needs**

4.27 The earlier sections of the Entitlement Framework stem from the belief that the individuality of the learner should be recognised and educational

provision tailored accordingly. This is equally true of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), who should enjoy the same entitlement to access as other pupils. We noted that proposed legislation on Special Educational Needs and Disability requires a pupil with special educational needs to be educated in mainstream schools unless doing so would be against the wishes of his or her parents or would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the pupil will be educated.

- 4.28 'Special educational needs' in this context embraces not only 'statemented' pupils with physical, emotional or learning disabilities but also those who are not statemented but who, for whatever reason, have fallen behind their peer group and require additional help and support, and also pupils with exceptional ability. The range and flexibility of educational opportunities advocated above should accommodate the needs of the majority of pupils, including many pupils who are currently provided for through "Alternative Education Provision". Where such provision is still deemed necessary, it should be the responsibility of the school to secure suitable arrangements, in collaboration with other schools and other providers in the area.
- 4.29 Early intervention for children with learning difficulties is crucial and the provision of funding and access to services to support early identification and intervention could reduce the need for ongoing special needs support in later years.
- 4.30 The Group considers that:
- arrangements must ensure that pupils with special educational needs have access to the same range of learning pathways available to other pupils including access to FE institutions, training organisations and other providers;
  - opportunities should be taken for two-way exchanges of expertise, teaching and support staff and, where appropriate, of pupils between the mainstream and any special schools in a given locality as part of the collaborative arrangements advocated elsewhere; and
  - the Department should ensure that the additional requirements under the proposed Special Educational Needs and Disability legislation are fully assessed and adequately resourced.



## Key Recommendations

- An Entitlement Framework should be established to guarantee each pupil, including those with special educational needs, access to a wide, varied and flexible range of learning pathways.
- The Entitlement Framework should include:
  - At Key Stage 3, a sound general education, as proposed by CCEA. This should occupy the majority of teaching time.
  - At Key Stage 4, access to a menu of at least 24 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third must be academic.
  - At Post-16, access to a menu of at least 27 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third must be academic.
  - Access to extension courses and enrichment opportunities.
  - Access to high quality Careers Education and Guidance.

## CHAPTER 5: MEETING THE ENTITLEMENT

### Context

- 5.1 This chapter outlines the key issues to be addressed in ensuring that each pupil has access to the Entitlement Framework with the choice and flexibility required to meet their needs. A new culture of collaboration and partnership is needed if pupils are to have full access to the Entitlement Framework.

### Choice and Flexibility

- 5.2 All pupils must be aware of the choices of subjects and learning pathways available to them if they are to reach their full potential. Pupils and parents must also be given sound advice to support them in exercising choice. Moreover, exercising well-informed choice should not be a one-off event, recognising that pupils' interests and career orientation may change over time, in line with increasing maturity. Erratic chopping and changing of courses is to be discouraged to avoid an unduly fragmented educational experience, but reasonable opportunities to change courses should be available, especially when it is clear that better choices could have been made at an earlier stage.
- 5.3 Schools should make available through their prospectus, information about the learning pathways available. In a later section, we recommend that CCEA should continue with the development of the Pupil Profile which should be a key document to inform pupil and parental choice about individual pathways which best reflect pupils' needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. This should be supplemented by advice from their schools or other institutions attended.
- 5.4 Towards the end of each school year, in consultation with teachers, pupils and parents should have the opportunity to:
- review their learning pathways/individual components they are following;
  - review their progress; and
  - adjust their pathways/individual components to reflect their maturity and changing needs, aptitudes, interests and career choices.



- 5.5 A more substantive review to help pupils and parents choose future learning pathways should take place during the second term of the final years of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At other times, pupils should have the opportunity to change their pathways or individual components where it is agreed between the pupil/parent and the school(s) that the learning pathway or individual component being followed is not in the pupil's best educational interests.
- 5.6 Whilst every effort should be made to accommodate pupil and parental preferences, it is recognised that choice cannot be entirely unfettered. Choice in any year would have to take account of the demand for courses and the number of places available. For example, there may be a particular local demand which is additional to that which schools would normally be expected to meet. In that situation, school managing authorities would be expected to work together, with the FE sector where appropriate, to seek to accommodate the demand within the locality, subject to considerations of educational and economic viability.
- 5.7 This range of choice, and the facility to match provision more closely with pupil needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations should make a major contribution to encouraging pupils to remain in full-time education beyond the age of compulsory schooling. As course provision becomes more specialised, however, it would be increasingly important to maximise collaboration between schools and other providers to offer the desired choice to the highest standard in a cost-effective way.

## **Meeting Pupil Needs**

- 5.8 As indicated earlier, primacy must be given to meeting the needs of the learner. Each school must provide its pupils with access to a range of learning pathways:
- through a range of appropriate delivery mechanisms, which for most schools will include a level of collaboration with other local providers both in the schools' sector, the FE sector and beyond;
  - incorporating a range of learning approaches; and
  - with appropriate support and information to pupils and parents to enable informed choices to be made.

- 5.9 The school to which a pupil is enrolled should retain responsibility for the pupil throughout the pupil's education even though part of it may be provided in other settings. That responsibility should begin with securing the smooth transition and induction of pupils from primary school to post-primary school; and continue with the school acting as a portal to secure access to the appropriate range of educational opportunities. Similar responsibilities apply for pupils admitted after Key Stage 3 or 4.

## **Partnership**

- 5.10 The core purpose of cooperation and collaboration is to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum breadth, choice and flexibility required by the Entitlement Framework. Regardless of the number and range of institutions available in a particular locality, a much richer and more varied educational provision could be offered, cost-effectively, through much higher levels of cooperation and collaboration with other providers. This is envisaged as a two way process whereby schools should both seek and offer facilities, resources and expertise.
- 5.11 There is a wide spectrum of potential cooperation ranging from curricular links in some subjects through to more formalised arrangements under which, for example, 11-14 schools may be linked to 14-18 or 11-18 schools in order to provide a full range of opportunities for their pupils. The emphasis should be on flexibility arising from locally determined arrangements to meet local wishes, needs and circumstances.
- 5.12 Unlike the Burns recommendation on Collegiates, such partnership would not necessarily require the formation of fixed groupings or consortia of schools. The nature of the cooperation could vary over time and involve providers other than neighbouring schools – for example institutions of further education, training providers or local employers. Adequate planning and clear agreement would be essential in each instance and this should include the management of the collaborative arrangements. Collaboration with other providers should not dilute the responsibility of the school in which the pupil is formally enrolled at year 8 or any subsequent schools. The school would remain responsible for securing provision that meets his or her individual needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations, for guaranteeing a learning pathway through to age 18 and for his or her welfare and safety.

- 5.13 There are some excellent examples of cooperation and collaboration between schools, and a more developed practice of schools securing certain types of provision in conjunction with their local FE institution. However, the practice of school/school and school/FE collaboration needs to become much more widespread and be regarded as the norm rather than the exception. Collaboration with training providers and with business should also be developed. Promoting innovative approaches to collaboration will expand choice and offer new opportunities for pupils and teachers.
- 5.14 The use of ICT/ILT has the potential to make a major contribution to this, whether through distance learning (to minimise travel) or through e-learning, which could make it possible to provide courses for small groups that would not otherwise be viable. Further investment will be needed in the development of these facilities and in the training of teachers so that they are comfortable with both the technical aspects and the issues relating to teaching in this way. These factors should be taken into account in the review of the Education Technology Strategy, which should articulate a path for further development with clear targets to secure significant gains for our young people as soon as possible.

### **School/School Collaboration**

- 5.15 Schools are 'learning communities' which leave a lasting imprint on their pupils through the formal curriculum and by virtue of their culture and ethos and the range of enrichment activities and experiences they offer. All schools, while they may differ in character and curricular emphasis, should be engaged in the pursuit of excellence and in raising the expectations of both staff and pupils. Our proposals seek to reinforce that sense of community and the ongoing responsibility of the school to secure access for their pupils to the range of educational opportunities appropriate to their needs.
- 5.16 Schools can discharge that responsibility through cooperation with other neighbouring schools. Such cooperation already exists in some areas, with resultant benefit to pupils, but it has been hindered by the competitive environment in which many schools have found themselves. To reduce competition over intakes (which in turn determine funding), we recommend elsewhere in this advice that the open enrolment arrangements should be modified to provide greater flexibility in setting admissions and enrolment numbers in individual localities so that the needs of all pupils in an area

can be better met. This should enable schools to engage more fully in collaborative working.

- 5.17 As indicated above, the nature of the collaboration could take a wide variety of forms, and should be flexible so as to be able to respond to changing needs. At a relatively simple level, there could be a sharing of facilities and teaching expertise in a given subject and for certain year groups, thereby allowing the schools involved to timetable an option that may not be viable in isolation. In other instances there could be more extensive collaboration, for example to deliver the full range of GCSEs and GCEs required under the Entitlement Framework; or to secure joint 6<sup>th</sup> form provision or other specialist provision such as a shared sports facility or a resource for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The valuable opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration should also be recognised, and school authorities should proactively explore the potential for cross-community working in the forum of the Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs) – see Chapter 8.

## **Relationship with the FE Sector**

- 5.18 Collaboration between schools and the FE sector has the potential to bring major benefits for all pupils by widening their subject choices. It should also raise the profile of vocational education more generally, something which is too often lacking or under-represented in the normal school timetable, particularly at Key Stage 4 and beyond. There needs to be a new relationship between schools and the FE sector so that pupils can be exposed to a range of learning experiences through a blended curriculum of academic and vocational courses. The FE sector can also help schools to consolidate key skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and managing their own learning. In so doing, pupils would also acquire a much more direct experience of what the FE sector has to offer. Where schools and colleges collaborate effectively and focus on pupil needs, the pupils are better prepared for making fully informed career decisions at a later stage.
- 5.19 It is not the intention that the FE sector should be a parallel school system, which would be wasteful duplication. However there is enormous potential to make better use of what each sector has to offer. In the main, schools will focus on the fundamentals of a good general education and the traditional GCSE subjects, supplemented by a number of vocational subjects. FE for its part can provide a wide range of the more vocational and practical courses, linked to appropriate vocational qualifications.



Appendix 5 provides examples of the range of provision currently or potentially available for learners at FE institutions at different ages and of varied abilities, including the very attractive range of sixth form 'enrichment' programmes. The significant investment in specialised equipment, and development of expertise through initiatives like the "Lecturers into Industry" scheme, mean that FE staff have a much more relevant and current industrial experience that greatly enhances the learning experience of the students. There has also been substantial investment in Centres of Excellence, which are now industry standard, and a number of the centres are currently exploring the curriculum continuum in their area and are looking to signpost and/or create progression routes through 14-19.

- 5.20 Schools already have considerable experience of joint working with their local FE institutions in the context of the Key Stage 4 flexibility pilot and the 'best practice' lessons have been drawn together in the report "Curriculum Continuum and Opportunities for Young People". The proposed Key Stage 4 curriculum will provide the opportunity for all pupils to gain greater experience of the workplace and greater knowledge of the range of provision available to them in the FE sector. This will provide a good foundation for later collaborative provision in the post-16 phase, enabling a wider, more varied and more balanced range of learning pathways from which learners may choose. These arrangements need to be reinforced at strategic level by close liaison between the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Learning so as to ensure a coherent and cost-effective range of provision for all young people in the 14-19 age range. The Group notes that the Department of Employment and Learning is reviewing the FE position and considers that the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Learning should work closely to ensure that the provision for 14-19 year olds is coherent and meets their needs and the needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

## **Piloting collaboration**

- 5.21 It is recognised that effective collaboration arrangements, whether among schools or with FE, will require commitment and effort from the parties concerned, including agreeing the practical arrangements such as synchronisation of timetables and securing transport provision, where applicable. It is vital that, from the perspective of pupils, the provision overall should be well co-ordinated and holistic. The Group welcomes the funding provided through the Development Package announced by the Minister to encourage collaboration and recommends that the Department



should facilitate a small number of early pilots involving larger-scale collaboration, which could serve as pathfinders for similar developments elsewhere.

