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NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION SECTORAL FORMAT

WARRENPOINT

23 JUNE 2010

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The 10th NSMC meeting in Education Sectoral format was held in Warrenpoint on 23 June 2010.
2. The meeting was attended by Caitríona Ruane, MLA, Minister of Education, Sir Reg Empey, MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning and Mary Coughlan TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills. Minister Ruane chaired the meeting.

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

3. Ministers welcomed a joint presentation from practitioners and officials on initiatives aimed at tackling educational underachievement in disadvantaged communities.
4. Ministers noted progress made in a number of areas in relation to educational underachievement, including:
 - the continuing work on Traveller education, including the conclusion of consultations with Travellers which will inform the recommendations of the Taskforce on Traveller Education;

- the launch of pre-school, post-primary and special Toolkits for Diversity to support teachers and schools in meeting the needs of newcomer pupils and their parents;
- progress made by the joint Working Group on Educational Underachievement including exploration of scope to develop links between schemes involving business working with schools;
- the positive report of the Joint Post-Primary Numeracy Conference which highlighted the benefits of collaborative professional development and sharing of best practice;
- the progress being made to prepare for an all-island Children's Book Week in the autumn; and
- it is planned to hold a conference on the theme of 'schools supporting parents to support children's literacy' in 2011 to follow up on the Children's Book Week.

TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS AND TEACHERS' SUPERANNUATION

5. The Council welcomed the re-constitution of the Teacher Qualifications Working Group and the progress already made in taking forward cooperation in teacher education issues generally and in relation to Irish-Medium Education (IME) in particular.
6. The Council welcomed the additional measures that are now in place to strengthen coordination and cooperation in relation to School Leadership and Irish-Medium Education (IME), including a commitment to share, where feasible, materials and resources in order to avoid duplication.
7. The Council also welcomed the contribution of exchanges between the Inspectorates of both Departments of Education to supporting the continuing development of inspection practice in both jurisdictions.
8. Ministers noted that the SCoTENS research sub-committee approved 'seed funding' grants in 2010 in respect of a range of topics.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

9. The Council welcomed the continuing progress made by the Middletown Centre for Autism including:
 - the reappointment of the Board for a further three year term;
 - the rolling out of further training packages across the island; and
 - the provision of advice and guidance to schools, and ongoing research and information services and expressed their continued support for the

efforts of the Centre and the Education Departments to develop a multi-annual plan for the future development of the Centre.

SCHOOL YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

10. The Council noted that a review of cooperation in the area of educational exchanges is included in the comprehensive Joint Study of North South Cooperation in Education which is currently underway and looked forward to receiving a further update on progress in this area at a future meeting.
11. The Council also noted the engagement between the two Departments and the IBEC/CBI Joint Business Council (JBC) in relation to the development of an enterprise strand in the Dissolving Boundaries project and that both Departments are planning to conduct an evaluation of the programme including its outcomes and benefits.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12. The Council agreed to meet again in Education sectoral format in November 2010.
13. The Ministers thanked Mrs. Michele Corkey, Principal of St. Marks High School, and all the staff and students for their help and cooperation in enabling the meeting to take place.

Joint Secretariat
23 June 2010