

An Interim Report on the Shared Education Signature Project

September 2016

ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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1. Introduction and context

The Shared Education Signature Project (SESP) was created under the Delivering Social Change Framework which seeks to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Launched in November 2014, the SESP is funded by the Executive Office¹, The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Department of Education (DE). The Education Authority (EA) is the delivery agent for the project.

Shared education provides opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together.

The Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a legislative definition of the minimum core requirement for Shared Education. The Act sets out the following:

'Shared education means the education together of those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; and those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not, which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.'

The 'Sharing Works' Policy², which underpins the legislation provides a practical description of Shared Education. The policy describes Shared Education as the organisation and delivery of education so that it:

- meets the needs of, and provides for the education together of learners from all Section 75 categories and socio-economic status;
- involves schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sector identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements; and
- delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

The policy encourages providers to move beyond the minimum core requirements and address all the groups set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998³.

The SESP is focused on raising educational standards through shared learning and collaborative working and promoting a peaceful and respecting society. Partnerships of two or more nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools were invited to apply to engage in the project⁴. At the time of the evaluation there were two cohorts of partnerships; cohort one commenced in autumn 2015 and consists of 32 partnerships with cohort two commenced in winter 2015 and consists of 86 partnerships⁵. The EA reports that by June 2016 there were 134 SESP partnerships involved in the project, comprising of 314 schools, 2,233 teachers and 22,036 pupils.

¹ Formerly the Office of First and Deputy First Minister.

² [Sharing works - a policy for shared education | Department of Education](#)

³ Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.

⁴ Application details can be found at www.sepni.org

⁵ At the end of May 2016, cohort one had 74 schools in 32 partnerships and in cohort two 198 schools in 86 partnerships. Since this there has been an additional cohort three and subsequently an ongoing open application process.

2. Aims and methodology

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was commissioned by DE to provide an independent evaluation of the SESP and will issue a final report in 2018.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- I. evaluate the progress in the delivery of the project;
- II. highlight and disseminate examples of good practice through case studies⁶; and
- III. make recommendations to promote further improvement in the project in the interest of all of the learners.

This interim report is informed by two previous reports⁷ on the impact of shared education in schools. In response to the recommendations made in these reports the following actions have taken place.

- The EA employed a project co-ordinator and development officers to support the partnerships.
- The EA provided support for the partnerships including, evaluation and action plan training, SESP coordinator training and financial guidance.
- The EA implemented an application process for schools to access funding to implement action plans to advance shared education.
- The ETI created the Developing Shared Education Framework for School Partnerships⁸ (the ETI framework) which enables schools to self-evaluate the extent and quality of their shared education provision, and to set targets for development.
- The ETI recruited 16 associate assessors with shared education expertise to assist in the evaluation of the project and to support capacity building for shared education.
- The partnerships used the ETI framework to baseline their current engagement and set realistic aims and objectives for shared education.
- Partnerships are beginning to appoint shared education co-ordinators to develop further this work.
- The ETI facilitated two information sessions for partnerships focusing on how ETI will work with the partnerships across the three years.

During the period April 2015 to June 2016, the ETI carried out a total of 122 evaluations of 93 partnerships.

⁶ Based on the evaluation carried out to date five case studies of good practice are included in the appendices and are referenced within the report.

⁷ ETI, A Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme (November, 2013) and RMS McClure Watters, Evaluation of the Sharing Education programme – programme Level Summative Evaluation Report (May 2014).

⁸ Appendix 2

In April 2015, there were baseline evaluations of 32 of the partnerships in cohort one, with monitoring evaluations of 29 of these partnerships in March 2016. Between October 2015 and March 2016, there were baseline evaluations of 61 of the partnerships in cohort two. As the project moves forward with cohort three and beyond, the inspection methodology, including the format and structure of the final reporting arrangements, will be adapted to reflect the anticipated increased number of partnerships.

The ETI met with school leaders, staff, pupils, a small number of parents, and observed shared learning experiences. As part of the application process, each partnership was required, through joint self-evaluation, to identify its baseline position across the four development stages, of defining, developing, expanding or embedding against each of the four pillars of the ETI framework: learner centred; high quality teaching and learning; leadership and management; and community connections. The target, set by the project, is for the partnerships to move up one level within three of the four pillars during the SESP, with the aim of progressing towards extending shared education provision and making it sustainable by June 2018.

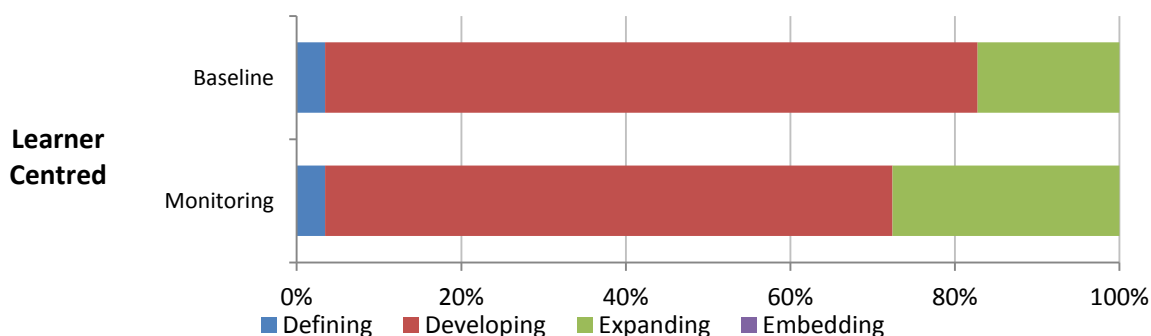
The position of each partnership on the framework was quality assured by ETI during the baseline visit, and was then used in the monitoring evaluations to measure the progress of the partnerships in delivering shared education. Inspectors also evaluated each partnership’s action plan going forward.

3. Key findings

The reporting of Key Stage Assessment results was deemed an essential requirement for schools in order to receive funding for the SESP. At the time of the baseline evaluation, many of the partnerships reported that they were in a challenging situation, due to teacher union directives, in relation to the reporting of these results. The prolonged period of uncertainty led to delays in the implementation of the project across the partnerships. Despite the initial difficulties, the partnerships demonstrated a high level of commitment to, and enthusiasm for, shared education.