## Assessment and Accreditation

5.22 The primary purpose of assessment is to inform the learning process and thus contribute to pupils' learning and development throughout their lives.

We consider that:

- "Assessment for learning" is the central focus.
- Assessment and accreditation arrangements must be appropriate for the type of course followed and the teaching and learning approaches. Achievement by pupils at all levels in all curriculum areas, including key skills, enrichment opportunities and personal development, must be recognised. The Group looks to CCEA to continue its work in this area.
- The assessment and accreditation system must be widely understood and have the confidence of the FE and HE sectors, employers and the wider public.
- All qualifications of the same value should be seen to have equal status, and have equivalences in the UK, as determined by the National Qualifications Framework (see Appendix 4), and equivalences in Europe.

5.23 The collation and monitoring of their own assessment data is a feature of self-evaluating schools. While this leads to improvements at individual pupil level as well as at school level, the Group notes the limitations of the current data used. We recommend that the Department should develop measures of "value-added". Value-added is the progress schools help individuals to make relative to their different starting points. The measures developed should reflect pupil progress across a number of dimensions and not solely academic attainment.

## **Pupil Profile**

- 5.24 There was a high level of support for the concept of a Pupil Profile in the responses to the consultation on the Burns proposals. CCEA's proposals for a Pupil Profile should provide a much more holistic and formative account of each pupil's intellectual, personal and social development and a clear and professional assessment of progress, attainment and development needs. This is an important step in recognising achievement on a wider basis. We acknowledge that CCEA's work is building on current best practice in schools and look to CCEA to continue with the development of the Pupil Profile.
- 5.25 The use of a well-developed Pupil Profile would provide the basis on which pupils and parents can decide which learning pathways best suit their individual needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. Pupils and parents will naturally expect to receive professional advice from their school about appropriate pathways. This advice should take account of the information in the Pupil Profile as well as the appropriateness of the learning pathways being considered.
- 5.26 The Group noted and endorsed CCEA's view that the Pupil Profile cannot be used to decide places in the event of a school being oversubscribed. The purpose of the Pupil Profile is to provide a formative record of a pupil's attainments. It should provide a wide range of information but will not be able to be used in a mechanistic way to provide a rank order or a grade to enable pupils to be selected for admission.

## **Quality of Teaching and School Leadership**

- 5.27 Northern Ireland has well-trained and committed teachers, assisted by experienced and dedicated support personnel. This resource, together with committed leadership provided by senior staff, underpins the provision of high quality teaching and learning experiences that motivate and inspire many pupils. The period immediately ahead will be one of significant change and development as schools implement the new curriculum and new assessment arrangements, as well as changes to post-primary provision. The proposals in this advice will also entail new ways of working to accommodate the wider and more diverse range of provision we envisage. Furthermore, schools will require support and encouragement to move from a tightly prescribed curriculum into a more flexible curricular environment.

- 5.28 Achieving our vision of future post-primary arrangements will thus be dependent on serving teachers. They will need relevant in-service training and support, covering not only the curricular changes but also the implications of the other developments arising from the increased use of ICT/ILT and e-learning. Teachers may also be teaching a wider ability range of pupils than previously and may require support to adjust their teaching approaches accordingly. The impact of these changes will need to be reflected in the programmes of Initial Teacher Training. Cognisance should also be taken of the recommendations of the Teachers' Health and Well-Being Survey. In light of the increased emphasis on work-related learning it will be important for teachers to have the opportunity to experience the business environment at first hand through secondment opportunities.
- 5.29 This change process will require careful and skilful leadership and management within schools, and will demand energy and vision in making the proposed new arrangements a reality. Success will be dependent on the continuing development of leadership skills amongst teachers alongside the other programmes of development and support for teachers in the classroom. The parallel needs for staff development in the FE sector must also be recognised. As part of the school development planning process, schools will need a coherent programme of continuing professional development and teacher specific training. Experience in the former 11-16 whole school development programme showed that this can be done effectively and can bring real benefits to the life of the school as a whole and to the motivation and engagement of both staff and pupils.

### **Key Recommendations**

- All pupils should have choice and flexibility in their post-primary education.
- Each school must provide its pupils with access to a range of learning pathways.
- Access is likely to include school to school and school to FE collaboration.

*(continued overleaf)*

- There should be a new relationship between schools and the FE sector so that pupils can be exposed to a range of learning experiences through a blended curriculum of academic and vocational education.
- The precise form of cooperation and collaboration should be determined locally, responsive to local needs, flexible, and capable of changing over time.
- CCEA should continue with the development of the Pupil Profile, which will provide information to help parents and pupils to make informed choices.
- There should be a coherent programme of continuing professional development and teacher specific training to ensure teachers and school leaders are fully equipped to deal with the changes required.

## CHAPTER 6: ENTITLEMENT CRITERIA AND OPTIONS FOR NEW ARRANGEMENTS

### Context

- 6.1 The Entitlement Framework sets the general context for future provision for all pupils. It provides a basis for the review of current provision in each locality and thence for proposals for the development, enhancement or reconfiguration of provision in order to achieve the range and choice which we believe should be available. To assist managing authorities and schools with this review, the following criteria and supporting guidance about the content of proposals crystallise the high level statements of the Entitlement Framework against which schools can measure their current provision and bring forward proposals for the development required. The arrangements by which schools' proposals will be developed and considered are described in a later chapter. The aim is to ensure that the provision proposed in and by individual schools contributes to meeting the overall needs of the area in which the school is located.

### Pupil Entitlement

#### 6.2 Criteria

- Each school will provide for its pupils, as a minimum, access to the full range of learning pathways outlined in the Entitlement Framework for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and post-16 where applicable.
- Schools must take account of the range of pupils' needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations and the range of teaching approaches required to meet these needs.

##### 6.2.1 Proposals will indicate:

- the range of curriculum provision that will be available for pupils at Key Stage 3 through the statutory core curriculum and extension and enrichment courses;
- the range of learning pathways that will be available for pupils at Key Stage 4;
- the full range of learning pathways for post-16 pupils;
- the arrangements for the provision of Careers Education and Guidance;



- the arrangements for making available the curricular choice for pupils and for meeting the full range of learning needs of pupils;
- the range of accommodation, resources and teaching skills available to provide the required range of learning pathways for all their pupils and demonstrate that this range can be delivered; and
- the components that will be delivered directly by the school in which the pupil is enrolled and those delivered in cooperation and collaboration with other schools, the FE sector and other providers.

## Special Educational Needs

### 6.3 Criterion

- Pupils with special educational needs (including non-statemented pupils) must have access to a full range of educational opportunities to meet their individual needs.

#### 6.3.1 Proposals will indicate:-

- how appropriate provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (including non-statemented) is secured through cooperation and collaboration to ensure that pupils have access to a full range of educational opportunities to meet their individual needs; and
- how account has been taken of the educational implications of proposed SENDA legislation in schools.

## Choice and Flexibility

### 6.4 Criteria

Each school must:

- provide pupils with the opportunities to exercise choice about learning pathways at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and provide appropriate information and advice to inform that choice; and

- provide pupils with the opportunity to exercise choice at other times where the learning pathway or components being followed are not in pupils' best educational interests and provide appropriate information and advice to inform that choice.

#### 6.4.1 Proposals will indicate:

- the arrangements for providing choice at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, including the availability of enrichment programmes. Such arrangements should include:
  - the processes to exercise choice, including the arrangements to deal with course over-subscription or with unmet demand;
  - the arrangements for advising pupils and parents about the choices available;
  - the types of information (i.e. the Pupil Profile and other information) together with support to be made available to inform choice (including how careers advice and guidance will be provided);
- the circumstances where choice may be exercised at other times and the arrangements to be used;
- the accreditation arrangements and their link to the National Qualifications Framework (Appendix 4); and
- that arrangements for the Pupil Profile are in place, including transfer of information between institutions when courses and programmes have been agreed, and that arrangements for recording and accrediting attainments and achievements are in place in the interim period before the Pupil Profile is fully operational.

## Cooperation and Collaboration

### 6.5 Criteria

- Arrangements for cooperation and collaboration must:
  - be for the purpose of providing all pupils with access to the full range of learning pathways and teaching approaches from 11-18;

- provide for children's welfare and safety;
- maximise pupils' learning time;
- guarantee continuity of provision for the full duration of a course by a cohort of pupils to ensure that they are able to complete a course provided under these arrangements; and
- be based on clear and mutually understood agreements between all the providers.

#### 6.5.1 Proposals will indicate:

- the arrangements to secure children's safety and welfare if pupils are moving between providers;
- what form cooperation and collaboration will take within an area;
- the curricular areas involved;
- the other providers involved (e.g. other schools, FE, training organisations, business organisations, the wider community) and the provision they will make available;
- the agreements reached with other providers, including any transfer of funds, or quid pro quo arrangements, agreed by all participating institutions;
- the content of memoranda of understanding or service level agreements which clearly set out agreed roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability including any ramifications of collaboration for pupils, for example pastoral care, transfer of information;
- how they have maximised pupils' learning time by minimising the disruption to the school day; and
- if pupils have to change location within the school day and indicate the travelling time involved.

## Professional Development of Staff

### 6.6 Criterion

- Schools must identify the training and development needs of teaching and support staff.

#### 6.6.1 Proposals will indicate:

- how the training and development needs of teaching and support staff have been assessed and the arrangements and timetable for providing the necessary training and development to implement new arrangements; and
- that the assessment of needs and provision of staff training and development to implement new arrangements links with needs identified by the teachers and the school development planning process.

## Options Compatible with Entitlement Framework and Criteria

6.7 The Entitlement Framework and criteria described earlier provide the context for the consideration of future post-primary education provision. The Entitlement Framework sets out the characteristics of the curriculum to which each pupil should be entitled. The criteria establish the requirements on schools to demonstrate how proposals for new arrangements would deliver the Entitlement Framework. This section examines a range of options which would facilitate the delivery of the Entitlement Framework, through a variety of structures.

6.8 The current arrangements are characterised by a sharp dichotomy of provision, the closing down of options, a lack of flexibility and an inadequate range of learning pathways. When considered against the Guiding Principles and the Entitlement Framework, we concluded that few schools, if any, could meet the requirements fully at the present time and that the status quo was therefore not an option. To varying degrees, schools would need to make changes to their curriculum, including offering access for all pupils to a much richer provision in the vocational area, and to ensure that provision is made to meet the needs of all pupils. This would involve working in cooperation and collaboration with other schools, with FE institutions, and with other providers. It is important to stress also

that collaboration should involve giving as well as receiving, so that a school with, say, specialist facilities or expertise could serve as a resource for other neighbouring schools in a given subject area.

- 6.9 There was a view expressed in the responses to the consultation on the Burns proposals that a “one-size-fits-all” option for future post-primary arrangements is not appropriate: the Group concurs with this view. Accordingly, it is envisaged that future structures should comprise a variety of school provision to meet the specific needs of different localities. The provision made by each school should complement and support what neighbouring schools are offering. In a locality as a whole, the tapestry of provision available should encompass the full range of opportunities and provide for the full range of pupil needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations.

