



PAPER NSMC ED 1 (09) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION SECTORAL FORMAT

MIDDLETOWN, CO ARMAGH

20 MAY 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

The 8th NSMC meeting in Education Sectoral format was held in Middletown, Co Armagh on Wednesday 20 May 2009.

The meeting was attended by Caitríona Ruane, MLA, Minister of Education, Sir Reg Empey, MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning and Batt O'Keeffe TD, Minister for Education and Science. Minister Ruane chaired the meeting.

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Ministers welcomed a presentation from education practitioners on approaches to the integration of newcomer children in schools and the challenges they face. They noted and welcomed the continued co-operation across the island on this issue.

Ministers reviewed progress on a range of issues related to Educational Underachievement and Traveller education and noted that a second joint conference on numeracy which will focus on the teaching and learning of mathematics in the post-primary setting will be held in the Autumn of 2009. It

was recognised that this would also contribute to the promotion of the STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) agenda.

The Council noted that a peer learning exercise on school attendance is scheduled to take place in the North West in September 2009. The event will bring together a range of academics, professionals and policy makers to jointly consider existing services, to share their experiences of ongoing initiatives and to examine best practice in addressing school attendance issues.

A Children's Book Week will be held during 2010 to focus on activities designed to promote reading as a positive experience. It was recognised that the public library services would have an important role to play.

The Council noted that following the successful Joint Traveller Education Conference in Newry on 11 March 2009, it is now proposed to create a Best Practice Forum for practitioners and policy makers to share and highlight best practice.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS & TEACHERS' SUPERANNUATION

The Council welcomed the closer liaison between both Departments of Education aimed at facilitating access to preparatory courses for the Irish language qualification requirements for teaching in schools in the south. It also noted the continuing cooperation between the Inspectorates of both Departments of Education aimed at supporting the continuing development of inspection practice in both jurisdictions;

The Council noted that the joint research project on how best to attract and develop new school leaders is expected to be available by end June 2009 and the ongoing work under the North South Student Teacher Exchange Programme and the ongoing teacher education research and conference activity under the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTens);

In relation to the issue of Teachers' superannuation, the Council noted that measures are being planned to provide additional information on pension issues to teachers and others in the public sector who wish to transfer to work in the other jurisdiction including information on recent changes in pension arrangements, Qualifying Recognised Overseas Pension Schemes (QROPS).

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The Council noted that there had been an exchange of correspondence between Ministers about Middletown and that the situation will be kept under active review by both Departments. The Council welcomed the plans for DE and DES to

jointly run a Conference on Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in November 2009.

SCHOOL YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

Ministers welcomed the progress made to date in developing a framework for a joint programme for the future management and funding of educational exchanges. They noted that both Departments will now take forward work on the development of a joint policy to underpin the new programme and that a progress report will be submitted to a future Council meeting.

The Council also noted that in light of the ongoing work programme it is the intention of both Ministers that the North South Exchange Consortium will continue for a year pending review by the two Departments.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council agreed to meet again in Education sectoral format in November 2009.

**Joint Secretariat
20 May 2009**

NOTE FOR EDITORS

The presentation on integration of newcomer children was provided by:

Ray Gilbert	Head of the Inclusion and Diversity Service
Breda Naughton	Department of Education and Science
Josephine McMahon	St Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry
Geraldine McClory	St Mary's High School, Newry
Eileen Donnelly	Drumglass High, Dungannon
Pat Halpin	Balbriggan Community College, Dublin