In evaluating progress against the four pillars of learner centred, high quality learning and teaching, leadership, and community connections, the latter is the area where a significant minority (8) of partnerships remained in the defining stage. This is largely because partnerships focused appropriately on the building of relationships between schools before extending into the communities. There was significant progress in the area of leadership, with an increase from 14% (4) to 45% (13) of the partnerships at the expanding stage or beyond; this is a reflection of the commitment of leaders to working together for the benefit of children and young people. In most of the partnerships the outcome of their self-evaluation was evaluated as identifying accurately their position on the ETI framework.

Learner Centred



Between the baseline and the monitoring evaluations, while 69% (20) of the partnerships remained at the developing stage, those evaluated at the expanding stage increased from 17% (5) to 28% (8). This good progress was a result of the successful implementation of the well-conceived action plans and the learner-centred activities which met the needs of the pupils.

During the baseline evaluations, a majority of the pupils reported that they would like more time to play together and build relationships with the pupils from the other schools. By the time of the monitoring evaluations, most of the pupils reported that they had benefited from additional time for informal contact, which enabled them to socialise, make friends and build relationships with one another. In the highly effective practice the pupils regularly evaluated the shared curricular and extracurricular projects and through shared learning experiences, barriers were broken down and genuine friendships were forged with pupils from the partnership schools. (Case study 5) Furthermore, at this time, there was strong evidence of increasing numbers of pupils involved in shared activities, with greater participation across the year groups. At the end of the 2015/16 academic year, the EA reported 21% of all of the 22,036 pupils in the participating partnership schools had engaged in shared learning experiences.

In discussions with the ETI, the pupils indicated an enthusiasm for more shared learning experiences, to enable them to develop further their relationships with others. In addition, they spoke of their appreciation of the curricular and learning opportunities provided and the purposeful engagement with one another in learning environments beyond their own schools. The pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of their role in welcoming pupils from other schools and their respect for diversity.

'It doesn't matter that we are different religions – we still made friends.'

'Hopefully this (shared education) might help stop conflict between Catholics and Protestants.'

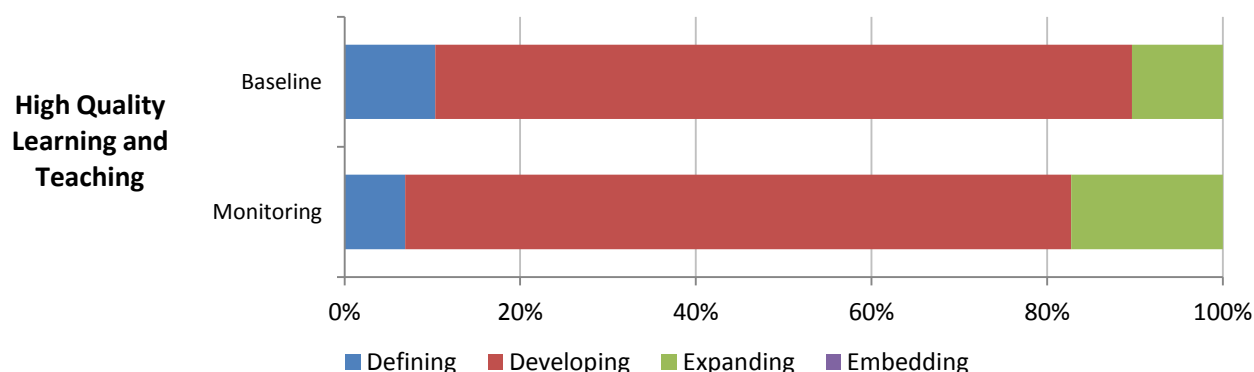
'I learned that people from different religions aren't really different.'

'Being in this project and meeting new people has really helped my confidence.'

Comments from pupils involved in SESP

In the best practice, pupils were taking on leadership roles and responsibilities, for example, as peer mentors, reading buddies and sports coaches within the partnerships. These opportunities contributed to the pupils' learning, the development of their leadership skills and their personal development. In addition, the pupils were involved in the planning for, and evaluation of, their shared learning experiences with their teachers. However, there is still the need for the partnerships to develop a more robust evaluation of the pupils' educational outcomes, through ongoing monitoring, recording and evaluation of the pupils' progress and outcomes in these areas, with a stronger focus on the extent to which pupils believe their experiences of shared education are meaningful.

High Quality Learning and Teaching



Good progress was made in the area of high quality learning and teaching with 93% (27) of partnerships in the developing or expanding stage.

All of the partnerships used the SESP to develop and extend further previous collaborative initiatives. At the baseline evaluation, the partnerships demonstrated a commitment to developing and expanding shared education through the shared learning experiences across the curriculum and involving more pupils and staff. In order to facilitate this development, the partnerships identified time to plan and prepare jointly as a key priority. At the time of the monitoring evaluations, it was clear that this collaborative approach to planning and delivery was having a positive impact on the quality of the learning experiences. Key features included the ongoing professional development of staff and the effective team-teaching; this made very good use of the teachers' skills and expertise across the partnerships. Furthermore, for some of the smaller primary schools, the sharing of teacher expertise and resources across the partnership is broadening the pupils' learning experiences; for example, through the use of a shared teacher and resources to give access to high quality Information and Communication Technology learning experiences for all pupils. In best practice, time is regularly set aside teachers to come together with their colleagues in the corresponding year group to plan a joint theme. (Case study 2)

'We believed that in year 1 we had to move the focus from simply learning through a topic in a shared environment to being explicitly focussed on raising standards in the core area of literacy.'

'Teachers benefit from a greater pool of expertise and have the opportunity to learn from each other. We understand that our shared classes and activities work best when planned and delivered in context.'

'Much discussion also took place around the appropriate balance between activities based on core curriculum content and specific activities with a reconciliation focus- this debate is on-going.'