### **Range of Possible Future Arrangements**

- 6.10 The Entitlement Framework is capable of being delivered through a very wide range of school types and structures. Those outlined below and in Appendix 6 are intended to serve only as exemplars of how future arrangements might be structured. It is possible that other approaches could emerge at local level, and these would be acceptable provided they conform to the Entitlement Framework.
- 6.11 Schools may differ in a number of ways.
- Schools’ curricular emphasis. For example, this could be academic, vocational or ‘specialist’.
  - The age profile of their pupils. Arrangements could include provision for pupils aged 11-14, 14-16, 11-16, 11-18, or 14-18 and 16-18.
  - Schools’ management structures. In addition to conventional management structures, alternative arrangements could be considered where appropriate, for example a ‘combination institution’ involving a number of schools combining to act as a single institution with a single management body, or a ‘confederation’ involving a number of schools, perhaps of different management types and/or including an FE institution.
  - The type of collaborative arrangements that exist between the school and neighbouring schools and FE institutions. These could be formal



arrangements, such as between an 11-14 school and a 14-16 school, or other less formal arrangements perhaps based on a service level agreement under which one school offers provision to certain pupils from another.

6.12 Whatever the configuration, the key factors determining the arrangements should be:

- the need to ensure a sufficient critical mass of provision of a given type and to secure optimum utilisation of the existing estate;
- sufficient complementarity and cohesion in the provision to guarantee a clear learning pathway for all pupils wishing to pursue their education through to age 18; and
- compatibility with, and contribution to, meeting the needs of the area in which the school is located.

6.13 'Specialist' schools have not hitherto existed in Northern Ireland. However the Group believes that this type of school has a contribution to make to the range and diversity of provision in an area, and at the same time provide a more direct response to, say, the needs of a local economy. Pupils would be assured of the range of opportunities set out in the Entitlement Framework while at the same time benefiting from provision geared to local needs and circumstances.

6.14 Examples of the type of school provision and arrangements that could arise out of various combinations of the above features are given in Appendix 6. It is stressed that these are examples only and are intended to be neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Schools and managing authorities should assess their current provision in light of the Entitlement Framework and criteria and draw up proposals for new arrangements.
- Schools and managing authorities should engage with others in the local area to consider how the overall provision required by the Entitlement Framework should best be secured at local level.

*(continued overleaf)*

- School structures in a local area can take a wide range of forms and exist under a number of different management arrangements so long as the Entitlement Framework criteria are met.
- Specialist schools should be developed where appropriate to meet specific needs.

## CHAPTER 7: TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS

### Transfer at age 11

- 7.1 We have outlined earlier our view that the first major decision point about learning pathways in a pupil's education should normally be at age 14, when pupils are beginning to choose the courses to be taken for external examinations. From that point, provision should increasingly reflect the pupil's personal choice of learning pathway and his/her needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. It nevertheless remains the position that the physical transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary education will normally take place at age 11. This is the most common age of transfer in other European regions. Responses to the Burns proposals confirmed that this is an appropriate arrangement. The Working Group shares this view, though alternative arrangements could be developed as long as they meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and criteria and are agreed at local level.
- 7.2 Under our proposals, the schools to which pupils will be transferring at age 11 will offer a broad, general education in Key Stage 3, based on the CCEA proposals for the Key Stage 3 statutory core curriculum, together with extension courses and enrichment opportunities to widen and develop interests and which reflect a school's ethos and emphasis. At Key Stage 4 and beyond, they will offer a wider variety of learning pathways, whether in-house or via collaboration with other schools, the FE sector or other providers. There will also be increased scope for pupils to change school at the end of either Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4, where pupils and their parents so choose in order to better meet pupils' needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. These decisions would be informed by the Pupil Profile and with advice from the school.

### The Transfer Test

- 7.3 At present, the Northern Ireland transfer arrangements revolve around the selection of pupils for certain types of post-primary education based on their academic ability as assessed in the two 1 hour Transfer Tests taken in the first term of their P7 year – the so-called 11+ exam. This arrangement is the single most sensitive issue the Group has had to consider. This is illustrated by the responses to the Burns proposals, which strongly

favoured the removal of the existing Transfer Test, while there were divergent views about the continuation of academic selection.

7.4 To achieve these seemingly contradictory outcomes would appear to require:

- devising an alternative form of Transfer Test that would be less stressful for pupils; and/or
- an alternative approach to academic selection, for example relying on primary teachers' professional assessment of pupils' relative abilities, expressed in the form of a recommendation as to which type of post-primary education would be most suitable.

7.5 The Transfer Tests have been in existence for some 50 years, originally in the form of the 'qualifying' exam. During that time, various models of tests have been used, plus hybrid arrangements involving a combination of tests and teacher assessment. All of these have attracted criticism for various reasons, as have the present curriculum-based tests in English, Maths and Science and Technology. To overcome the problem of reliance on performance in just two 1-hour tests, it would in theory be possible to aggregate results from tests or other assessment tools over a longer period, such as the last two or three years of primary education. However, that would be likely to extend the period of stress on pupils and add to the pressure on teachers to 'teach to the test' to the detriment of a balanced and enjoyable curriculum for their pupils. In short, we do not believe that there is an alternative testing regime which would overcome the concerns expressed.

7.6 In some other European countries, teachers' assessment of pupils' aptitudes and abilities play a major part in decisions about which post-primary school they attend. However, to work effectively, such arrangements require a context where there is greater parity of esteem between different school types and a process of transfer much less highly charged than it is currently in Northern Ireland. Based on previous experience where teachers' professional judgement was a main element of the process, it would not be appropriate or fair to place a similar responsibility on teachers here. There is also the potential for dispute. We believe nevertheless that parents should have more consistent and comprehensive information on how their children are progressing. For that reason, we endorse strongly the current work by CCEA on the

development of the Pupil Profile. The Pupil Profile should be an integral element of the information available to parents – alongside school prospectuses and admissions criteria - when they are taking decisions about post-primary education for their children.

7.7 The preceding paragraphs deal with some of the practical dimensions of the transfer arrangements. There are, however, more fundamental issues:

- There is a widely held view that the age of 11 is too early for significant decisions to be taken which commit pupils to particular learning pathways for at least 5 years. Children mature at different rates and their career interests and aspirations will not emerge until much later. It is for this reason that we see age 14 as the earliest point at which major decisions about learning pathways should begin to be taken.
- There is a deep concern expressed by many about the stress caused to pupils and the damaging sense of 'failure' for those who do not do sufficiently well to gain their preferred school place. The pressures on pupils, parents and teachers appear to increase year by year, and may be further intensified where parents resort to private tutoring.
- It is intrinsically unsound to believe that pupils deemed to be more able should automatically be routed along an 'academic' pathway as distinct from those with a more vocational bias. Our economy and society need able young people in business and other spheres. This 'academic' and 'vocational' dichotomy is in any case artificial and unhelpful (see page 21). To avoid these spurious distinctions, the Entitlement Framework described earlier seeks to ensure a wider and more varied range of course choices, to meet individual pupil learning needs.
- It is sometimes argued that the present selective arrangements provide opportunities to pupils from less advantaged backgrounds that would not otherwise be available to them. Whilst that may have been true historically, the current picture is very different. As noted earlier (see page 9) there is a wide disparity between the proportion of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in grammar schools and in non-grammar schools. This suggests that the present arrangements tend to perpetuate social disadvantage rather than overcome it.



- The options for school provision in individual localities described in the previous chapter are based on the principle that provision should be varied but should be seen as of equal value. Pupils should have a clear sense that they have chosen whatever school they are attending (accepting that first preference may not be attainable in every case) and not that they have been assigned there by default, by dint of being considered ineligible or unsuitable for some other type of school.

7.8 With all these considerations in mind, the Group has concluded that a Transfer Test or any other means of academic selection should have no place in the transfer arrangements to post-primary education described in this advice. The Transfer Test should be removed as soon as possible and be replaced by arrangements based on parental and pupil choice.

7.9 The Group would recommend the immediate removal of the Transfer Test but for the realisation that this would lead, in the short term, to very substantial over-subscription in a number of post-primary schools and considerable upheaval in the system generally. The key underlying problem is that, where attractive alternative provision is not available, many parents seek a grammar school place regardless of their child's individual interests or aptitudes. The Group's recommendations aim to address that imbalance by ensuring that all post-primary schools, whilst offering provision that may differ in ethos and emphasis, are regarded as of equal value. In addition, the present arrangements tend to accentuate the decision at age 11. Rather, the emphasis should be on the decisions at age 14 and on the important role of the Pupil Profile in helping pupils and parents make informed choices. Age 14 is the stage at which most pupils will be making their first significant decisions about the courses to be taken for external examinations.

These changes will not happen overnight but the Group believes that it is vital to ensure sufficient momentum in the implementation of these proposals and in particular towards the final removal of the Transfer Test. The Group does not wish to preserve the status quo for a further period but recognises that time is needed for concerted action to prepare for the non-test environment. It may be possible to proceed more quickly in some areas than in others, depending on the present configuration of provision in individual localities.

## The Interim Period

- 7.10 Specifically in relation to the Transfer Test in the interim period, immediate action should be taken on a number of fronts including the following:

### Choosing to do the Transfer Test

- 7.10.1 Already about 30% of pupils do not sit the Transfer Test. These include pupils in the 'Dickson Plan' schools in Craigavon, and some other areas where non-selective arrangements exist, together with other pupils whose parents opt them out of the Transfer Test. There are, however, a great many pupils who are entered for the Transfer Test simply because parents are seeking a grammar school place without being aware of the opportunities available in other schools or that they can choose not to have their children entered for the Transfer Test.
- 7.10.2 Before making the decision about whether a child should be entered for the Transfer Test, parents should be given an opportunity to come to a better understanding of the type of provision best suited to their child's needs, aptitudes, interests, and aspirations and the type and range of provision offered by the post-primary schools in their area. This could be achieved through a number of steps including:
- discussions with the P6 teacher about the child's needs, aptitudes, interests, and aspirations, taking account of the information available within the school. The Pupil Profile will be an integral part of this information sharing in the future;
  - information should also be provided, whether by the Department or school managing authorities, explaining to parents the increased choice and flexibility envisaged in all schools as a result of our recommendations, and the fact that there will be opportunity to make choices about learning pathways when their children reach age 14; and
  - post-primary schools should hold 'open nights' for parents and pupils during the P6 year to enable them to see the provision on offer and help them decide whether or not a child should be entered for the Transfer Test.

7.10.3 These steps should ensure that, by the end of P6, a parent would have a clearer view of the school best suited to their child's needs and whether they should be entered for the Transfer Test. As new arrangements begin to take shape, we envisage that the proportion of pupils being entered for the Transfer Test would reduce year on year.

### **Using the Transfer Test**

7.10.4 The present legislation permits grammar schools to use the results of the Transfer Tests as part of their admissions criteria, but they are not obliged to do so. A number of grammar schools already admit pupils with the full range of Transfer Test scores, including Grade D (see Appendix 2). There is nothing to hinder these schools – and indeed any other grammar schools which so choose – deciding that they could contribute to the educational provision in their area just as effectively without the need to include Transfer Test results among their admissions criteria. In so doing, they could still retain their essentially academic character if they so wish, or they could adopt another curricular emphasis that reflects their particular strengths or the needs of the area they serve. The LPDP could play an important part in encouraging and assisting such changes in individual areas where that is seen to be appropriate.

### **Reducing the Use of the Transfer Test**

7.10.5 An additional option which should be made available to selective schools is to begin to reduce progressively the proportion of their intake admitted on the basis of the Transfer Test grades. For example, a grammar school could decide to admit 25% of its intake in the first year without reference to Transfer Test grades, and move to higher percentages in subsequent years. Again, the LPDP could assist such moves in the context of the consideration of the needs of the area more generally. Care would, however, need to be taken to ensure that the reduction in places accessible via the Transfer Test did not inadvertently increase pressure on pupils to attain still higher grades.

