



**Shared  
Education**

# **ADVANCING SHARED EDUCATION**

## **3rd Report to the Northern Ireland Assembly**

March 2022



Department of  
**Education**

[www.education-ni.gov.uk](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk)



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## FOREWORD

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I am delighted to lay before the Assembly, the third report on Shared Education, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. This latest report covers the period April 2020 to March 2022.

Great strides have been made over recent years in terms of the development of Shared Education, assisted in particular by the introduction of *Sharing Works: A Policy for Shared Education* in 2015, followed by the Shared Education Act a year later. These have provided the bedrock for where we find ourselves today, with significant growth of Shared Education participation supported by relevant funding programmes.

This financial investment, with assistance from partners such as the Northern Ireland Executive, Atlantic Philanthropies and the European Union, has been critical in our efforts to support the learning together of our children and young people. Over 700 schools and pre-school settings in Northern Ireland have been supported to date through the funded Shared Education programmes. Opportunities for our children and young people to mix, learn and socialise with others across religious and socio-economic divides would have been restricted, or simply may not have been available at all, without the collaboration made possible via Shared Education.

As with virtually all aspects of our lives, Shared Education has felt the significant effects of COVID-19 and related restrictions. With the majority of face to face pupil engagement suspended since the onset of the pandemic, participation levels of children and young people taking part in Shared Education have inevitably fallen in comparison to previous years. However, we must give immense credit to the leaders and teachers/practitioners in educational settings who have sought to maintain relationships and continued to connect with their partners and networks via enhanced use of online and digital technologies.

Since I was appointed as Minister of Education, I have had the pleasure of visiting numerous schools, many of which are involved in Shared Education, and hear from principals, leaders and school governors about the positive impact that Shared

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Education is having. I am also aware that there is a growing interest and appetite among many schools and other educational settings who have not, as yet, had the opportunity to participate, to become involved in Shared Education. I am pleased that the upcoming PEACE PLUS Programme specifically aims to provide opportunities to make this happen.

We know that Shared Education is making a difference, with a wealth of evaluative and research evidence pointing to the educational benefits for not only our children and young people but also the positive impact that it has for schools (and other settings), teachers/practitioners, leaders, parents and families.

The importance of Shared Education cannot therefore be underestimated. It is vital to build upon the momentum gathered thus far.

I feel that it is incumbent upon all of us to do all that we can to show our support for Shared Education and, in light of the broader benefits for a society which continues to struggle with issues from our troubled past, encourage our communities to do the same. Only through this consistent effort and dedication can we fulfil the Executive's commitment, as outlined in the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement to ensure that our children and young people can be educated together in a shared environment.

That is why, in line with earlier commitments made in Sharing Works, my Department has been taking forward a significant piece of work, alongside a range of key stakeholders and in consultation with experienced practitioners, in the development of a Strategy for 'Mainstreaming' Shared Education.

The Strategy will aim to set out a vision for the future delivery of Shared Education over the longer term, one which will seek to increase and maximise opportunities for children and young people and educational settings to participate. Whilst this report sets out wide-ranging progress made to this point, it is recognised that there remains much work to be done to effectively enable and support the further development of Shared Education.

Of course, this work is not without its challenges, especially in the context of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a constrained budgetary outlook. It

is clear, however, that Shared Education can contribute much to changing attitudes, and over time, as part of a wider co-ordinated approach, I am confident that it will help to create a more united, peaceful and prosperous society for us and for future generations.

I will therefore continue to impress upon my Ministerial and Assembly colleagues the importance of Shared Education.

*Michelle McIlveen*

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**MICHELLE McILVEEN MLA**  
**Minister of Education**





## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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AP	The Atlantic Philanthropies
APWG	Area Planning Working Group
CASE	Collaboration through Sharing in Education
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CnaG	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
CRED	Community Relations, Equality & Diversity
CSSC	Controlled Schools Support Council
CSTS	Catholic Schools' Trustee Service
DSC SESP	Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project
DE	Department of Education ('the Department')
DE (RoI)	Department of Education (Republic of Ireland)
EA	Education Authority
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EU	European Union
EYO	Early Years Organisation
GBA	Governing Bodies Association
IM	Irish Medium
JPD	Joint Practice Development
KLT	Kids' Life & Times
MSEPB	Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board
NCN	National Childhood Network
NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
NI	Northern Ireland

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NSSI	Network of Shared School Improvement
PfG	Programme for Government
PHA	Public Health Agency
RoI	Republic of Ireland
SECR	Shared Education & Community Relations Team
SEC	Shared Education Campus
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
SfS	Sharing from the Start
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SRG	Stakeholder Reference Group
SSEC	Strule Shared Education Campus
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
TEO	The Executive Office
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning
TRC	Transferors' Representative Council
YCNi	Youth Council for Northern Ireland
YLT	Young Life & Times

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- (i) The Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act) places a requirement on the Department of Education (DE) to lay a report before the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly on the operation of the Act every two years. This is the third such report and covers the period April 2020 to March 2022.
- (ii) This Report sets out the extent to which the DE, the Education Authority (EA) and other bodies impacted by the Act have complied with or exercised their respective duties and powers. The Report also addresses levels of participation, and the extent to which the purpose of Shared Education has been achieved.
- (iii) To inform the Report, information was gathered from the Department's policy teams, the EA and other relevant bodies.
- (iv) Over this reporting period, investment in Shared Education has continued through the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project (DSC SESP) with contributions from the DE, The Executive Office (TEO) and The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP); the 2019/20 Shared Education pilot; the Shared Education Transition Phase; PEACE IV Shared Education projects; the Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC) and the Shared Education Campuses (SEC) Programme.
- (v) The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably had an impact on Shared Education delivery with the majority of face to face pupil contact suspended since March 2020. As a result, there has been an 80% reduction in the overall number of children and young people involved; falling from 87,385 participating at June 2019 to 17,476 at June 2021.
- (vi) Since the closure of the DSC SESP programme in June 2020, those partnerships previously supported through the DSC SESP have entered what has become a two year 'Transition Phase' towards a mainstreamed model of Shared Education. The DE continued to provide funding for Shared Education

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leadership and teacher professional development training, to help these partnerships prepare for the resumption of normal shared activities and pupil to pupil engagement, when the time is right to do so.