Comments from teachers involved in SESP

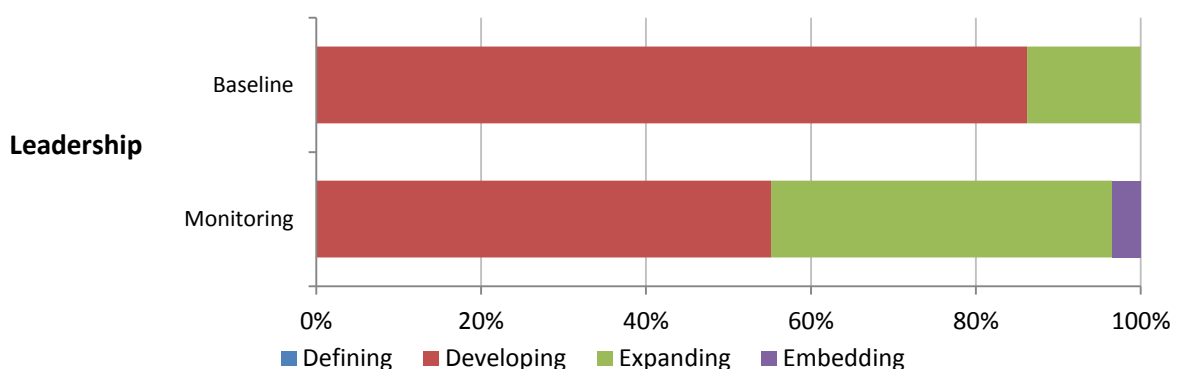
Multiple areas of the curriculum are being used to deliver shared lessons and while literacy and numeracy were often the focus of the shared lessons observed by ETI, partnerships were often delivering shared education meaningfully in other areas of the curriculum, most notably through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, and the World Around Us, in particular, the science-based activities. Pupils were also brought together to enjoy extra-curricular learning experiences, through drama, music and sport, for example, with their creativity being fostered through engagement in a variety of arts projects, which in turn benefitted the development of their personal and social skills.

Both pupils and teachers reported that the shared learning experiences contribute to raising standards through, for example, an enriched learning in history and politics with pupils coming together to discuss their differing perspectives on controversial historical events. However, at this stage of the evaluation it is too early to measure fully the impact on the pupils' values, attitudes and outcomes. The partnerships require further support from the EA development officers to assist them in developing their capacity to evaluate and track the impact of shared learning on improving standards for the pupils.

While a focus of the SESP is to improve the understanding of and the relationships between the two main traditions, without excluding any other tradition, there was sound evidence of the pupils developing skills and attitudes including empathy, respect and inclusion through learning with others. Given the diversity of cultures in Northern Ireland, this is essential for progressing to a peaceful future and an inclusive society. Partnerships expressed the need for further support in managing potentially sensitive and controversial issues related to conflict and reconciliation.

There is emerging evidence that the learning and teaching strategies currently used by partnerships are having a positive effect on the education and reconciliation outcomes for the pupils, such as, empowering the pupils in high level decision making and self-evaluation. It is important that the partnerships continue to identify and share best practice to inform the continued improvement and future development of shared education going forward.

Leadership



The most significant progress was in leadership, where 45% (13) of the partnerships progressed to the expanding or embedding stage between the baseline and monitoring visits. This was due to the excellent work of those senior leaders who worked hard to build the capacity of staff across the partnerships. In particular the integration of the shared education priorities within the School Development Plan, the time allocated for shared education across the school and the development of staff to engage effectively in shared learning for pupils.

Appropriately, there has been an increased involvement of teachers and middle managers, with principals devolving greater responsibility to them for the development of the project. In the best practice, the shared learning experiences across all year groups was regular and involved all the pupils, such as in one partnership where there were shared lessons on four days each week and every child took part. (Case study 1)

In the very good practice, partnerships shared and made efficient and creative use of a wider pool of expertise and resources to support the pupil's learning. Joint staff development not only made an effective contribution to developing further collegial relationships, but also enabled the sharing of teaching strategies and learning approaches supporting the development of high quality teaching and learning. This was supported well by the EA development officers through the effective training sessions held for the partnerships, in particular, the emphasis on SESP as a whole school focus.

'Leadership of the project is critical at all levels and is especially important in the early stages of the project.'

Shared education is not some sort of "add on", it is fundamental to the delivery of quality teaching and learning and going forward will become part of the normal way in which we do things in the future.

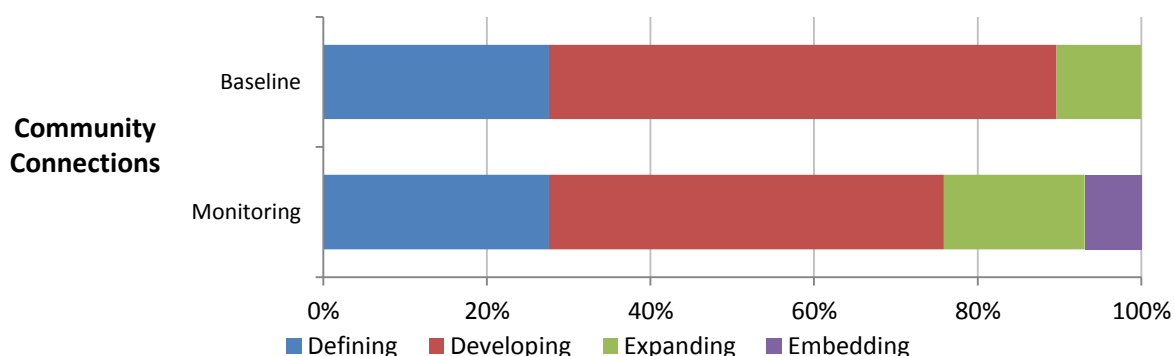
Comment from leader involved in SESP

A key strength was the joint planning and evaluation within the partnerships at all levels. Through setting and monitoring joint targets in school development plans, the partnerships identified key priorities to progress and develop shared education. In the best practice observed partnerships built further their capacity to measure the impact on learning. In addition, they developed further their understanding of reconciliation through self-evaluation, joint staff development leading to a mutual understanding of best practice. In the best practice staff came together to find out more about shared education and to get to know each other in a relaxed environment and established good working relationships and mutual trust. Time was invested in the planning and monitoring process and learning points were regularly logged and minor difficulties were identified and resolved quickly. (Case study 3)

The role of governors was also enhanced through joint meetings and training. Furthermore, there were examples of innovative, engagement with the local community, such as through intergenerational projects which had a strong curricular focus. There is emerging evidence of leaders taking risks to challenge perspectives held both within the school community and beyond; this has encouraged debate and discussion around traditional stereotypes and controversial issues.