## **Reviewing Current Admissions Criteria**

7.10.6 The interim period should also be used by school managing authorities to review existing admissions criteria, taking account of the recommendations in the next section. The aim of this and the foregoing proposals is to enable a smooth transition to the arrangements that will apply when the Transfer Test is no longer available.

## **Protecting the Primary Curriculum**

7.10.7 The Department should issue advice to primary schools that they should ensure that the focus of work in P6 and P7 is on the full curriculum. Continuing to prepare pupils for the Transfer Test will detract from the successful delivery of the new Key Stage 2 curriculum.

## **Transfer Test – Final Date**

7.11 We recognise the extent of the culture change inherent in a move away from the selective system which has so long been a feature of post-primary education in Northern Ireland. We have concluded, however, that the longer-term continuation of the present arrangements is untenable both educationally and socially. The Group's recommendations provide an agenda for the development and enhancement of provision over the next few years, which will be reinforced by the parallel developments on the implementation of the revised curriculum and the introduction of the Pupil Profile. The Group has considered carefully the timetable for these various developments and has concluded that Autumn 2008 should be the final date for the use of the Transfer Test. The use of ability-based admission criteria should not be available to any school for subsequent admissions rounds.

7.12 This timescale takes account of the expected developments in:

- creating a range of schools which are different but equally valued, including the extension of vocational provision as part of the general enhancement of curricular choices resulting from implementation of the Entitlement Framework;



- the associated development of joint working between schools, with FE institutions and other providers which will result in a wider range of course options and learning pathways, especially from age 14 onwards;
- the implementation of the Pupil Profile, where pupils transferring to post-primary education in September 2009 will be the first cohort to be able to make an informed choice of learning pathways for Key Stage 4 based on 3 years of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum and 3 years of the Pupil Profile; and
- the review of admissions criteria to reflect the removal of ability-based criteria.

## **New Transfer and Admissions Arrangements**

7.13 The fundamental principle underlying the new arrangements should be informed choice by parents and pupils. In addition to good quality advice from schools (both primary and post-primary), parents should have access to external support to assist them through the admissions process. The role of the Education and Library Board Transfer Officers could be extended to include this, along with well publicised parent-friendly access to advice. The transfer process should be set out clearly for parents, pupils and schools to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and that all concerned are engaged in the process. A step-by-step guide should be made available to parents, which should include details of how and when admission criteria would be applied by schools and how parents can access the in-built appeals procedures.

7.14 Measures should also be taken to simplify the present rather complex and time-consuming process. For the future, the Department should explore the possibility of a more efficient computer-based system under which parents could make choices on a form to be submitted to a central body that could apply the criteria of their preferred schools and notify parents of the outcome.

7.15 In a non-test environment, parents and pupils will decide which school best meets the pupil's needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. Making this informed decision will involve a number of steps, including:

- Discussion between parents and pupils and the primary school about the pupil's needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations, taking account



of the information available within the school. The Pupil Profile will be an integral part of this process.

- Dissemination of information to parents:
  - by Department of Education, or managing authorities explaining to parents the choice and flexibility available in all schools and the opportunity to make choices about learning pathways when their children reach age 14;
  - by schools through School Prospectuses and other sources, outlining the school's education provision and ethos; and
  - by school managing authorities, outlining the admissions criteria for each school in the local area.
- School Visits. Parents' and pupils' in P7, or P6 if desired, attendance at 'open nights' at the post-primary schools that they feel will meet the needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations of their child.

7.16 In the non-test environment, decisions about post-primary schools can be made sooner than at present with the following advantages:

- parents will not have to wait for the Transfer Test results before listing their preferences for schools;
- post-primary schools will be able to begin the admissions process much sooner; and
- decisions could be made by Easter, to the benefit of parents, pupils and post-primary schools.

This valuable extra time in the final term of primary education would facilitate an appropriate induction phase to enable a smooth transition from primary to post-primary education.

7.17 Parents' and pupils' choices about schools may mean that some are oversubscribed. As the fundamental developments required to give effect to the Entitlement Framework begin to be implemented and individual schools enjoy a more equal status and reputation, the degree of over-subscription should diminish. Effective planning of provision at local level should also seek to match demand and places as far as possible, so that

oversubscription would be minimised. When the Transfer Test is removed, schools will no longer be able to select on the basis of academic ability if they are oversubscribed. In that situation, admissions criteria should be rigorous enough to enable admissions to be determined in an orderly and well-managed fashion and must comply with human rights and equality legislation.

7.18 The Burns Report proposed five statutory admissions criteria to be used in a specified order by all schools. The Group noted the mixed views expressed during the consultation on the concept of universal and statutory criteria and on the criteria proposed by Burns. Our proposals envisage the development of local arrangements that meet local needs, wishes, and circumstances. It would be inconsistent with this approach for the Group to prescribe a universal set of admission criteria that would be applicable in every locality, if indeed that were possible. It is, however, necessary to have a degree of consistency in the criteria used and to ensure that no child within any locality is disadvantaged. The Group believes that in the future, schools should select from a limited menu the admission criteria that they will use and decide the order in which they will be applied. This approach will enable schools to reflect their own ethos and take account of local circumstances. To ensure coherence and consistency, criteria should be subject to discussion and agreement within the Local Planning and Development Partnership (LPDP - see Chapter 8). This would ensure that admission criteria are complementary and that each pupil is given priority under at least one set of admission criteria.

7.19 The admission criteria listed below are considered suitable for inclusion in the menu from which schools would choose. They are based on the principle that they should be transparent and fair and not just lawful, and free from any inadvertent bias or indirect discrimination against particular groups or individuals. The Group believes that they should give precedence to the interests of the pupil and the area the school serves.

7.20 Schools could select from the following:

- **Family Connections**

- **Siblings:**

- This is based on the principle that we should not break up families. The term “sibling” needs to be clearly defined and the position of half and step-relations made clear.

- **Children of employees in the school:**  
This should apply to all employees and not just teachers. The Group noted the responses to the consultation on this criterion but considered that it could be a demonstration of commitment to the school, as well as an element of a school's 'family friendly' policy for its employees. It would have relatively little impact on admissions given the number of pupils involved.

- **Eldest Child.**

- **Geographical factors**

These could be reflected in a number of ways, for example by one or more of catchment area, nearest suitable school, contributory primary schools, local area and adjacent areas. These need to be clearly defined and balance enrolment traditions with fairness. The Group recommends that the Department should commission demographic and geographic research in order to inform how the geographic factors should be expressed in the menu of criteria from which schools may draw. The term "nearest suitable school" will also need to be defined.

- **Final Criterion**

Criteria must be capable of admitting pupils down to the last available place. This could be achieved by using either:

- **Proximity to school** - with specification of how the 'measured distance' is to be determined; or
- **Random computerised selection:** this process should be explained clearly and administered fairly.

7.21 The Group recognises the different circumstances of children with statements of special educational needs, where parents can express a preference as part of the statementing process. Given the increased incidence of statementing and the greater integration of statemented pupils in mainstream schools, the present practice of regarding such pupils as additional to the school's admissions number should be reviewed.

7.22 Particular considerations also apply to Integrated and Irish-medium schools, which draw their intakes from a wider area. In addition to the

criteria outlined above, Integrated schools should be able to make reference to religious affiliation during the admissions process in order to ensure an appropriate religious mix.

### **Compelling Individual Circumstances**

7.23 No admissions criteria can deal with every eventuality and it will be important to have arrangements that are able to take account of 'compelling individual circumstances'. We believe that such arrangements should be restricted to the most exceptional circumstances and that these will require careful definition. To ensure consistency of approach, a central independent body with the necessary expertise (i.e. educational, medical, social) should consider these cases. 'Compelling individual circumstances' should not be included in schools' admission criteria.

### **Unsuitable Criteria**

7.24 The following oversubscription criteria are not considered suitable for use under the new arrangements:

- Selection by ability or aptitude, including any use of the contents of the Pupil Profile;
- Attendance or behavioural records;
- Date of application;
- Interviews: these could be used as a proxy for selection by ability and have the potential to unfairly disadvantage some pupils.

This does not preclude consultation interviews intended to offer advice and to inform pupil and parental choice. Material from such consultations should not, however, be used by schools when determining admissions where a school is oversubscribed.

### **Variations in Admissions Numbers**

7.25 Under the new arrangements, schools will no longer be operating in isolation but in cooperation with others in their areas. Where a school is only marginally over-subscribed, it should be possible for it to seek a temporary variation in the admissions number where this would not be detrimental to neighbouring schools and is supported by the LPDP.



## **Exercising Choice at Age 14 and 16**

7.26 The choice and flexibility inherent in the Entitlement Framework will facilitate those pupils who change institution at age 14 and 16 to reflect decisions about learning pathways. There should be no undue impediment to pupils moving between institutions to access courses at these stages and any transfer should be based on informed pupil and parental choice. In consultation within their Local Planning and Development Partnership, schools should have in place arrangements to deal with any oversubscription, in line with the previous guidelines, though it should also be possible to seek a temporary variation in schools' enrolment numbers where this is consistent with the overall provision in the area. The cooperative arrangements in the locality should be capable of ensuring that each pupil can be offered provision suited to their needs. At post-16, given the qualifications-driven nature of education at this level, it is accepted that schools may need to set minimum requirements based on prior study or attainment for entry into specific courses (not the institution). In so doing, schools should provide access to alternative courses.

## **Moving Forward**

7.27 It is not feasible to outline interim admission criteria for the period prior to cessation of the Transfer Test, because schools are starting from different positions and practices, and the pace at which new arrangements based on the Entitlement Framework can be put in place may differ from one area to another. Schools should, however, begin to adapt their admission criteria as soon as possible, in consultation within the LPDP, in a way which reduces the present complexity and which moves in the direction of the anticipated future menu of admission criteria outlined above.

7.28 The Group recommends that the Department should commission immediately the necessary demographic and geographic research to inform the development of future admission criteria, so that schools have early access to these as they move away from the use of traditional, including test-based, admission criteria. The new admission criteria should be developed in conjunction with the Strategic Planning and Implementation Group (see Chapter 8) and should aim to strike a balance between the need to keep the list of criteria short, so that the admissions arrangements are straightforward and easily understood by parents, and the need to give schools sufficient flexibility in setting their admission criteria.



## Key Recommendations

- The Transfer Test should end. No other means of academic selection should replace the test.
- Transfer decisions at age 11 should be based on informed parental and pupil choice.
- Immediate steps should be taken to reduce the impact of the current Transfer Test; the final date on which the Transfer Test should be held is Autumn 2008, and sooner where possible.
- Schools should draw from a limited menu of admission criteria to deal with any oversubscription situations.
- The Department should commission immediately the necessary work to establish the menu of admission criteria so that schools can migrate to these as soon as possible.
- Decisions about learning pathways at age 14 and 16 should be based on informed pupil and parental choice.
- At age 16, there may be minimum requirements for entry into specific courses.