- (vii) The pandemic has also impacted on partnerships and pupil to pupil activity supported through PEACE IV projects. Partnerships involved in Sharing from the Start (SfS) were able to continue pupil engagement, albeit in a limited way, through innovative and creative approaches and the use of enhanced IT and online platforms. Likewise, many partnerships engaging in Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE) utilised online collaboration opportunities through virtual linked classrooms and shared schemes of work with pupils working together online, enabling partnerships to continue to interact.
- (viii) For those settings involved in the Transition Phase and the CASE project, teachers have been able to avail of an online Shared Education Hub, which offers a range of online Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) modules. This EA central resource brings together a wide range of easily accessible information, support, and guidance to assist partnerships and settings in the context of sharing and to enhance and improve delivery.
- (ix) In acknowledgement of the impact of COVID-19 on participation numbers, approvals have been granted for extensions to both PEACE IV projects. SfS is running for a further year until June 2022, to allow all existing partnerships to engage in at least three years of shared classes. CASE received approval for partnerships to extend pupil activity until March 2023, providing support for an additional 2 terms.
- (x) During this reporting period, the DE, working closely with EA colleagues, has focused on the development of a Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy aimed at embedding further the concept of Shared Education across our education system. Finalisation of the strategy is subject to Ministerial approval.
- (xi) The forthcoming European Union (EU) funding programme PEACE PLUS will provide opportunities to further develop Shared Education. The *Shared*

*Learning Together* programme will seek to build upon the success of the existing PEACE IV Shared Education Programme by supporting the participation of pre-school settings and schools, whilst also extending Shared Education across youth settings, and providing the opportunity to address a range of other complementary or enabling policy areas.

- (xii) In regard to the SSEC, located in Omagh, following Executive endorsement a Ministerial Direction was issued in July 2021 which has enabled the programme to progress to the next phase of construction. Within the SEC Programme, the two post-primary projects are leading the way, with progress also being made on the two primary school projects.
- (xiii) The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) continues to play a key part in embedding Shared Education across the system, evidenced by their involvement in the DE Mainstreaming Shared Education Project Board (MSEPB). The ETI has also continued to review Shared Education evidence and, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, district inspectors have engaged with organisations and partnerships to support continuity of shared learning experiences through the effective use of digital learning platforms where available, as part of the inspection process, and disseminated best practice within the organisation.
- (xiv) All of the named bodies in the Act have complied with their duties and exercised the powers provided by the Act. There is evidence that all have taken an active role in advancing Shared Education, although somewhat restricted due to the pandemic, by promoting its benefits to the groups and sectors they represent. All of the bodies are represented on the DE's Mainstreaming Shared Education Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), which acts as a critical friend to the MSEPB.
- (xv) A wide range of evidence and research continues to demonstrate the impact that Shared Education is having upon children and young people, families and communities, and the educational settings which serve them. Shared Education has contributed positively in terms of delivering educational benefits, making more efficient and effective use of resources, promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, and respect for identity and diversity.

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Many teachers have advised that the positive professional relationships developed through Shared Education has been invaluable as the schools work through the impact of COVID-19.

- (xvi) In spite of the limitations placed on educational settings over the last two years, school leaders and teachers/practitioners have remained committed to developing and delivering Shared Education, where possible. The support offered by the DE and delivery partners has focused on supporting pupils and schools in all aspects of COVID-19 issues and developing opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on shared topics. This has resulted in the strengthening of relationships already built through Shared Education partnerships.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 1.1 The NI Executive remains committed to Shared Education, as demonstrated through the New Decade, New Approach document, successive Programmes for Government, and the Shared Education Act (NI) 2016, which places a duty on both the DE and the EA to “encourage, facilitate and promote shared education” and to consider Shared Education in both policy and operational work.
- 1.2 The 2020 Report to the Assembly on Advancing Shared Education set out key areas of work which the DE and EA planned to undertake in pursuance of the duty placed on both organisations. Since then, the implications of COVID-19 have continued to impact extensively on many aspects of society, including schools and other educational settings. The disruption to normal operations from the end of March 2020, as we entered the first period of lockdown, until now, has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of children and young people participating in Shared Education activity over the reporting period April 2020 to March 2022.
- 1.3 Throughout this time, the DE and the delivery partners for the funded Shared Education programmes have sought to support the settings involved in Shared Education both in regard to new ways of working during the pandemic and in helping the partnerships prepare for the resumption of normal shared activities and pupil to pupil engagement, when the time is right to do so.
- 1.4 Work has continued on the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme which will provide opportunities to further develop Shared Education and allow more children and young people to access its benefits. The *Shared Learning Together* programme will seek to build upon the success of the existing PEACE IV Shared Education Programme by supporting the participation of pre-school settings and schools, whilst also extending Shared Education across youth settings, and providing the opportunity to address a range of other complementary or enabling policy areas.