While partnerships are planning and evaluating their shared learning experiences, their capacity to jointly self-evaluate and record the pupils' educational outcomes, including reconciliation, remains a challenge. Partnerships indicated that they would benefit from further support and guidance in how to effectively track pupil outcomes as a direct result of SESP from the EA development officers.

Community Connections



Community connections was the aspect of the framework where initial progress was most limited, with 28% (8) remaining at the defining stage; however, there was an increase from 10% (3) to 24% (5) of partnerships at the expanding stage or beyond. Partnerships report that, due to the complexity of the wider societal issues, building community connections is the most challenging area within the project. While the partnerships were committed to engage further with other stakeholders, they felt it was more appropriate to focus on consolidating their partnership between the schools involved. Going forward, it is important for all partnerships within the SESP to have a clearer view of what is expected of schools regarding their community connections and to have examples of best practice from which to learn and to inform future development.

In their evaluations of community connections, most of the partnerships highlighted the development of their links with parents. A significant number of the partnerships addressed successfully, through clear explanation of the aims of the project, any parental concerns about the participation of their children in SESP projects. When parents can see the benefits to their children's personal development and learning, the partnerships report that they are supportive of shared education. A number of partnerships received positive feedback from parents that they would have liked similar opportunities during their own school lives. Similarly, parents valued their engagement with parents from other schools and different community backgrounds. Examples of highly effective engagement include parents being clearly informed of the purpose of the project; participating alongside their children in shared lessons; attending joint celebration events and information sessions; and being invited to voice their views and opinions on the shared project. (Case study 4)

'The partnership has played a key role in bringing together our two school communities as well as deriving many positive educational benefits for all our pupils.'

'To make our shared education experience real, it was identified early on that parents must not only be supportive of the project but actively involved.'

Comments from leaders involved in SESP

4. Interim recommendations

ETI:

- To analyse, monitor and report on the ongoing progress and to liaise with the EA on identifying and disseminating examples of most effective practice, particularly in community connections.
- To refine the ETI framework in light of the progression of the project.

EA:

- To provide professional development for the identified and emerging needs of the partnerships, including:
 1. How to manage sensitive and controversial issues; and
 2. The evaluation and use of data on pupils' outcomes to effect further improvement in their learning.
- To support further the partnerships development of the community connections aspect of the ETI framework.

Partnerships:

- To analyse the outcomes for pupils and its impact on their learning, as a result of participation in shared education.
- To capture key improvements in curriculum delivery as a result of involvement in SESP.
- To involve pupils more in the planning and evaluation of their shared learning experiences to inform the continuous improvement and impact of shared learning during the project and beyond.

5. Conclusion

The Shared Education Signature Project is progressing well, particularly in the area of leadership. Despite some initial challenges, the partnerships are committed to shared education and they are working hard and creatively to provide the pupils with well-planned and meaningful opportunities to learn together and promote good relations. Much work has gone into the planning and designing of shared learning programmes and the ongoing challenge for the partnerships is to demonstrate that this work is raising educational standards and promoting reconciliation. Although the impact of shared education on wider Northern Ireland society cannot yet be measured, it is clear that within the partnerships, schools are creating inclusive learning communities.

'Time and time again we have returned to two interrelated key questions: 'Does shared education enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our schools and the educational outcomes for our pupils beyond that which is already provided separately?' and, 'Has shared education promoted reconciliation within our community as a result?' At this stage, we do not have the definitive data to support our thesis, but our gut sense is that the answer to both questions is a resounding yes.'

Comment from leader involved in SESP

Based on observations by ETI during the interim evaluation period five case studies from partnerships of good practice are included below.

1. Positive impact on the school community - Desertmartin Primary School and Knocknagin Primary School

Context

We have secured funding over the next three years to employ a teacher who will work with both of the schools on three days per week from the Shared Education Signature Project (SESP). Our partnership is well established and a shared approach is now the norm for everyone associated with both schools, therefore with the current funding, we believed that in year 1 we had to move the focus from simply learning through a topic in a shared environment to being explicitly focussed on raising standards in the core area of literacy.

Action

Through collaboration, analysing data and observations, literacy was highlighted as an area for development in both schools with a focus on phonics/spelling. All staff completed Linguistic Phonics training together. The shared teacher assists with classes in both schools which allows for team teaching opportunities, capacity building, single year group teaching and small group focus. The children come together in their class groups to be taught in shared lessons, with the shared teacher focussing on literacy/spelling and phonics activities.

Outside of our SESP work the partnership has continued with the sharing we were involved in previously. Therefore in addition to the above our P.1/2 children complete one shared play session per week. Our P.3/4 and P.5-7 each complete two shared World Around Us lessons per week. Other additional sharing occurs when our P.1/2 children take part in the Physical Literacy scheme and when our P.5-7 children attend swimming lessons together every Monday. In our partnership there are shared lessons on 4 days per week and every child takes part.

Outcome

Through feedback sessions and on-going observations and discussions around our partnership, we know that our shared education has had a positive impact on our community. Our school communities are now overlapping. This has led to our parents, guardians, grandparents and carers interacting with each other, which would not be happening without our sharing. Each school holds several events throughout the year and it has become the norm for our schools to receive substantial support from each other. Our parents, by their actions have shown us that they are comfortable accessing each other's school and through the schools partnership, positive relationships are developing in the community. Outcomes such as this are central to our thoughts when planning for shared education, and the impact now and in the future cannot be underestimated.