## CHAPTER 8: MAKING IT HAPPEN - DELIVERING THE ENTITLEMENT

### Context

- 8.1 The Entitlement Framework outlines our vision for new post-primary arrangements in which:
- pupils are central;
  - there is access for all to a wide, balanced and flexible mix of educational provision;
  - schools are of varying types but are seen as of equal value; and
  - schools operate in collaboration with their neighbouring schools and FE institutions and other providers, for the benefit of their own pupils and of all pupils in the locality.
- 8.2 Realising this vision will be a substantial undertaking. It will require both engagement and commitment at local level and strong leadership and co-ordination at area and strategic level, together with the necessary human and financial resources. It is the responsibility of the Department to provide the necessary strategic leadership for the planning and implementation of the major programme of development and improvement required. All the parties concerned should be involved from the outset, as equal partners, in helping to determine how services should be provided. This is especially important if multi-sector solutions are to develop.
- 8.3 Our advice about delivering the Entitlement Framework for all pupils envisages that school managing authorities, at local level, will develop arrangements which meet local needs. Mindful that there are already well-established structures to manage the education system, the Group agreed the following key principles:
- schools should remain at the centre of a system to develop new arrangements at local level;
  - schools should not be burdened with bureaucratic structures and procedures for the development of proposals;

- implementation processes should be based on partnerships between the existing managing authorities; and
- existing school management responsibilities should remain unchanged.

8.4 Planning school provision in Northern Ireland is complex, given the range of school types and managing authorities. The current planning process is well defined and implemented but does not facilitate a strategic co-ordinated approach involving all the managing authorities. The number of surplus school places and the continuing impact of demography clearly point to the need for a much more strategic approach. The Group considers that future planning for local areas should be done in the context of the 'common good' where schools should work together to ensure that all pupils in the area have their needs met. It is important that all schools in the area should take part, to ensure a coherent approach and secure the best use of the expertise and facilities available.

## **Implementation Process**

8.5 The Group placed great emphasis on the development of proposals locally, with schools working together to deliver the best provision for all pupils in an area in the context of the Entitlement Framework. However, local development also has to be supported at both an area and strategic level, 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.

8.6 We do not envisage additional layers of bureaucracy. Structures already exist in the form of the Department at a strategic level, and the Education and Library Boards at area level and these should be utilised as a vehicle to provide support for the development of local proposals. We recommend that work at a strategic level should be the responsibility of the Department with advice from a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group. At operational level, detailed planning will involve the schools and managing authorities working together at local level through Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs), supported and guided by Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs) based on Education and Library Board areas.

## Implementation Model



### Operational Level

8.7 At operational level the development of proposals locally will involve:

- schools and managing authorities working together to determine the best provision to meet the needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations of all pupils in their area;
- discussions between schools, managing authorities, the FE sector and other providers; and
- engagement with parents, pupils, and the business and wider community to determine local needs and wishes.

## **Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs)**

- 8.8 The LPDPs will include representatives of all schools and FE institutions in the defined local area together with representatives of the school managing authorities, and will be responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of new arrangements for the local area. The members of LPDPs will work together to develop proposals for future arrangements in consultation with parents and the wider public in the area. They will also implement, monitor and evaluate new arrangements at local level.
- 8.9 The LPDPs will be supported by the APDPs to enable schools to participate fully in determining the future arrangements for the local area, with the necessary professional and administrative support to enable work to progress.

## **Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs)**

- 8.10 APDPs will support the work of the LPDPs and evaluate proposals for new arrangements. The 5 Education and Library Boards are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient schools in their areas and providing support arrangements for all schools in their areas. Given these responsibilities, we believe that the APDPs should be convened through, and serviced by, the Education and Library Board for their respective area. The membership of each APDP should include representatives from those bodies that will promote and manage change within the education sector. The organisations from which the members of the Post-Primary Review Working Group were drawn provide an indication of the groups that should be included.
- 8.11 The role of the APDPs is to:
- co-ordinate planning and provision of services within and across the Education and Library Board area;
  - determine what is a “local area”, and establish LPDPs;
  - provide the LPDPs with guidance, support and expertise in developing proposals;
  - consider and evaluate the proposals emerging from the LPDPs;



- ensure that proposals are developed in a coherent way, and that any new arrangements are consistent with the Entitlement Framework;
- ensure cooperation between LPDPs;
- provide support for the implementation of proposals for new arrangements through the LPDPs; and
- monitor the development of proposals and evaluate the implementation of proposals against the Entitlement Framework and criteria.

8.12 The “local areas” should be determined by the APDPs following consideration of information on local schools – primary, post-primary and special - alongside demographic information and geographical factors and in consultation with school principals. It will be important to avoid a proliferation of LPDPs to keep the process manageable and also to ensure a sufficient critical mass in each area. In some cases, a local area may cross an Education and Library Board area boundary.

8.13 Each Education and Library Board will have staff dedicated to facilitate and support the Planning and Development Partnerships at area level. They should be employed by the relevant Education and Library Board but under the direction of, and responsible to, the APDP.

### **Strategic Level**

8.14 At strategic level, strong leadership and clear direction is needed to ensure coherence and consistency of provision and access to the Entitlement Framework across all schools in all areas. The Department of Education has overall responsibility for the implementation of new arrangements and it must show clear leadership and commitment to making change happen.

8.15 The Department will need to draw upon the advice and experience of those responsible for delivering change through the establishment of a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group. Its membership should comprise representatives of the key bodies who will promote and manage change within their particular spheres of responsibility. The organisations from which the members of the Post-Primary Review Working Group were drawn provides an indication of the groups that should be included.

8.16 At strategic level, we believe the Department should:

- secure the establishment of new arrangements for post-primary education through the implementation of the Entitlement Framework;
- secure the development and implementation of proposals by providing advice and guidance to those working at area and local level on matters of common interest;
- coordinate and monitor the implementation process;
- review all policies which impact, or have the potential to impact, on the overall arrangements for post-primary education;
- consider local proposals submitted for approval; and
- secure necessary resources to implement changes.

### **Implementation Process Timetable**

8.17 We have proposed that the last Transfer Tests should take place in the 2008/09 school year i.e. for pupils transferring to post-primary schools in September 2009. Schools that decide they no longer wish to admit pupils on the basis of academic selection in advance of that date should be encouraged to do so. In the period up to 2008/09 the focus should be on establishing the conditions for these changes to take place. Schools should be working towards implementing the Entitlement Framework and developing proposals for new arrangements working through LPDPs and supported by APDPs.

8.18 The process of developing new arrangements will involve schools and managing authorities:

- auditing their existing provision against the Entitlement Framework; and
- through the LPDPs, developing proposals for new arrangements to secure access to the full entitlement for all pupils in the locality, including arrangements for cooperation and collaboration with other schools, FE institutions and other providers.

8.19 The development of local arrangements to meet local needs, wishes and circumstances will also take account of the views of parents and the wider community, including employers and Higher Education, through a process of local consultation. Appendix 7 sets out a timeframe for the various stages of this process of establishing the local groups and the development of proposals.

### **Key Recommendations**

- Implementation arrangements should be based on partnership and should not require the development of additional administrative structures.
- Schools and managing authorities working together in Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs) should develop proposals for new arrangements in their locality.
- Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs) will support the work of the LPDPs and evaluate proposals for new arrangements.
- The Department of Education should provide the strategic leadership in managing the implementation of new arrangements advised by a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group.

## CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTATION

### Context

- 9.1 The implementation of new post-primary arrangements will be challenging for every post-primary school and will require careful planning and a high level of commitment. While it will be for each school, in conjunction with other schools in the locality, to determine the pace at which they start to implement the necessary changes to deliver the Entitlement Framework, it will be important for schools to begin the process as soon as possible. The Department of Education should take steps to encourage and facilitate the changes with the view to creating the circumstances in which all aspects of the new arrangements are in place at the earliest possible date.

### Schools Estate

- 9.2 The Entitlement Framework envisages a substantial expansion of the range and variety of educational choice available in our schools. This increased range will be provided primarily through partnership working between schools and with the FE sector and other providers. It will not therefore give rise directly to significant demand for additional buildings and equipment. However, the physical environment in which teaching and learning currently takes place in many of our post-primary schools is far from ideal and well below the standards required in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Creating a modern and attractive environment for learning is an integral part of the measures needed to ensure that schools are equally valued by the communities they serve and are seen to be providing a high quality educational experience for all pupils.
- 9.3 The Department should provide the strategic leadership in taking forward the planning and implementation of new arrangements. The relevant managing authorities should look fundamentally and critically at the physical facilities available to ensure that they are fit for purpose, of sufficient standard and that they are being used effectively. This review must be forward looking and take account of projected enrolment trends to ensure that facilities are not only adequate but are appropriately located. In addition, consideration should be given to reviewing the School Building Handbook to reflect the implementation of the new curriculum and the Entitlement Framework.



- 9.4 There is already a significant problem of surplus capacity in the schools estate, which is being exacerbated by the continuing demographic decline. Our proposals do not rely on a specified minimum school size. However, the diseconomies of scale experienced by small schools mean that many already have a more limited range of teaching expertise available and offer a more limited curriculum and range of enrichment opportunities, including clubs, societies and sports provision, than larger schools. It will be much more difficult for some small schools to achieve the range and variety of learning experiences and enrichment opportunities we envisage, even with partnership working. The need for rationalisation is therefore clear and urgent, for both demographic and educational reasons. We do not believe this should be regarded as a threat: it presents a real opportunity to effect much needed change and in so doing to free up resources – including teaching resources – that would contribute directly to the delivery of the greatly enhanced range of educational opportunities which we envisage. The Group recognises that, given the largely rural nature of Northern Ireland, the retention of a number of smaller schools is likely to continue to be a feature of our provision, albeit on a reduced scale and as part of an inter-related structure.
- 9.5 The Group is aware that the Strategic Investment Programme currently provides opportunities for substantial investment in the renewal of the schools estate. This has major potential for achieving the required realignment of provision within a shorter timescale than would otherwise be possible. However, it will be vital to ensure that the investment contributes to the achievement of the Entitlement Framework rather than merely consolidating existing models of provision. The availability of these resources adds to the urgency in taking our proposals forward: failure to do so in a timely manner could result in valuable resources being diverted to needs in other parts of the public sector. The needs of each locality should therefore be reviewed urgently and early decisions taken about the range of provision required and how best it should be structured, whether drawing from the examples of possible structures outlined earlier or other arrangements agreed at local level.
- 9.6 At a practical level, experience has shown that where rationalisation or amalgamations are proposed, it is essential to have an interim Board of Governors to take forward planning and recruitment etc, but at present there is no such provision in law. The Group recommends that the Department should seek such provision at the earliest opportunity.



## **Policy Areas**

- 9.7 We discuss below several key policy areas that will impact on the new arrangements and we recommend that the Department review these policies to facilitate the delivery of the Entitlement Framework.

### **School funding**

- 9.8 Delivering the proposed Entitlement Framework will require schools to make available additional provision, in cooperation and collaboration with other schools, FE institutions and other providers. In Appendix 8 we have identified where additional funding will be required to ensure delivery of the Entitlement Framework.
- 9.9 As well as providing additional funding, it will be important to ensure that the allocation of resources to schools is based on schools' needs under the proposed new arrangements. The current LMS arrangements are largely pupil based and provide additional resources to reflect the specific needs of schools - for example, where the school is located in two sites, or to help small schools to deliver the curriculum. However, neither the current formulae nor the proposed common formula would fully meet the needs of schools under the proposed new arrangements for post-primary education.
- 9.10 We believe that the LMS arrangements should continue to have a pupil focused element but should include enhanced elements to reflect the cost of providing the greater curriculum breadth, including partnership arrangements, specialisms, flexibility on enrolment numbers etc. It is outside the remit of the Group to determine what changes should be made to the LMS arrangements. However, we consider that the Department of Education should review the arrangements to consider how the LMS common formula should be amended to ensure that all schools are able to provide all pupils with full access to the proposed Pupil Entitlement, and to encourage collaboration between schools.

### **Open Enrolment**

- 9.11 The current system of open enrolment enables parents to express, in order, their school preferences and schools are required to admit pupils up to their enrolment and admissions numbers. This creates competition amongst schools to keep up their pupil numbers; and competition amongst pupils for places in what are perceived to be 'good' schools. In the context

of a demographic downturn, the net effect is a diverse pattern of oversubscription and surplus places in schools. The competition for pupils between schools, which is also linked to the current funding arrangements, has the effect of hindering cooperation between them.