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- 1.5 Another central focus of work during the last two years for the DE, working closely with the EA, has been on the development of the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy, aimed at embedding further the concept of Shared Education across our education system. Work on the Strategy has been informed by evaluations of the funded Shared Education programmes, the views of practitioners, children and young people, consideration of academic research and engagement with a SRG.
- 1.6 More detail on these and other work streams taken forward during the reporting period can be found in the following sections of this report.
- 1.7 The implementation of mainstreamed Shared Education would be a further milestone reached in the delivery of the Executive's commitment to Shared Education. Section 6 of the report sets out the key priorities for advancing Shared Education over the next few years.

### **Shared Education Act (NI) 2016 (“the Act”)<sup>1</sup>**

- 1.8 The Act defines and sets out the purpose of Shared Education. It also sets out the responsibilities of the DE, including the requirement to report to the Assembly, and those of the EA and the various arms-length bodies.
- 1.9 The Act provides a consistent definition of Shared Education, setting out the core components that are regarded as the minimum essential for the delivery of Shared Education as:

*Shared education means the education together of -*

- a) *those of different religious belief, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; and*
- b) *those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not,*

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1 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/20/contents>



*which is secured by the working together and co-operation of two or more relevant providers.*

“*Relevant providers*” may be early years settings, schools, or youth work settings. A single educational establishment that can demonstrate a mix of religious belief and socio-economic status **would not** satisfy the definition of Shared Education.

- 1.10 The Act places a duty on both the DE and the EA to “*encourage, facilitate and promote shared education*”. It also confers the power to “*encourage and facilitate shared education*” on other educational bodies<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.11 In addition, the Act places a duty on certain education bodies<sup>3</sup> to consider Shared Education when (a) developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans; and (b) designing and delivering public services.
- 1.12 The Act places a requirement on the DE to lay a report before the Assembly no more than two years following Royal Assent and on a biennial basis thereafter.
- 1.13 The Act stipulates that the report must detail the extent to which the DE, the EA and other bodies impacted by the Act have complied with their respective duties and powers. The report must also address levels of participation, efficiency in the use of Shared Education resources, the educational benefits to children and young people and the impact on good relations. This reporting requirement is set out in detail in Section 2 below, referencing the applicable provisions of the Act.

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2 These are the CCMS, YCNI, CCEA, and any sectoral body (one recognised by DE as representing the interests of grant-aided schools of a particular description and to which grants are paid under Section 4 of the Education Act (NI) 2014).

3 Relevant education bodies are defined as DE, EA, CCMS, CCEA and YCNI.

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## Sharing Works Policy

- 1.14 The Act is underpinned by “*Sharing Works – A Policy for Shared Education*”<sup>4</sup>, which includes a description of how Shared Education is expected to work in practice.
- 1.15 The policy sits within a broader education policy framework designed to improve educational outcomes for children and young people and tackle the significant tail of educational under-achievement that has characterised our education system. Together, the Act and policy provide a framework for advancing Shared Education.

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4 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sharing-works-policy-shared-education>

## 2. REPORTING REQUIREMENT AND METHODOLOGY

### Reporting Requirement

- 2.1 Section 7 of the Act<sup>5</sup> requires the DE to lay a report on the operation of the Act before The Assembly “*at intervals of not more than two years*”.
- 2.2 Section 7(3) of the Act lists the areas which must be included in the report, as follows:-
- (a) *the extent to which the Department of Education has complied with its duty under Section 3;*
  - (b) *the extent to which the bodies listed in Section 4(2) have exercised their powers under that Section;*
  - (c) *the extent to which the Education Authority has complied with its duty under section 2(3) of the 2014 Act;*
  - (d) *the level of participation in shared education and the extent to which there has been any increase or decrease in participation;*
  - (e) *the extent to which the purpose of shared education set out in Section 1(2) has been achieved.*
- 2.3 The DE and EA’s duty at Section 3 of the Act<sup>6</sup> and Section 2(3)<sup>7</sup> of the Education Act (NI) 2014 respectively is to “*encourage, facilitate and promote shared education*”. Section 4(2) confers a power to “*encourage and facilitate shared education*” on a number of bodies.
- 2.4 The Act, at Section 1.2, defines the purpose of Shared Education as:
- (i) *delivering educational benefits to children and young persons;*

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5 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/20/section/7>

6 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/20/section/3>

7 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/12/section/2>

- (ii) *promoting the efficient and effective use of resources;*
- (iii) *promoting equality of opportunity;*
- (iv) *promoting good relations; and*
- (v) *promoting respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.*

### **Methodology**

- 2.5 The DE gathers data across the reporting period from policy teams within the Department, those bodies named in the Act and those which meet the Act's definition of "sectoral body", and from third parties.
- 2.6 For this reporting period, DE Heads of Teams have been required to make "statements of compliance" confirming that they have complied with the duty to consider, and where appropriate, with the duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education.
- 2.7 Regular monitoring is in place to gather information from other bodies and supplemented by follow-up queries as required. This facilitates challenge to those bodies identified at section 6 of the Act to ensure that Shared Education is considered when developing policy or delivering a service.
- 2.8 Information on the impact of Shared Education is obtained from a range of sources including regularly scheduled surveys and reports such as the Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey, the Kids' Life and Times (KLT) Survey and the School Omnibus Survey. For this period, the available information captured through these means has been supplemented by a number of evaluations, reports, surveys and research papers linked to the funded programmes, including the Impact Evaluation of PEACE IV Shared Education Programme, and the ETI phase reports.
- 2.9 Data on participation is obtained from the funded Shared Education projects, viz. the DSC SESP, CASE, SfS, 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot and 2020/21 Shared Education Transition Phase.