2. Teachers learning from one another - Castleroe Primary School and Ballyhackett Primary School

Context

From the outset parents and governors in each school were consulted individually and there was overwhelming support for the partnership. The partnership has played a key role in bringing together our two school communities as well as deriving many positive educational benefits for all our pupils.

Action

One particular challenge was the difference in number of pupils at both schools. This has required us to be more creative about the way that we put classes together to allow all of the pupils access to shared education. The distance between the schools is also a factor which we need to consider when arranging shared activities. In order to make best use of transport and time taken to travel between the two schools we meet less regularly but for a greater part of the school day. Video Conferencing has also been used as a means to maintain contact between shared lessons and as opportunity for pupils to engage in discussion and showcase their learning.

As we have continued our journey as a partnership we have sought to evaluate our approach to planning in order to achieve the best educational outcomes for our pupils. We understand that our shared classes and activities work best when planned and delivered in context. In order to achieve this we have set aside two days per term for each teacher to come together with their colleague in the corresponding year group to plan a joint theme.

Outcome

Teachers benefit from a greater pool of expertise and have the opportunity to learn from each other. As a result their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum increases which leads to greater confidence in their own ability.

Pupils have completed evaluations at the end of thematic units of work which have helped us to understand the skills that they have developed, what they have enjoyed and what they have found challenging. Curricular progress is also measured externally through the submission of end of key stage levels.

3. Becoming the way we do things - Cookstown Primary School, Holy Trinity Primary School and Phoenix Integrated Primary

Context

The SESP project was launched with a joint staff training day with over 150 staff from the three schools in attendance. Looking back, this was vital in allowing staff to find out more about shared education and to get to know each other in a relaxed environment; thereby, establishing the good working relationships and mutual trust which are critical to the success of SESP.

Action

It was absolutely critical that a detailed one year plan was worked up which included the dates of planning meetings involving staff. Provision was also made for the regular monitoring of the project to inform evaluation. The time invested in the planning and monitoring process proved invaluable as learning points were regularly logged and minor difficulties were identified and resolved quickly.

In all 180 children and 16 Staff from Year 3, and 130 children and 12 staff from Year 5 participated in the shared lessons. The lessons operated on a carousel type arrangement with one member of staff delivering the same lesson to mixed groups of children from the three schools. The project was designed to allow some preparatory lessons to take place in each of the schools prior to the shared sessions. This meant that that the children had some background knowledge of the topic/ theme; this helped enormously as a starting point for the literacy/ numeracy/Science / ICT lessons which followed.

Outcome

The sharing of information between teachers so that provision could be made for individual children thus avoiding potential misunderstandings was also critical to the success of the joint lessons. This sharing of information proved to be a powerful catalyst, for the building of trust between staff - trust being a vital pre-requisite for any effective working across schools.

Much discussion took place around the appropriate balance between activities based on core curriculum content and specific activities with a reconciliation focus - this debate is ongoing. Other issues related to the size of the groups and the need to ensure that there was sufficient representation from each of the schools in the shared education classes.

Shared education is not some sort of “add on”, it is fundamental to the delivery of quality teaching and learning and going forward will become part of the normal way in which we do things in the future.

4. Parental involvement - Presentation Primary School and Hart Memorial Primary School

Context

To make our shared education experience effective, it was identified early on that parents must not only be supportive of the project but actively involved.

Action

We utilised a range of strategies to address this. At all times, parents were kept fully informed and included to ensure they were valued part of the shared project between the two schools.

On a number of occasions, some parents expressed concerns about the nature of the activities, the issues explored and even being in each other's schools. We took a supportive and non-judgemental approach when addressing these issues. Time was taken to sit down and talk with parents, to alleviate fears and explain what was actually going on. It was always emphasised that the starting point for all projects was to learn about and celebrate their children's own culture before developing their knowledge and tolerance of others. The purpose of the project was to strengthen each school's individual ethos, not to become grey mirror images of each other.

Outcome

Examples of parental involvement include:

- Parents were informed of the purpose of the project and given the date and theme for each lesson for their children's particular classes.
- Parents were invited to participate alongside their children in shared lessons in their own school and the partner school. They also accompanied classes to historically contentious venues.
- Joint celebration events were held in one school thereby necessitating parents from the other school to attend in an unfamiliar setting.
- Parents were invited to two joint information sessions, one in each school, to explore the history - fact and myth - of key causes of division between the two historical communities in Northern Ireland
- Parents were invited to voice their views and opinions by completing questionnaires specifically on the shared project.

Going forward, we aim to sustain and strengthen parental involvement and have established a parental focus group. This group will develop its role in the planning of shared events and implementing the partnership's 'Community Connections' action plan.

5. Partnership for education and community enrichment - St Paul's Bessbrook and Newtownhamilton High School

Context

The SESP saw St Paul's linked with Newtownhamilton High School and at the initial meetings between the two schools many potential projects were discussed as an avenue to build friendship and trust between two schools that had previously existed in separate silos and without any formal interaction.

Action

It was decided that sport could be used to build positive relationships between the two schools and the sport finally decided upon was rugby. We believe that as a sport rugby is genuinely cross community and not subject to the unilateral identity element that exists within other sports played in Northern Ireland. Both schools selected pupils to design a jersey for the rugby team and thus began the co-operation between the two schools. The logo which went on the front of the jersey was:

PEACE – Partnership for Education and Community Enrichment.

Subsequent to this was the participation of the new team in rugby blitzes and small competitions. The pupils travelled to matches together and in playing on the same team, developed a strong friendship which lasts until this day.

Outcome

The SESP has progressed beyond enhancing the provision for our pupils. The pupils partaking in each of our shared programmes have undoubtedly developed a mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity. With each shared learning experience, barriers are broken and the partnership grows stronger. The pupils have forged genuine friendships with pupils or others from the partnership schools. The pupils regularly evaluate the shared curricular and extracurricular projects. One commented, "It was great fun...I have made new friends. I learned about their culture...we really have more similarities than differences." Under SESP, the focus moved from rugby to music, Learning for Life and Work and catch up maths and this has been equally successful. However, the rugby element has been missed by the pupils and the new development plan has introduced rugby again. The new programme will involve four partnership schools and it is hoped they will enter the schools' league. We have now been joined by Newry High School and St Joseph's High School Crossmaglen and this year the new team will meet for the first time in the coming weeks as they begin training for the season. As part of the programme, Ulster Rugby kindly fitted the school out with a full multipurpose gym which is being used in the evenings by both sides of the community.