- 9.12 The Group has agreed that future post-primary arrangements must be pupil centred and that informed choice by parents and pupils will be fundamental to the new arrangements for admitting pupils to schools.
- 9.13 Under the Entitlement Framework, schools will be working in partnership to provide access to a wider range of educational opportunities for all pupils, irrespective of the school they attend. Schools will become more equally valued and parents will have a wider range of acceptable schools. This will reduce the potential for oversubscription and we believe that the policy of open enrolment will function more effectively under the proposed post-primary arrangements once the Entitlement Framework and the wider range of choices are available to pupils.
- 9.14 Currently enrolment and admission numbers, based on the physical capacity of schools, are determined by the Department of Education and can be varied by the Department in response to temporary pressures. Proposals for new post-primary arrangements will be determined locally, for approval by the Department, and we believe that there should also be greater flexibility at local level in relation to enrolment and admissions numbers. If a school agrees not to fill to capacity in support of local arrangements, they should not be penalised financially and the LMS funding arrangements should be amended accordingly. The aim is to secure provision which is in the best interests of all the pupils in the locality.
- 9.15 It will require careful management in order to establish successful new arrangements in each area. The Group believes that this could be achieved through a more flexible open enrolment policy involving the schools (through the LPDP) and the APDP. It will be important to keep the arrangements in each locality under review.

## **Transport**

- 9.16 The current Home to School Transport policy is based on the principle of “nearest suitable school” as determined by the outcome of the Transfer Test and the preference expressed by parents when choosing a

post-primary school for their child from the established educational categories of controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish-medium, and in the grammar sector, denominational and non-denominational schools. Ending the Transfer Tests and changing to a system of post-primary school admissions based on informed parental choice means that the present definition of “nearest suitable school” will no longer be appropriate and should be reviewed.

- 9.17 The Entitlement Framework will provide a greater range of suitable schools within localities. This may have the dual impact of some pupils travelling shorter distances whereas others may decide to travel further. Age 14 is the point at which major decisions are made about learning pathways and it will be important that Home to School Transport policy is designed in a way that supports, rather than inhibits, those decisions. The Home to School Transport policy should therefore be reviewed to ensure that it supports and facilitates the implementation of the Entitlement Framework. Other transport resource implications linked to cooperation and collaboration are identified in Appendix 8.

### **Expulsion/Powers to Direct**

- 9.18 The implementation of the Entitlement Framework, combined with the revised curriculum, will provide all pupils with education which they will see as more relevant to them. As a result, we believe pupils will be better motivated and engaged. We expect that this will lead to a decline in the incidence of behaviour which currently may result in expulsion.
- 9.19 We believe that schools should retain responsibility for the educational needs of all their pupils. Where a pupil is losing motivation or displays signs of disengagement, the school, with appropriate support as necessary, should review the provision made for the pupil in consultation with the pupil and parents. Schools should make available more suitable provision to meet the pupil’s needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations, in partnership with other schools, FE institutions and other providers. This could include a temporary placement, for example, to address specific behavioural problems but the aim should be to re-integrate a pupil into his or her school as soon as possible.
- 9.20 Expulsion should become a very exceptional occurrence and resorted to only where all other approaches have failed or in the most extreme circumstances. The Department of Education should review policy and

practice in relation to the arrangements for the placement of pupils who have been expelled.

## **Encouraging the Development of the New Arrangements**

9.21 The success of the proposed arrangements will be heavily dependent on the availability of additional resources to enable the changes to take place. School managing authorities must have confidence that these resources will be made available to support the development and implementation of their proposals without impacting on the resources currently available for the classroom and that those children already in the system will continue to receive a high quality education while the changes are being introduced.

9.22 The Department of Education should seek additional resources for the development and implementation of the new arrangements. These should be focused on those schools which can clearly demonstrate that they can deliver the Entitlement Framework and meet the criteria. We recognise that this will be a developmental process for schools and the allocation of resources should take this into account. It is not possible at this stage to provide an overall estimate of cost because, by definition, this will emerge only after decisions are taken at local level on the form of provision to be adopted.

9.23 The need for additional resources falls into the following categories:

- developing new proposals;
- delivering the Entitlement Framework;
- implementing new arrangements;
- capital investment; and
- raising local awareness of new arrangements.

Details of areas which may be covered under each of these headings are contained in Appendix 8. We wish to emphasise that the list is not exhaustive but reflects the main resource issues identified during our discussions.



## Information and Public Awareness

- 9.24 The proposals contained in this advice are wide-ranging and will impact on provision both at local level and more generally. Pupils, parents and teachers have a legitimate interest in any educational developments and will wish to understand what is happening, when and why. Parents should be aware of what the new arrangements could provide for their children. It is important therefore that the reasons for change and the benefits that will accrue should be fully explained to everyone. Providing information at local level will facilitate the engagement of the community in developing local arrangements so that the resultant provision can reflect local wishes, needs and circumstances.
- 9.25 The Group considers that a coherent and multi-stranded information and communication plan to provide information to teachers, parents, pupils and the wider public should be developed and implemented. This should identify the key issues requiring explanation and the various interest groups to be addressed.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

- 9.26 Our proposals will involve significant changes to our system of post-primary education and it will be important that the implementation process is monitored to ensure that momentum is maintained and also to resolve any emerging difficulties. We propose that the Department of Education, advised by the Strategic Planning and Implementation Group, should have this function on an ongoing basis.
- 9.27 We have every confidence that our proposals represent the best way forward in the interests of all pupils. Nevertheless, given the complexity of the issues and their importance to our young people and the future of our society and economy, we believe that the proposed changes should be the subject of a full evaluation after they have been implemented. This will identify any issues emerging from the implementation of the new curriculum and the Entitlement Framework, including arrangements for cooperation and collaboration, the system of informed parental and pupil choice, and the outcomes from the new arrangements and make recommendations for any amendments to improve their operation.
- 9.28 We propose that an evaluation should not take place until the arrangements have become fully embedded, and parents and teachers



have become familiar with them and their operation. This process should include self-evaluation by LPDPs which should be quality assured by the Department of Education. We propose that the evaluation should take place 5 years after the date of the final Transfer Tests i.e. in 2014.

### **Key Recommendations**

- The Department of Education should provide a cohesive and strategic approach to the planning and development of the schools estate.
- Schools and managing authorities should take a fundamental and critical look at the physical facilities available to ensure they are fit for purpose, of sufficient standard and used effectively.
- The Department of Education should review policies on school funding, open enrolment, school transport and expulsions/powers to direct and make the necessary policy changes to facilitate the development of new arrangements.
- The Department of Education should seek the necessary additional recurrent and capital resources to implement these proposals.
- A coherent and multi-stranded information and communication strategy should be put in place to provide information to teachers, parents, pupils and the wider public.
- The Department of Education should monitor the implementation of new arrangements on a continual basis and an evaluation of the new arrangements should take place in 2014.

## **CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY**

This has been an exciting and challenging assignment. Many factors are driving change in post-primary education but the most important in our view is the need to prepare our young people for a rapidly changing world. We believe that these proposals will shape the future for our young people and for Northern Ireland society.

### **Principles**

Future post-primary arrangements should be based on the principles of equality, quality, relevance, access, choice, respect and partnership.

### **Pupil Entitlement**

We want to meet the specific educational needs of all our young people. Our proposed Entitlement Framework seeks to guarantee access to learning pathways offering a broader and more flexible curriculum. Every young person should be able to choose a blend of courses including traditional and vocational courses, which best meet their needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations.

### **Schools**

Schools will need to offer a wider and more flexible choice of courses than is currently available, including a mix of both traditional academic and vocational courses. Schools acting in isolation will be unable to provide the entitlement for all pupils. They will need to work with other schools and with FE institutions in a new culture of collaboration and partnership.

We do not believe in a “one size fits all” model. New arrangements will need to be developed locally to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met, taking account of local circumstances. Arrangements may take a variety of forms provided they meet the Pupil Entitlement Framework. All of the existing types of schools will have a role to play, and we anticipate the development of new types of school, for example specialist schools, as we focus on meeting local needs.

### **Transfer**

The present Transfer Tests should end. Transfer from primary to post-primary school should continue to be at age 11 but should be on the basis of choice by

parents and pupils, supported by appropriate information including the Pupil Profile. Choice of post-primary schools will be between local schools with distinctive characteristics but which will be of equal high quality, equally valued, and which provide access to the breadth, choice and flexibility offered by the entitlement. The first main decision point about learning pathways will be at age 14 and should also be based on informed parental and pupil choice.

The last Transfer Tests should take place no later than Autumn 2008. This time will be needed to implement the new curriculum, to develop the Pupil Profile and new arrangements at local level. However, these new arrangements could be developed in some localities in advance of the formal ending of the Transfer Tests. Grammar schools can already choose to move away from ability based admission arrangements. We encourage schools to begin to work together to implement the proposals immediately.

## **Implementation**

Our vision will be achieved only with a significant increase in the range and quality of choice available to our young people. The achievement of the vision will require excellent strategic planning at a regional and local level; very significant support for schools, teachers, parents and pupils as operational changes are made; and sufficient resources.

## **Conclusion**

These far reaching proposals offer a new beginning for post-primary education. They will significantly enhance the range of provision available for all pupils, and provide choice and flexibility to best match pupils' needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. The proposals are crucial to the preparation of all our pupils for life and work and to enable them to play their part as responsible citizens in a vibrant, modern society and prosperous economy.

We believe passionately that a vision has been painted; the challenge now is for all those in education to make it a reality by working together with the common purpose of providing all pupils with the best possible educational opportunities and to deliver a world-class service.



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Mr Matt Murray	Education & Training Inspectorate
Mr Brian Spiers	Education & Training Inspectorate
Ms Edel Teague	Human Rights Commission
Dr Alastair Walker	CCEA
Mr Richard Wallace	Northern Ireland eLearning Partnership



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Unless otherwise stated the information was provided by the Department of Education.