## 3. PROGRESS OVER REPORTING PERIOD (April 2020 - March 2022)

3.1 This section sets out the progress made by the DE, the EA, and other education and sectoral bodies against the duties and powers specified in the Act.

### (i) Department of Education Compliance with the Act

3.2 The Act requires the Department to:-

- (i) encourage, facilitate and promote shared education<sup>8</sup>; and
- (ii) consider shared education when:-
  - a. developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy/strategy/plan; and
  - b. designing and delivering public services<sup>9</sup>.

These are addressed in turn below.

### Duty to Encourage, Facilitate and Promote Shared Education (DE)

#### Compliance with Statutory Definition

3.3 The definition of *Shared Education* set out in the Act requires both a mix of children or young persons across the religious divide **and** of those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not, i.e. both conditions must be satisfied. Tables 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b at Appendix 1 quantify the religious divide and levels of entitlement to free school meals<sup>10</sup>, respectively, across the NI education system over the last two years. These show that the current school structure continues to provide scope to satisfy

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8 [Shared Education \(NI\) Act 2016, section 3.](#)

9 [Shared Education \(NI\) Act 2016, section 6.](#)

10 Level of Free School Meal Entitlement is used as a proxy measure for social deprivation.

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the statutory definition of Shared Education, i.e. there remain high levels of religious segregation across schools and a social mix within schools. These criteria have been, and are, applied in approving partnerships in the DSC SESP<sup>11</sup> and the PEACE IV Shared Education Programme.

### Raising Awareness, Supporting & Monitoring

3.4 Responsibility within DE for advising on the Act and monitoring its implementation falls to the Shared Education and Community Relations Team (SECRT). Throughout the reporting period, SECRT has raised awareness of Shared Education in the Department through working with various teams to help them consider how their policies and areas of responsibility relate to Shared Education:

- Early Years Pre-school - In order to build on the success of pre-school engagement in the current Shared Education funded programmes, discussions have taken place with DE's Early Years Pre-school Education Team to determine how pre-school settings can become an integral part of Shared Education going forward;
- Area Planning - The Act requires DE to consider Shared Education when: *developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy/strategy/plan*. In light of this SECRT has liaised with DE's Area Planning team to ensure Shared Education is considered during the development proposal stage of the Area Planning process. In a written statement made to the Assembly on 9 August 2021, which set out Area Planning priorities for 2022-2027, the Minister of Education outlined her expectation that ***“it is incumbent upon all Area Planning stakeholders and schools to engage positively with the Education Authority and other sectors and collaborate and partner in the co-design of Development Proposals; to bring forward innovative, creative and shared solutions for sustainable provision”***;

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11 DSC SESP funding for classroom activity ended in June 2019. DSC SESP Funding for capacity building is available to June 2022. DSC SESP partnerships were funded for classroom activity in the 2019/20 academic year through a DE funded pilot model. DE has also provided funding to former DSC SESP partnerships through the Transition Phase (2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years)

- Communications Team - Discussions have taken place with the Department's Communications Team regarding SECRT's Communication Strategy and annual Action Plan to ensure the ongoing promotion and celebration of Shared Education. The use of social media platforms extends the reach to a wider audience providing opportunities to increase public awareness of the purpose, impact and benefits of Shared Education for children and young people, partnerships, communities and the wider education sector.

3.5 Wider Government Policy - There are also linkages with policies outside of the DE, in particular with TEO's Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy. SECRT has engaged with TEO to identify opportunities to link Shared Education, and DE's Community Relations, Equality & Diversity (CRED) policy with TEO's Urban Villages programme, which is designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places where there has previously been a history of deprivation and community tension. Of particular interest are the Schools of Sanctuary, Buddy Up Scheme and Creative Schools initiatives. These links were evidenced in joint events celebrating Shared Education organised through Good Relations Week in September 2021. These connections with other Shared Education initiatives will assist in the promotion of Shared Education to a wider audience outside of the education sector.

3.6 The DE and the EA also recently met with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) to discuss current Irish Medium (IM) involvement in Shared Education and future Shared Education initiatives and opportunities for the IM sector.

## Funding to Advance Shared Education

3.7 Over the reporting period, the DE has continued to provide a range of funding streams to advance Shared Education as follows:-

- £25m through the DSC SESP (including contributions from TEO and The AP; available to June 2022);

- £3.2m for the 2019/20 academic year for delivery and evaluation of a Shared Education pilot funding model for those partnerships previously funded through the DSC SESP;
- £3.8m for the Shared Education Transition Phase (covering the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years);
- €35m was initially awarded to fund the PEACE IV Shared Education Programme (with funding from EU and match funding from the DE (NI) and the Department of Education (Republic of Ireland));
- £47m spend to date on SSEC; and
- £76.5m for the first 4 projects approved to proceed in planning under the SEC Programme, secured as part of the Fresh Start Agreement announced in March 2016,
- The Department has also received £1.25m from TEO in Resource Funding during the requested report period to develop the SEC's through Principal Release Time, Staff Salaries and support from the Managing Authorities.

In addition, a total of €51.3m is due to be made available to support the upcoming PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme. Further detail on PEACE PLUS can be found later in this section at paragraphs 3.66 - 3.76.

#### Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project (DSC SESP)

- 3.8 The DSC SESP was delivered by the EA and involved 371 schools working together across 159 Shared Education partnerships. The project was overseen by a Project Board, chaired by a senior DE official, and with representation from the co-funders (TEO and The AP), the EA and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA), and with the ETI in attendance.



- 3.9 Funding for pupil to pupil engagement under the DSC SESP ended in June 2019 and, during the 2019/20 academic year, was replaced by the DE funded Shared Education Pilot (see paragraphs 3.13 - 3.16). The DSC SESP funding continued to support capacity building in the participating schools and was due to end in June 2020.
- 3.10 The closure of schools on 23 March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to the complete cessation of all Shared Education pupil to pupil activities in the DSC SESP partnerships. Capacity building measures funded through the DSC SESP, including TPL courses and conferences planned for term 3 of the 2019/20 academic year for over 200 schools not involved in Shared Education, were also impacted and, as a result, there was an underspend in the project's £25m budget.
- 3.11 In June 2020, at its final meeting, the DSC SESP Project Board agreed, in principle, to a proposal to continue capacity building support for former DSC SESP schools and to support engagement with schools not involved in Shared Education. Board members also agreed to extend the lifespan of the project to June 2021.
- 3.12 However, the disruption in schools due to the pandemic continued throughout the 2020/21 academic year. In October 2020, approval was given by co-funders and former DSC SESP Project Board members to further extend the project to June 2022, to complete the activities outlined in paragraph 3.11, suspended due to the pandemic and to enable maximum use of the remaining budget.

## 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot

- 3.13 The DSC SESP funding for classroom activity ended in June 2019<sup>12</sup>. The DE funded 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot was designed to test a funding model for pupil to pupil engagement to further inform the long term arrangements for mainstreaming Shared Education. The pilot involved 158 DSC SESP

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12 Funding for other activities, e.g. capacity building, awareness conferences, continues until June 2022.

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partnerships (369 schools) and was to operate across the full 2019/20 academic year. The total budget for the pilot was £3,245k.

- 3.14 The 2019/20 funding model was accompanied by a set of essential criteria developed in 2019, designed to assist partnerships to embed Shared Education and to focus their activities on delivering on the core purpose of Shared Education.
- 3.15 The 2019/20 pilot was interrupted in March 2020, when all shared activities, including shared classes and lessons were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department met the committed costs (£374k) of the 2019/20 pilot incurred by the EA and schools up to the end of the June 2020.
- 3.16 The collection of data to inform the evaluation of the 2019/20 pilot was also interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but a significant amount of information, gathered from a school survey, pupil focus groups, one-to-one interviews and project monitoring data, had already been captured. An evaluation of the 2019/20 funding model and the essential criteria was completed in June 2020.

#### Shared Education Transition Period

- 3.17 In April 2020, largely due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in regard to how long social distancing measures would be in place and how soon schools would be able to resume normal shared activities, the then Minister agreed that the 2020/21 academic year would be a Transition Year.
- 3.18 The Transition Year provided an opportunity to develop a long term strategy for the phased mainstreaming of Shared Education, to address some of the issues emerging from various evaluations conducted during the DSC SESP project and to strengthen capacity to engage in and deliver Shared Education in the education workforce.
- 3.19 In March 2021, due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the Minister agreed to extend the Transition Phase to include a second year, the 2021/22

academic year. The total budget for the Transition Phase over the two year period is £3.8m and provides funding for:

- Capacity building measures in former DSC SESP partnerships including continuance of an effective leadership allowance to help schools plan and coordinate shared activities and the development of an online Shared Education Hub to host a range of TPL modules, case studies and resources to support Shared Education partnerships
- Facilitating the reconnection of partnerships, to support the process of re-establishing relationships after long periods of working in isolation from partners due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Engagement with non-participating schools to raise awareness of the benefits and purpose of Shared Education and to lay the groundwork in preparation for them joining or creating a Shared Education partnership, to allow for the continued recovery of the education system
- EA central resources to support the various work streams of the Transition Phase.

## Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy

- 3.20 In the summer of 2020, a MSEPB was established, chaired by a senior Departmental official with representation from the EA, the ETI, TEO and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), to take forward work to begin to embed Shared Education across the education system and to oversee implementation of the Transition Phase and the remaining expenditure on the DSC SESP project. A SRG, with wide representation from across the education system, was also established to assist the Project Board in the co-design and development of sustainable long-term arrangements for Shared Education.
- 3.21 Throughout the second half of 2020, the Project Board's work focused on reviewing the evaluation of the 2019/20 Shared Education pilot to inform the further development of the funding model to support pupil engagement

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in primary, post-primary and special schools, in the expectation that those partnerships exiting the DSC SESP project would “enter” the mainstream model in September 2021. The aim was to have the funding model finalised, agreed and communicated to partnerships by early 2021, to allow time for planning for the resumption of pupil engagement at the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year should public health guidance deem it safe to do so. In January 2021 the draft funding model, which provides for the inescapable additional costs of pupil engagement, was subject to consultation with the SRG. Feedback, while generally positive on the funding model, questioned how other aspects of mainstreaming Shared Education, such as building capacity in the system and aligning wider education policy to Shared Education, would be taken forward and highlighted the need for an overarching strategy for mainstreaming.