DEVELOPING SHARED EDUCATION
A FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS
NOVEMBER 2014

DEVELOPING SHARED EDUCATION

Introduction

Whilst our education system reflects historical divisions in society, the benefits of educating children and young people together are increasingly recognised. In recent years, the concept of Shared Education has developed to provide opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together.

Shared Education involves the provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together for better education and reconciliation outcomes.

Shared Education is defined as the organisation and delivery of education so that it:

- Meets the needs of, and provides for the education together of learners from all Section 75 categories and socio-economic status;
- Involves schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements; and
- Delivers educational benefits to learners, promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, and promotes equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

Specifically, Shared Education involves the provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together.

The vision is for:

Vibrant, self-improving Shared Education partnerships delivering social change through educational benefits to pupils; promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion; and encouraging the efficient and effective use of resources.

Shared Education to date

Since the early 1980s, DE has developed and implemented a range of programmes to promote cross-community relations by bringing young people from each of the two main traditions together. The overarching aim was to improve mutual understanding and relationships between the two main traditions without excluding any other tradition. Many schools also developed their own working relationships with other schools from different backgrounds independently. In 2011, DE launched a new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy which encouraged schools and youth settings to work collaboratively.

In recent years, and with the support of external funding from the International Fund for Ireland and the Atlantic Philanthropies, the concept of a more strategic approach to Shared Education has evolved and a series of pilot projects were implemented.

Wider Context

Shared Education is developing within a wider legislative and policy context that is designed to promote equality and good relations.

“Building a Strong and Shared Community” has been recognised by the Northern Ireland Executive both as a key priority within its *Programme for Government 2011-15* (PFG) and as essential to the growth of a strong, modern economy and society. The PFG sets out three specific objectives for the Department of Education relating to Shared Education:

- to establish a Ministerial Advisory Group to advise on advancing Shared Education;
- to ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in Shared Education programmes by 2015; and
- to substantially increase the number of schools sharing facilities by 2015.

The Executive’s commitment to creating a united, reconciled and shared society is also outlined in the *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* which presents a vision for society based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation. It lays the foundations for a transformed and more shared society in the future and Departments are working together to ensure outcomes are delivered on the ground.

The strategy undertakes to “*enhance the quality and extent of Shared Education provision, thus ensuring that sharing in education becomes a central part of every child’s educational experience*”.

Shared Education sits within a broader education policy framework designed to improve educational outcomes for young people and tackle the significant tail of educational under-achievement that has characterised our education system by breaking the cycle of social disadvantage, educational failure and restricted life chances. Notably, the system has embedded both the concepts of self-evaluation and collaborative delivery that evidence indicates are necessary in the development of effective Shared Education programmes.

The Case for Shared Education

There is an extensive body of international research regarding the effectiveness of school collaboration generally and in divided societies more particularly.⁹ This has been supplemented by specific local evidence, particularly a series of evaluations of Shared Education pilot projects. These include major reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Atlantic Philanthropies funded Sharing in Education Learning Forum on the impact of Shared Education in schools.¹⁰

The case for Shared Education has now been well established. This may be summarised as:

⁹ The report of the Ministerial Advisory Group provides an extremely useful literature review of both international research evidence and local studies.

¹⁰ ETI, *A Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland’s Sharing in Education Programme* (November, 2013); RSM McClure Watters, *Evaluation of the Sharing Education Programme – Programme Level Summative Evaluation Report* (May 2014)

- The education case – improving access for pupils to a wider choice of subjects encompassing the full range of the curriculum; increasing access to specialist teaching and to modern facilities; and facilitating the sharing of ideas and good practice between education providers.
- The social case – improving societal well being by promoting a culture of mutual understanding and inter-relationship through significant, purposeful and regular engagement and interaction in learning between pupils from different community backgrounds and between schools and their communities.
- The economic case – making more effective and efficient use of limited resources to improve value for money.

Shared Education Going Forward

With funding from the Executive, the Department of Education and Atlantic Philanthropies, the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project will provide the means to support Shared Education to develop in schools over the next four years. Funding of £25 million over four years will be available. This represents a significant commitment against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial landscape in the coming years. This funding will focus initially on schools that have already engaged in this work. The overall aims of the Signature Project are to scale up the level of sharing drawing on existing evidence; mainstream financial support for any additional costs and improve the educational and reconciliation outcomes in schools working collaboratively. School projects will provide opportunities for shared curricular learning experiences. The projects will increase the extent, frequency and continuity of meaningful shared contact between peer groups over the funded period. School partnerships must demonstrate clear educational benefits resulting from the project, including reference to planned improvement in educational and reconciliation outcomes for learners within the curriculum.