### Demographic Trends

#### Post-Primary School Population Projections (2002 based)

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
<b>Non-Grammar</b>	91806	90794	88332	86089	83911	81327	80152	78922
<b>% Change</b>		-1	-4	-6	-9	-11	-13	-14
<b>Grammar</b>	63102	63301	63297	63280	63317	63331	63382	63370
<b>% Change</b>		+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0
<b>All Post-Primary</b>	154908	154094	151629	149369	147228	144658	143534	142291
<b>% Change</b>		-1	-2	-4	-5	-7	-7	-8
<b>Non-Grammar: Grammar Ratio</b>	59:41	59:41	58:42	58:42	57:43	56:44	56:44	55:45

#### Population Projections for Age 11-18 Population (2001-2040)

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2040
<b>Age 11-18 population</b>	212541	199052	195086	181711	172868	171777	158058
<b>% Change</b>		-6	-8	-15	-19	-19	-26

Source: NISRA Population Projections

## Profile of Admissions to Grammar Schools

### Admissions to Grammar Schools by Grade

Transfer Test Grade	1998/1999	2002/2003
	% of Admissions	% of Admissions
A	73	69
B1	14	13
B2	8	9
C1	3	5
C2	1	2
D	0	1
Other	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Admission of Pupils with Grades C or D to Grammar Schools

School Admissions with Grades C or D	2002/2003	
	No of Grammar Schools	% of Grammar Schools
Admitting any C/D Grades	53	78
10% or more of admissions	20	29
15% or more of admissions	13	19
20% or more of admissions	10	15

## Educational Provision

### GCSE and GCE Subjects available in Post-Primary Schools

No of Subjects	GCSEs		GCEs	
	Schools			
	No	%	No	%
>10	5	2	31	24
10-14	16	7	21	16
15-19	106	46	43	33
20-24	92	40	33	26
25 or more	13	6	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: CCEA

## Sixth Form Provision in Post-Primary Schools

Number of Pupils in 6 <sup>th</sup> Form	Schools with 6 <sup>th</sup> Forms	
	No	%
5-19	14	8
20-39	21	12
40-59	25	14
60-79	9	5
80-99	8	5
100-119	11	6
120-139	9	5
140-159	8	5
160-179	7	4
180-199	16	9
200-219	10	6
220-239	10	6
240-259	6	3
260-279	3	2
280-299	6	3
300-349	5	3
350-499	7	4
500+	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100</b>

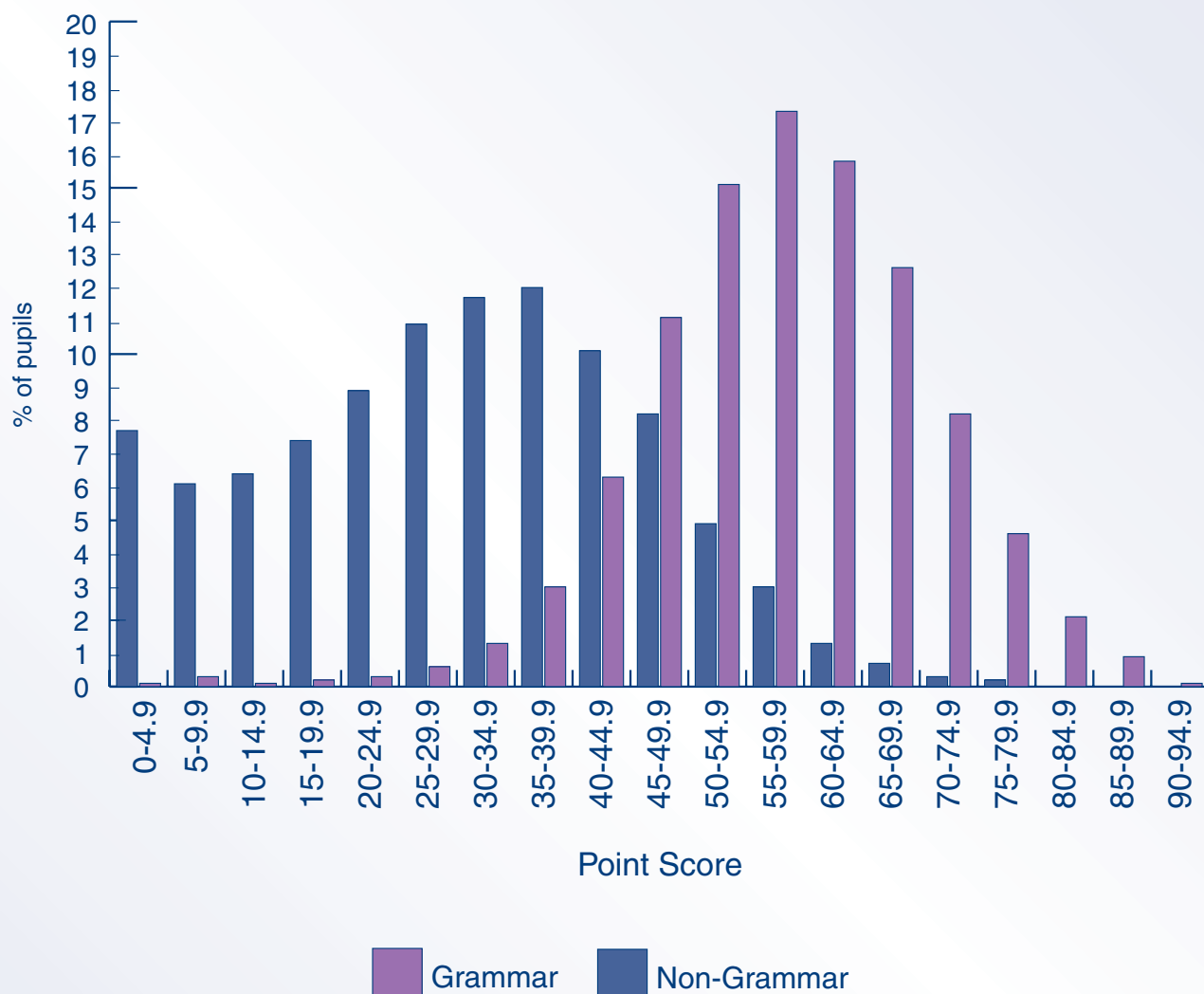
## Performance Indicators

### Comparison of Performance between Northern Ireland and England (2001/02)

Performance Indicator	Northern Ireland	England
% of pupils achieving		
2+ 'A' Levels A-E	95	83
5+ GCSEs A*-C	59	52
5+ GCSEs A*-G	87	89
No GCSEs	4	5
Average GCSE Point Score	37.7	40.1

## GCSE Point Score Comparison of Grammar and Non-Grammar Pupils

GCSE Point Scores for Grammar and Non-Grammar Pupils



### Calculation of Point Score

The GCSE Point Score is calculated as follows: - each GCSE grade is assigned points, where GCSE Grade A\* =8, A=7, B=6, C=5, D=4, E=3, F=2, G=1. The grade points are summed for each pupil. Includes all school types in Northern Ireland and England, and figures include GNVQ Part I qualifications and GCSE Short Courses in addition to GCSEs. The average GCSE point score is calculated by dividing the total points by the number of pupils.

## OECD PISA Study 2000: Student Achievement

	Reading Literacy		Mathematical Literacy		Scientific Literacy	
	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Finland	546	89	536	80	538	86
Canada	534	95	533	85	529	89
New Zealand	529	108	537	99	528	101
Australia	528	102	533	90	528	94
Republic of Ireland	527	94	503	84	513	92
Korea	525	70	547	84	552	81
United Kingdom	523	100	529	92	532	98
England	523	100	529	92	533	97
Japan	522	86	557	87	550	90
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>105</b>
Sweden	516	92	510	93	512	93
Austria	507	93	515	92	519	91
Belgium	507	107	520	106	496	111
Iceland	507	92	514	85	496	88
Norway	505	104	499	92	500	96
France	505	92	517	89	500	102
United States	504	105	493	98	499	101
Denmark	497	98	514	87	481	103
Switzerland	494	102	529	100	496	100
Spain	493	85	476	91	491	95
Czech Republic	492	96	498	96	511	94
Italy	487	91	457	90	478	98
Germany	484	111	490	103	487	102
Hungary	480	94	488	98	496	103
Poland	479	100	470	103	483	97
Greece	474	97	447	108	461	97
Portugal	470	97	454	91	459	89
Luxembourg	441	100	446	93	443	96
Mexico	422	86	387	83	422	77

Source: OECD



This table shows how Northern Ireland compares with other countries. The mean score is the average performance. The standard deviation is a measure of the deviation from the mean score, reflecting the extent of variance of scores – the higher the standard deviation the greater the difference between the highest and lowest scores.

### **Policy Lessons from PISA 2000**

An OECD symposium was held in Berlin in November 2002 to identify factors and policy strategies associated with educational success and to identify the policy lessons that different countries are drawing from the results of PISA 2000.

The PISA results were discussed at the symposium and some broad conclusions reached included:

- Quality and equity do not have to be seen as competing policy objectives.
- Spending alone does not guarantee better outcomes.
- Student engagement with reading, and with school more generally can lift overall performance and reduce the influence of coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Students tend to perform better in schools characterised by high expectations, the enjoyment of learning, a strong disciplinary climate, and good teacher-student relations.
- A clear focus on outcomes with greater freedom for schools to organise their learning environment and to manage their resources can produce better results.
- More integrated and flexible educational pathways, combined with a higher level of teacher support for students, appear to be conducive to better results and a more balanced distribution of educational opportunities.

### MEASURING OUTCOMES

Some outcomes are not capable of direct measurement and will have to be assessed indirectly or by proxy – for example, increased relevance in the curriculum could be measured by improved attendance and increased staying-on rates. In other cases, it may be appropriate to use periodic surveys, for example to gauge pupil and parental perceptions. In addition, the increasing use of self-evaluation by schools, coupled with external evaluation by the Education & Training Inspectorate, will provide useful information.

The following is an illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of some of the potential sources of information that could be used:

- examination and assessment outcomes including key skills and competences;
- other recorded and collected data, including CLASS data and statistical returns;
- inspection evidence;
- surveys;
- research evidence;
- “Pupil Profile” information;
- measures of value added (not currently available in NI – consideration should be given to developing a Northern Ireland model);
- school self-evaluation - through ETI Guidance “Improving Quality Raising Standards” and “Together Towards Improvement” and attitudinal questionnaires;
- quality assurance tools – Charter Mark, IIP, EFQM etc;
- school development planning process; and
- accredited professional development courses.

## NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Level of Qualification	General	Vocationally-related	Occupational
<b>Level 5</b>	Post-graduate Degrees and Diplomas	Post-graduate Degrees and Diplomas	Level 5 NVQ
<b>Level 4</b>	Degrees and Diplomas	Degrees and Diplomas	Level 4 NVQ
<b>Level 3</b> (Advanced)	Advanced GCE and Advanced Subsidiary (AS)	Advanced VCE and Advanced Subsidiary VCE	Level 3 NVQ
<b>Level 2</b> (Intermediate)	GCSE grades A*-C	Intermediate GNVQ	Level 2 NVQ
<b>Level 1</b> (Foundation)	GCSE grades D-G	Foundation GNVQ	Level 1 NVQ
<b>Entry Level</b>	Entry Level qualifications provide a stepping stone to Level 1 qualifications		

Source: CCEA

## EXAMPLES OF PROVISION CURRENTLY OFFERED IN THE FE SECTOR

The links between schools and FE institutions are extensive and largely vocationally orientated. At present links at 14 –16 are focused mainly, but not exclusively, on less able students, while links at 16 –19 are provided for more able students following A level or AVCE courses. This provision can be built upon and expanded significantly to offer enhanced opportunities for pupils of all abilities and at the same time contribute to the development of an enterprise and business culture and thus to future economic growth.

### 14-16

A significant amount of energy and resources have been invested in link provision between FE institutions and post-primary schools in the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Pilot. As part of this pilot, the newly introduced Occupational Studies offer pupils the opportunity to take courses in Engineering, Construction, Vehicle Studies, Media, Design, Retail, Sport, Leisure and Travel, Office Administration, Hairdressing and Beauty and Hospitality and Catering. Pupils generally take these courses in an FE institution to gain access to the appropriate staff, facilities and equipment. Some NVQs are also taken by school pupils in FE institutions.

Other provision offered by the FE institutions to Key Stage 4 pupils in schools includes modules in the following areas:

Music Technology and Music Performance	Product Design
ICT and Software Engineering and Development	Autocad
Multi Media, Digital Media and Video Production	Journalism
CNC Machining	Business Enterprise
Electronics	Photography
Ceramic and Glass Design	Animation
Graphic Design	Fine Art Printmaking
Web Design	Fibre Arts
Introduction to Architecture and Interior Spatial Architecture/Interior Design	Basic Food Hygiene

These modules/units/options are mostly studied in FE institutions and many of them offer coherent progression routes into higher education, further education and training and/or employment.

## 16-19

For 16-19 pupils, links between schools and FE institutions may mean FE lecturers coming into schools to teach the courses or, where more specialist facilities and equipment are required, pupils may attend the FE institution.