- 3.22 In response to the feedback from the 2021 funding model consultation with the SRG, the emerging certainty that the impact of the COVID-19 virus would continue to severely disrupt the education system into the 2021/22 academic year and the subsequent decision to extend the Transition Phase, the then Minister agreed to prioritise the development of a Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy.
- 3.23 A working group, consisting of DE, EA and ETI officials and reporting to the MSEPB, was set up to consider the copious amount of evidence gathered over the last number of years from the funded projects and draft the strategy.
- 3.24 DE commissioned the Department of Finance’s Innovation Lab to provide assistance with the initial stages of the Strategy development via their Insights Programme, which brought together a range of stakeholders in March and May 2021 to consider how best to mainstream Shared Education.
- 3.25 The draft Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy, informed by the DoF Innovation Lab events, has been subject to a targeted consultation with the SRG and updated to reflect the feedback received. Finalisation of the strategy is subject to Ministerial approval.

## PEACE IV Shared Education Programme

3.26 The PEACE IV Programme funds Shared Education partnerships within NI, within the border counties of Ireland, and cross-border, through two projects:-

- *CASE* for Primary, Post-primary and Special schools<sup>13</sup>. This project has a budget of €28.9m, which includes an intervention to support youth work approaches which aim to enhance Shared Education delivery within school partnerships; and
- *SfS* for early years settings, with a budget of €4.26m.

3.27 The Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB), a cross-border body set up under the Good Friday Agreement and the Irish Government Act 1999, acts as the Managing Authority for implementation of the PEACE IV Programme and as such has overall responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the Programme.

3.28 Both PEACE IV projects have been impacted by COVID-19 and the associated periods of school closures. In recognition of this, the SEUPB agreed a temporary variation arrangement, which has provided necessary flexibility and ensured that schools and early years settings have not been penalised for an interruption to delivery beyond their control. This additional flexibility has continued throughout the period of the pandemic.

## Sharing from the Start (SfS)

3.29 The DE, as the appropriate policy Department (the Accountable Department) represents Government interests through exercising a scrutiny role, ensuring compliance with policy, and participating in the various oversight and selection bodies associated with the PEACE IV Programme.

3.30 A consortium led by the Early Years Organisation (EYO) partnered by the Fermanagh Trust and the National Childhood Network (NCN), was selected

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13 And school led projects in collaboration with youth service providers.

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as the delivery body for the SfS project. The SfS Advisory Group provides strategic and operational advice and support for the project.

- 3.31 Membership consists of representatives from the DE, the Department of Education (RoI), the EYO, the Fermanagh Trust, and the NCN and provides advice and support to the Project Management Team in relation to implementation of the SfS Project.
- 3.32 The project delivers a programme to pre-school settings in NI and the border counties of Ireland; and is required to involve 99<sup>14</sup> settings, engage 9,914 pupils and train 157 teachers with the capacity to facilitate sharing.
- 3.33 The main activities of the project include:
- Developing neighbouring shared education pre-school partnerships;
  - Training of pre-school staff on a shared basis;
  - Supporting pre-school partnerships to develop and implement a policy to sustain shared education in their settings beyond the end of the project, to sustain inclusion, equality and diversity;
  - Involving parents in workshops and activities;
  - Giving priority to children from marginalised and divided communities, ethnic minority communities and vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds; and
  - Engaging pre-school children in shared education activities on an ongoing and sustained basis over the duration of the project.
- 3.34 The Partnerships undertake SE activities aimed at improving community cohesion, inclusion, diversity and educational outcomes for young children. The project involves bringing children from different pre-school settings and

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14 inc ROI schools, teachers and pupils

different community backgrounds together for regular joint sessions during the year. A virtual information session for new parents to the programme was offered by Senior Early Years Specialists and the leaders of each setting.

- 3.35 Throughout this reporting period, the SfS project team provided support and capacity training to settings/partnerships involving an initial training session provided for all settings and staff, and partnership meetings with their Senior Early Years Specialist for planning purposes. Four peer cluster sessions were held throughout this period delivered by Senior Early Years Specialists. These involved sessions on virtual connections, media initiatives, reconnecting virtually and a SfS open forum held to ascertain the needs of the groups going forward. A number of Webinars and Vlogs were also provided including “Compassionate Leadership”, “Childhood Transitions” and “Parental Engagement” that was designed for practitioners to empower parents in supporting their children’s learning and development at home.
- 3.36 September 2020 to June 2021 was a difficult year for project delivery with the onset of COVID-19. However, the project adapted with the implementation of an IT infrastructure plan for settings, to enable remote engagement. Without this technology the project would have come to a standstill, with no engagement possible. Settings have indicated that while the IT enabled a temporary alternative for engagement it is not a substitute for face-to-face engagement.
- 3.37 Activity was originally due to complete in June 2021, however the project sought an extension to June 2022, which was agreed by the SEUPB, utilising funding remaining within the existing SfS budget.

### Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE) Project

- 3.38 As with the SfS project, the DE, as the appropriate policy Department (the *Accountable Department*) represents Government interest for the CASE project.

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- 3.39 The EA, the lead partner, works with Léargas<sup>15</sup> to deliver Shared Education through the PEACE IV CASE project. The project operates across NI and the Border counties and targets schools with no or limited prior experience of Shared Education.
- 3.40 The CASE project has quarterly Project Management Board meetings, with representation from the EA, Léargas, the SEUPB and the Accountable Departments - the DE and the DE (RoI).
- 3.41 As Accountable Department, the DE liaises with the SEUPB on the Shared Education Programme implementation/progress and scrutiny of financial and management data provided by the SEUPB.
- 3.42 Details of the implementation of the CASE project can be found at paragraphs 3.91 - 3.97.