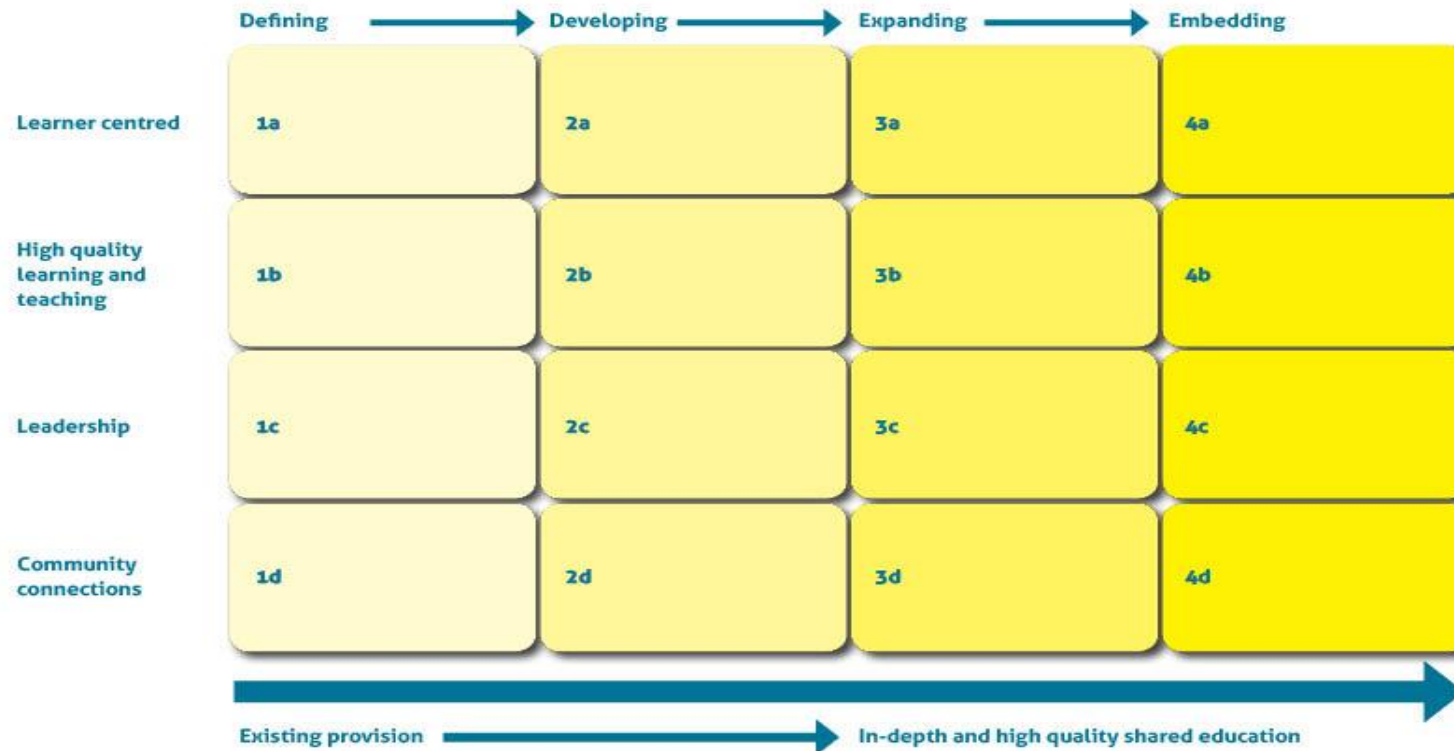
In addition, the Peace IV Programme will provide funding to support further the development of Shared Education in schools that have not yet engaged in Shared Education, as well as across pre-school and youth work settings in a way that will complement the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Project. ETI will inform DE and stakeholders through the ongoing evaluation of the learning from the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Project on how best to support educational establishments in offering shared education in the longer term from 2018 onwards.

The Framework

This framework provides school partnerships with the means of self-evaluating the extent and quality of their shared education provision and to set targets for development. Schools are at different starting points along a framework in regard to shared education. For some, they are beginning their journey to build true understanding rather than compliance, and for others, in embedding high quality shared education.

ETI will work alongside schools in supporting the development of quality in shared education through honest and robust self-evaluation, recognising the time, resources and strategic planning needed to progress shared education effectively. It is not intended given the starting point of different partnerships that all will reach 'embedding' after 4 years. Key here will be the partnership identifying the progress made in demonstrating measurable educational outcomes and delivering social change by achieving conditions in schools and communities whereby children and young people become better learners, more fully engaged in learning and more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes, dispositions, behaviours, understanding of reconciliation and respect for others.

Self-evaluation: Mapping our¹¹ journey to effective shared education



¹¹ Schools should seek to engage in self-evaluation as a partnership at the outset in order to plan collaboratively joint actions to bring about improvement

Learner-centred	Defining 1a Schools identify the need to:	Developing 2a Partnership schools:	Expanding 3a Partnership schools:	Embedding 4a Partnership schools:
Participation in shared education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop learning beyond predominantly single settings and one-off events. • Seek ways to give pupils a say into shared learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage pupils in single class/year group in sustained¹² shared education activities to learn better. • Listen and act on pupils' views on shared education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage groups of pupils in more than one class/ year group in sustained shared education to learn better. • Use pupils' views to inform the improvement of shared learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage pupils in multiple classes/ year groups and beyond the classroom in sustained shared education to learn better in a planned and progressive way. • Integrate pupils' views across partnership in the ongoing review process for further development of shared learning.
Surmounting barriers e.g. cognitive, emotional, personal, social and physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have greater awareness of diverse backgrounds and experiences of pupils. • Build capacity to meet wider needs of pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit, identify and understand diverse backgrounds of pupils. • Develop strategies and structures to help pupils work with others from differing backgrounds to surmount barriers to learning and achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan collaboratively and use effective strategies and structures to enable pupils to surmount barriers to learning and achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, monitor and review collaboratively consistent and well-developed strategies and structures to enable pupils to surmount barriers to learning and achievement.
Outcomes¹³ Education and reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve outcomes for pupils. • Develop pupils' understanding in how to engage in promoting reconciliation for life and work in NI and globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and target strategies to improve outcomes. • Develop pupils' understanding about intended outcomes of shared education in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the aims of NI curriculum. • Helping them to learn and attain better. • Developing skills in promoting reconciliation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate progress in measurable outcomes for pupils across the curriculum and beyond the classroom. • Prepare pupils better for their next stage of education and the diverse world of life and/or work through acquiring skills in reconciliation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate improved measurable outcomes for pupils through shared education across their curriculum experience. • Prepare pupils well for their next stage of education and the diverse world of life and/or work through their knowledge, understanding and skills in reconciliation.

¹² For example, at developing stage, sustained could mean a minimum of 6 quality shared contact sessions, expanding to a minimum of 12 shared contact sessions and at embedding stage, shared classes are daily/weekly.