At this level link courses may lead to qualifications such as A and AS levels, AVCE units and single awards and Key Skills or they may be used to enrich the 6<sup>th</sup> form curriculum. In either case links provide a wider range of options for pupils and give them an insight into possible careers. Examples of links courses leading to qualifications include:

Key Skills	Leisure
Built Environment	Performing Arts
Business	Physics
Economics	Politics
Health and Social Care	Psychology
ECDL/Word processing	Sociology
ICT	VCE Technology and Design

Examples of enrichment programmes include

Music	Business Enterprise
Catering	Software Development
Journalism	CISCO
Technology	Multi Media/Animation/Digital Editing
Autocad	



## Special School Provision

Special Schools and FE institutions collaborate to provide link courses such as:

Catering

Outdoor Pursuits

Ceramics

Painting and Decorating

Communication

Personal Presentation

Computing

Photography

Dance and Movement/Aerobics

PSE

Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene

Retail

Gardening

Team Enterprise

National Skills Profile

Woodwork

**OPTIONS FOR FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS**

Taking account of the range of educational, management and other features outlined in Chapter 6, the following are some examples of the possible range of structures. In any given locality the provision made should be in response to local needs, wishes and circumstances and could comprise some or all of these examples, or alternative proposals developed at local level, provided that they conform to the Entitlement Framework and criteria. In responding to local needs, wishes and circumstances, arrangements should build on the attributes and strengths of the provision currently existing in a locality.

**Example**

A school which, in conformity with the Entitlement Framework, offers the required proportions of its provision in the form of vocational and academic subjects and which also offers a specialism based on its strength in a particular curricular area. The specialism will normally have been developed to reflect particular local needs or the existence of links with specific areas of business, industry or social and community organisations. The area of specialism will be a matter for determination at local level. Examples might include horticulture, art and design, leisure and tourism, health and social care.

Key elements of the specialist approach would involve the school sharing its expertise and facilities with other schools and acting as a centre of excellence to provide advice and support in the area of its specialism. It will be important that specialist schools are able to offer the breadth of curricular entitlement as well as their specialist area. The development of a specialism is not a way of supporting schools where there are questions about their longer-term viability, but should be a means of developing skills and expertise in areas of interest to young people and relevant to the local and the Northern Ireland economy and society. As indicated in Chapter 6, this type of school would be new to Northern Ireland.

## Example

A school which has traditionally made provision for the full range of ability (e.g. at 11-16 or 11-18) and which, in conformity with the Entitlement Framework, will offer a broad mixture of courses including the required proportion of academic type courses. Informed choice by pupils and parents at age 14 would determine appropriate learning pathways which would be accessed from pupils' existing school or, if necessary, by changing schools.

Some of these courses may be provided in collaboration with other schools and other providers. Where the school has specialist facilities and/or staff with particular expertise e.g. business, languages, technology, arts, sport etc, the school could offer access to these by pupils (and staff) from other neighbouring schools as part of the local collaborative arrangements.

## Example

A school with a traditional academic ethos which, in conformity with the Entitlement Framework, will also offer the required proportion of its provision in the form of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and above. The vocational provision may be offered from within the school or via collaboration with other local schools and/or with the local Further Education institution or other providers. Arrangements would provide for the full range of abilities and provide for pupils progressing at varying degrees of pace and depth.

Provision at Key Stage 3 would be based on the statutory core syllabus for that phase, augmented by extension and enrichment options that reflect the school's ethos and emphasis. Informed choice by pupils and parents at age 14 would determine appropriate learning pathways, which could be accessed from pupils' existing school or, if necessary, by changing schools.

Within the broad menu of courses offered by the school, there may be some for which the school has specialist facilities and/or staff with particular expertise e.g. business, languages, technology, arts, sport etc. The school could offer access to these by pupils (and staff) from other neighbouring schools as part of the local collaborative arrangements.

## Example

A school which has traditionally made provision for the full range of ability of pupils aged 11-14, and which has close links with other schools offering 14-16 and 14-18 provision, will offer provision based on the statutory core syllabus for Key Stage 3 augmented by extension and enrichment options.

Informed choice by pupils and parents at age 14 would determine appropriate learning pathways to be followed at any of the other illustrative types of schools outlined in these examples.

In all the examples mentioned, and others that may emerge from local consideration, it is expected that in most instances a school would be able to provide all, or the majority, of core provision from within its normal timetable. To extend the range of options available to pupils, some other courses may be offered on a joint basis with other neighbouring schools, especially at Key Stage 4, whilst for post-16 provision there is considerable scope for collaboration with the FE sector. To minimise travel and/or to provide for some courses with a small uptake, it may be possible to use distance-learning or e-learning provision for at least part of the course content.

## IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS TIMETABLE

<b>Preliminary Phase</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> <b>1. To establish the Strategic Planning and Implementation Group</b> <b>2. To raise awareness of proposals for new arrangements</b>	<b>Months 1-4</b>
Establishment of Strategic Planning and Implementation Group	Month 1
Establishment of Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs)	Month 2
Appointment of APDP Staff	Month 3
Guidance to schools about management/planning arrangements/timetable	Month 4
<b>Phase One – Delivering the Entitlement</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> <b>1. To audit current provision</b> <b>2. To establish Local Planning and Development Partnerships</b> <b>3. To develop proposals</b>	<b>Months 5-16</b>
Determine Local Areas and establish Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs)	Months 5-8
Schools audit their provision against framework/criteria	Months 5-8
LPDP discussions to explore options to enable schools, through collaboration with other schools, FE and other providers, to deliver the Entitlement Framework.	Months 9-16
Prepare proposals for local consultation	Month 16



<b>Phase Two – Finalising Proposals</b>  <b>Objective:</b> <b>1. To undertake local consultation on draft proposals</b> <b>2. To finalise proposals</b> <b>3. To consider and approve proposals</b>	<b>Months 17-28</b>
Local consultation	Months 17-19
Final proposals submitted to APDPs	Months 21-23
Development proposals published	Month 24
Decisions	Months 26-28
<b>Phase Three –Planning for Implementation</b>  <b>Objectives:</b> <b>1. To implement the proposals at a local level</b>	<b>Up to month 40</b>
Schools prepare implementation strategy.	Up to month 34
Schools prepare detailed implementation plan	Months 34-40
<b>Phase Four – Implementation</b>  <b>Objective:</b> <b>1. To introduce new local arrangements</b>	<b>Beginning of following school year</b>
First transfer to revised structures under new arrangements	Beginning of following school year

## **MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE NEW ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Developing Proposals**

The process of developing proposals will involve schools and managing authorities engaging through the LPDPs to determine how best to deliver the Entitlement Framework in any given area. Resources should be provided to facilitate the following actions:

- the release of a member of the senior management team of schools to direct the process of change within each school;
- leadership and change management training for staff;
- training and support for Boards of Governors;
- exceptional closure days to facilitate discussion with staff and to audit the current provision against the Entitlement Framework;
- establishment of structures to give strategic and operational level direction and support for the development of proposals;
- the production of high quality guidance materials for schools;
- support for, and costs of, carrying out local consultations and local information strategies; and
- appointment of staff to the APDPs with the necessary skills to facilitate the development of proposals by working with schools individually and all schools in a locality through the LPDPs.

### **Delivering the Entitlement Framework**

The emphasis on the Entitlement Framework will require the current curriculum provision to be expanded to ensure that each pupil has access to the full range specified by the framework and to provide information to enable informed decisions to be made by pupils and parents. Resources should be made available for:

- development of curriculum materials for teachers and pupils;

- staff training and development (including substitute cover);
- ICT/ILT facilities;
- development of links with business and the wider community;
- enhanced careers education and guidance;
- development of the Pupil Profile; and
- release of teacher time to provide the necessary quality professional advice to parents/pupils.

## **Implementing New Arrangements**

To introduce the new arrangements schools will have to cooperate and collaborate with other schools, FE institutions and other providers. Schools may be securing a service/expertise or providing a service/expertise to another school. This will be a new undertaking for many schools and will necessitate the deployment of staff to engage in this process and to plan the arrangements. We recommend that resources be made available to participating schools to facilitate:

- managing the collaborative arrangements between schools, FE and other providers;
- a combination of additional staff and some redeployment of existing staff in an area to provide the full entitlement – full-time appointments in individual schools, joint appointments, peripatetic teachers and support staff;
- transport costs for teachers and pupils if necessary;
- development of the appropriate infrastructure particularly in relation to ICT/ILT for distance learning and to underpin the implementation of the Pupil Profile; other equipment to enable a school to deliver the pupil entitlement; and IT transfer between schools and FE; and
- professional development of teaching staff.

## **Capital Investment**

The Department of Education invests a significant amount of capital resources in the schools estate each year. It is imperative that the capital investment programme encourages and facilitates the introduction of the new arrangements. We recommend that resources are made available both from within the Department's existing capital budget and through the Strategic Investment Programme and that priority should be given to schools engaged in the process of reorganising to provide the Entitlement Framework. The allocation of resources should be on a strategic basis, taking account of the needs of the local area, rather than based, as it is now, on the requirements of individual schools. Resources should be directed at:

- new structures/schools required as a result of local development proposals;
- new facilities required to enable schools to deliver the Entitlement Framework; and
- schools requiring refurbishment or renovation to secure an appropriate learning environment for pupils.

## **Raising Local Awareness of New Arrangements**

It will be important to ensure that local communities are fully aware of the enhancements to the curriculum on offer and the distinct features of the new arrangements. Schools will be at the forefront of delivering the new Entitlement Framework and we consider resources should be made available to enable them to do so.

## GLOSSARY

<b>AEP</b>	Alternative Education Provision is education outside the mainstream system.
<b>Enrichment Activities or Courses</b>	Activities or Courses which provide breadth outside the range of the main courses studied.
<b>Entitlement Framework</b>	A framework of entitlement which should be the right of every post-primary pupil.
<b>Extension Courses</b>	Courses which pupils take to widen and develop their interests in particular courses.
<b>ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)</b>	Network of computers allowing access to a wide range of shared software held centrally on a server which provides communication possibilities both within and between organisations.
<b>ILT (Information and Learning Technologies)</b>	Application of IT and ICT to education.
<b>IT (Information Technologies)</b>	Stand alone computer hardware and software.
<b>Learning Pathway</b>	A combination of courses, learning opportunities and teaching approaches which an individual chooses to follow to meet his or her needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations.
<b>Managing Authorities</b>	The organisations which have overall responsibility for managing schools, ie, Education and Library Boards, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Boards of Governors of grant-maintained integrated, and voluntary grammar schools.



## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>APDP</b>	Area Planning and Development Partnership
<b>AVCE</b>	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
<b>BTEC</b>	Business and Technical Enterprise Council
<b>CAD</b>	Computer Aided Design
<b>CAM</b>	Computer Aided Manufacturing
<b>CCEA</b>	Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment
<b>CCMS</b>	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
<b>CLASS</b>	Computerised Local Administration Schools System
<b>ECDL</b>	European Computer Driving Licence
<b>EFQM</b>	European Foundation Quality Model
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education Other Than at School
<b>ETI</b>	Education & Training Inspectorate
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>GCE</b>	General Certificate of Education
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate of Secondary Education
<b>GNVQ</b>	General National Vocational Qualification
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>ILT</b>	Information and Learning Technology
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>iiP</b>	Investors in People
<b>LMS</b>	Local Management of Schools
<b>LPDP</b>	Local Planning and Development Partnership
<b>NVQ</b>	National Vocational Qualification
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>PSE</b>	Personal and Social Education
<b>SEN</b>	Special Educational Needs
<b>SENDA</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
<b>VCE</b>	Vocational Certificate in Education
<b>VRQ</b>	Vocationally Related Qualification

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