#### Strule Shared Education Campus (SSEC)

- 3.43 The SSEC is a flagship Programme located in the Omagh area that will bring together six schools and over 4,000 children and young people from all backgrounds to learn together on a single, vibrant and dynamic campus.
- 3.44 The Department remains fully committed to delivering this educationally and strategically significant Programme.
- 3.45 Following Executive endorsement, a Ministerial Direction was issued in July 2021 which has enabled the Programme to progress to the next phase of construction.
- 3.46 The previous Main Works procurement competition was closed and the Department has now formally commenced a fresh Main Works procurement competition with the release of the Invitation to Tender on 13 December 2021.

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<sup>15</sup> Léargas, a not-for-profit organisation, wholly owned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science



- 3.47 This is an exciting and significant milestone which begins the process to appoint a contractor to construct the remaining five schools and shared facilities for the campus.
- 3.48 On the current Programme timetable, assuming successful appointment of a main works contractor and following the pre-construction design period, campus construction is due to begin on site in the spring of 2023 and is currently planned to complete early 2026, with potential partial opening of some facilities in academic year 2025/26 and full campus opening planned for September 2026.
- 3.49 The Department is continuing to work closely with the six school principals and their teams to build on the culture of sharing in Omagh and advance the Strule Programme.
- 3.50 Given the scale of the investment the educational benefits are vital to the success of the campus. A long term Benefits Realisation Plan has already been agreed with the schools.
- 3.51 The work required to realise the educational benefits and pilot various shared education initiatives prior to go-live is being detailed in a project plan and business case currently under development by Project 4 (Developing the Education Model) within the Programme.
- 3.52 The six school principals are in active engagement with the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), the DE and the EA to progress the development of the Project 4 Business Case.

### Shared Education Campuses (SEC) Programme

- 3.53 The NI Executive's T:BUC Strategy, published in May 2013, included a headline action to commence new shared education campuses. The headline action is being taken forward by the DE under the Shared SEC Programme which provides capital assistance to applicant schools to facilitate shared education through:

- Shared education facilities – where new facilities are built to allow for shared educational use by all schools within the model;
- Enhanced education facilities – where current facilities are improved to allow for shared educational use by all schools within the model; and
- Shared Education Campuses – where schools are co-located and share infrastructure.

3.54 The key objective is to ensure high quality educational benefits to children and young people. Applicant schools must have an established history of sharing and provide clear evidence of educational benefits for all the children and young people involved. There have been three Calls to the SEC Programme to date. Five projects were approved to proceed in planning from the first two Calls, with capital funding secured under the Fresh Start Agreement.

3.55 The two post-primary projects are leading the way:

- Limavady SEC (which includes St Mary’s High School, Limavady and Limavady High School) commenced construction in March 2021 and has an anticipated completion date in 2023.
- The design work is completed for the new SEC project in Ballycastle involving Ballycastle High School and Cross & Passion College, Ballycastle. The procurement of the Integrated Supply Team was re-launched in January 2022. Appointment is anticipated late 2022.

3.56 Progress is also being made on the two primary school projects:

- Moy SEC (Moy Regional Primary School and St John’s Primary School, Moy). An Integrated Consultant Team was appointed and a concept design for the Shared Campus has been completed.
- A business case for the Brookeborough SEC which involves the two primary schools in the village - St Mary’s Primary School and

Brookeborough Primary School has been drafted by the EA and is being considered by the Department.

- 3.57 The Minister took a decision in October 2020 to terminate the Duneane / Moneynick SEC due to sustainability issues at both schools and the failure to present a value for money argument in the business case for the project.
- 3.58 The TEO provides resource funding to the Department on an annual basis to support the delivery of the headline action and project development. The schools involved in the four SECs were allocated funding in 2021 largely to provide support through the provision of substitute teacher costs, enabling principals and senior leaders to plan and prepare for the new shared facilities/campuses.
- 3.59 The Department's Permanent Secretary approved projects to proceed in planning from the Third Call to the Programme in 2017, subject to confirmation of funding. Following confirmation that Fresh Start capital resources are not available for these latest projects, the Department is currently considering options on how to progress the schemes identified from the Third Call.

### Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI)

- 3.60 The ETI continues to advise, provide objective observations, and exercise a challenge function on the development of shared education through their participation on the DE Mainstreaming Project Board and through their work in organisations during district visits, evaluations and engagements.
- 3.61 In September 2020, the ETI produced a scoping report on DE's Priorities for Youth. It found that youth work was providing a valuable opportunity for young people to build upon their school-based learning by equipping them with the skills, attitudes and behaviours to recognise, understand and respect difference and to build new relationships. While concluding that much of the youth work curriculum as outlined in 'The Model for Effective Practice' is still relevant, it recommended that it be reviewed to take greater account of the lives of young people today to ensure that it supports young people to

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understand more fully their community and the world in which they live, and support them to proactively bring about positive changes.

- 3.62 In November 2020, the ETI published its report on the progress of the T:BUC Summer Camps Programme led by the EA Youth Service.
- 3.63 In September 2021, as part of the work relating to the ‘Mainstreaming Shared Education’ Strategy, the DE requested that the ETI carries out a review of the Framework to support the embedding and mainstreaming of shared education; this work is in progress and is being informed by the views of principals, lead practitioners and learners.
- 3.64 The ETI continues to review internally the quality of inspection and reporting for shared education in schools and plans to disseminate further to inspectors the findings of this review, with examples of effective reporting and writing on shared education. Through staff development on shared education, the ETI continues to develop the capacity of inspectors to evaluate and report on the quality of shared education across schools, and the youth sector.
- 3.65 Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the ETI’s district inspectors have engaged with organisations and partnerships to support continuity of shared learning experiences through the effective use of digital learning platforms, in line with the health and safety restrictions and protocols. In November 2021, the ETI published its report of a survey of children and young people (in Year 6 to Year 14) on their experiences during the pandemic of remote learning which received over 28,000 responses. When individual institution inspection resumes, inspectors will continue to report on the quality of shared education within the reports.