¹³ Educational outcomes could include skills in communication, using mathematics, ICT, thinking skills and personal capabilities, attitudes and dispositions for learning, behaviours, attendance, punctuality, progress measured through internal data and standards in public examinations/accreditation.

High quality learning and teaching	Defining 1b Schools:	Developing 2b	Expanding 3b	Embedding 4b
Planning for shared education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the need to understand effective planning for sustained shared education beyond events. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit provision for shared education, identify and plan steps for development including extra-curricular/enrichment activities. Implement agreed plans to develop high quality shared education across partnership. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for effective shared education throughout the curriculum and beyond the classroom. Monitor and review regularly the effectiveness of planning and implementation to bring about improvement in processes and outcomes. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and embed coherent and effective shared education throughout the curriculum and beyond the classroom. Involve pupils regularly to inform planning for continuous improvement.
Quality of learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the need for pupils to be included more fully in the learning environment through experiential and meaningful shared learning. Consider what shapes identity and ways to be at ease with difference. 	Partnership schools collaborate to plan, develop and facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive, inclusive learning environments. Effective learning strategies and methodologies. High quality shared learning. 	Partnership schools collaborate to facilitate and expand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive, inclusive learning environments and methodologies in shared classes across the partnership. High quality shared learning and engage pupils to attain better. 	Partnership staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safe, respectful and high quality shared learning environments. Use effective learning strategies consistently to enable high quality shared learning and to improve pupils' attainment.
Assessment for, and of, shared education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek ways to baseline pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours in shared education from which to track progress. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline of pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours in shared education from which to track progress. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and use a range of methods to monitor and track progress in pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours in shared education. 	Partnership schools collaborate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track and evaluate consistently, progress in pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions, and behaviours in shared education to inform next steps across the partnership.

Effective Leadership	Defining 1c	Developing 2c Partnership schools:	Expanding 3c Partnership schools:	Embedding 4c Partnership schools:
Strategic leadership for shared education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT • MLT • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT and MLT initiate work to clarify an agreed understanding of shared education in partnership. • Governors engage in process to seek agreement and/or clarity about the aims and purposes of shared education. • Schools identify the need for their ethos to reflect more fully in reality at all levels a respect for diversity and mutual respect. 	Consult with governors, staff, parents and pupils to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a clear vision for shared education in the local context. • Agree benefits of shared education for pupils and wider community. • Review their partnership ethos. • Evaluate critically how best to develop aims of shared education. 	<i>(SLT, MLT, staff, governors, parents and pupils)</i> collaborate across the partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate clearly their vision for shared education. • Expand shared education through governance, curriculum, planning, learning and teaching collaboratively across partnership. • Reflect the aims of shared education through ethos, pastoral policies and processes. 	<i>(SLT, MLT, staff, governors, parents and pupils)</i> collaborate across the partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish collaborative leadership and management of shared education. • Develop collective ownership for outcomes and quality provision. • Embed shared education through governance, curriculum, planning, learning and teaching. • Demonstrate respect for diversity and promote mutually respectful working relationships at all levels through jointly-developed pastoral policies and processes.
Action to promote improvement in shared education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared education yet to feature clearly in the schools' development plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct honest and frank evaluation of the extent and quality of shared education to inform development plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly evaluate and develop sharply-focused action plans to improve pupil outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate, refine and implement actions to ensure improved outcomes for pupils.
Empowering and supporting staff in shared education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole- staff/ governors training on shared education required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify effective practice in shared education. • Empower staff to identify their own needs for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). • Designate personnel to lead and manage shared education. • Collaborate, plan and deliver professional development to develop staff confidence and competence in shared learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable staff to access CPD regularly to identify and disseminate effective practice in shared education. • Designate teams across the partnership to lead and manage shared education to promote coherence across provision, policy and practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed ongoing CPD targeted to address those areas of shared education practice which prove complex and challenging, including embedding collaborative leadership at all levels. • Motivate and enable staff to provide high quality shared education.
Resources/ Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and accommodation are not yet shared with another school or wider community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources and accommodation between schools and wider community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the allocation of resources and accommodation between schools and wider community to provide shared learning and value for money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and use resources and accommodation between schools and wider community to improve shared learning experiences, value for money and outcomes for pupils.

Community Connections	Defining 1d Schools identify the need to:	Developing 2d Partnerships schools:	Expanding 3d Partnerships schools:	Embedding 4d Partnerships schools:
Parents/Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable parents/carers to understand the aims of shared education within context of NI curriculum and between partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ways to engage parents/carers on the purpose, benefits and expected outcomes of shared education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform parents/carers regularly of emerging outcomes of shared education between partnership and their views are used to inform improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage parents/carers in the review of outcomes of shared education to inform further development.
External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote links between schools and external partners beyond those which are ad hoc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit the extent, depth and quality of liaison with external partners • Engage appropriately with external partners to support shared education practice and to build staff capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link and build on existing effective shared education practice by external partners. • Evaluate existing practice delivered by external partners to inform future planning and focus on building capacity of school staff to deliver. • Model the values and effective practice of partnership working in collaboration with external partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and evaluate collaboration with external partners to demonstrate impact on pupils outcomes. • Build strong internal staff capacity to facilitate high quality sessions with less dependence on external partners.
Community access and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend access by the local community to school resources and activities to develop shared education. • Engage with diverse community voices on shared education. • Consider ways for pupils to share their shared education experiences across the schools and the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities for local community access to both schools' resources and activities. • Engage appropriately with diverse community voices on reaching an understanding of the complexities of shared education. • Provide opportunities for pupils to share the outcomes of their shared education experiences across the schools and the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek and use greater community engagement effectively to promote shared education. • Use issues raised from diverse community voices to inform collaborative planning. • Enable more pupils to share the range of outcomes of their shared education experiences with local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ongoing community access to schools' resources and activities to promote shared education and community cohesion. • Respond proactively to issues raised from diverse community voices, including skilful handling of communication and media. • Share and celebrate regularly the outcomes of shared education with local community.

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