### PEACE PLUS

- 3.66 Similar to PEACE IV, PEACE PLUS is a cross border co-operation Programme co-funded by the EU, the Irish Government, and the United Kingdom (UK) government. The NI Executive and the Irish Government will also provide match-funding allocations. The Programme aims to promote peace and prosperity across NI and the border region of

Ireland, and is a single successor to previous EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. It is however expected, under the new Programme, that there will be increased geographical scope for activity to reach beyond the immediate 'Programme area' i.e. NI and six border counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth.

- 3.67 As with the PEACE IV Programme, the SEUPB is the managing authority for PEACE PLUS. Since 2019, the SEUPB has, in line with its legislative duties, sought to develop the PEACE PLUS Programme, involving extensive engagement with key stakeholders in establishing strategic priorities, including consultation with government departments.
- 3.68 During the reporting period, DE officials have worked extensively alongside departmental colleagues in RoI, and with the SEUPB, in helping to shape and develop the PEACE PLUS Programme. This included the preparation of a number of joint North South proposals, submitted for consideration by the SEUPB in mid-2020, including those directly related to Shared Education provision. These stressed the key importance of advancing Shared Education in compliance with the DE's legislative duty to 'encourage, facilitate and promote' Shared Education under the Act.
- 3.69 Funding totalling approximately €1.14bn is due to be made available through the overall PEACE PLUS Programme over the programming period, supporting 22 'Investment Areas' across six Themes. The PEACE PLUS Programme 2021-2027 Programme Overview document<sup>16</sup> presents an overview of the Themes and Investment Areas that have been approved by the NI Executive, Irish Government and North South Ministerial Council. This is not yet approved by the European Commission and is therefore subject to change.
- 3.70 Under Theme 3: 'Empowering and Investing in Young People', the DE is expected to act as the Accountable Department for two Investment Areas, namely the *Shared Learning Together* programme, and a separate *Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing* programme.

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16 [PEACE PLUS Programme 2021-2027 \(seupb.eu\)](https://seupb.eu)

- 3.71 As revealed in the recent consultation on PEACE PLUS undertaken by the SEUPB in 2021, some 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals put forward for the Shared Learning Together programme. In response to that considerable public support, the funding allocation for this Investment Area has been increased to €51.3m, more than €6m on previous levels indicated.
- 3.72 As with its predecessor under PEACE IV, the PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme will retain a focus on Shared Education but also seeks to build upon, enhance and amplify the existing Programme by incorporating elements, arising from the joint proposals previously submitted to the SEUPB, which provide an opportunity to address other policy areas which can be considered as complementary to, or are ‘enablers’ of, Shared Education.
- 3.73 It is anticipated that the Shared Learning Together programme will support:-
- (i) Increased participation (in Shared Education) within the education system in NI and the border counties of Ireland, across early years settings, primary schools, post-primary schools and special schools, including those in the integrated sector.
  - (ii) Development and delivery of youth to youth Shared Learning Together programmes in the non-formal education sector delivered by youth organisations.
  - (iii) Programmes which develop youth work capacity on a cross-border basis that will include enhancing relationships between youth workers.
  - (iv) Actions to address educational underachievement and disadvantage, which will also seek to equip parents with the skills to make a fuller contribution to their children’s educational and social development.
  - (v) Digital-based approaches which will contribute to the development and sustainability of shared education partnerships, including those of a cross-border nature.

- (vi) Awareness-raising programmes outlining the benefits of shared and integrated education.
- (vii) Collaborative initiatives which enable stakeholders from all education sectors to further develop approaches to shared learning.
- (viii) Development of diverse school collaborations through the exploration of wider social and civic issues of relevance to young persons (14 to 16 year olds).

3.74 The significant investment in the PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme over the coming years will enable the exploration of ways to sustain support for some of those involved in existing Shared Education partnerships and, crucially, provides a key vehicle for expanding the reach of Shared Education across NI and beyond.

3.75 These enhanced opportunities for participating in Shared Education via PEACE PLUS will incorporate both pre-school settings and schools, and also extend across youth settings. This is an important development in line with the aims of the Act.

3.76 Officials in both jurisdictions are engaging on an ongoing basis alongside SEUPB colleagues as we proceed through the next phase of planning and development of Shared Learning Together, working towards implementation and delivery of a programme of activity in a wide range of educational settings which will seek to improve educational outcomes whilst supporting good relations and social inclusion. This collaboration will continue over the lifespan of the PEACE PLUS Programme.

### **Duty to Consider Shared Education (DE)**

3.77 The DE's duty to consider Shared Education in terms of both public services and policy represents action to be taken across the Department to further Shared Education. For this reporting period, Heads of Teams have been required to make "statements of compliance" confirming that they have complied with the duty to consider, and where appropriate, with the duty

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to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. Heads of Teams were also required to retain documentary evidence to demonstrate their compliance with the duties placed upon them by the Act.

- 3.78 As part of its work during the Shared Education Transition Phase and in development of the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy, SECRT has engaged directly with several DE teams to advance Shared Education, activity which is outlined in paragraph 3.4.
- 3.79 The DE Heads of Teams in October 2021, confirmed that Shared Education had been considered when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans; and/or designing and delivering public services for which the respective team is responsible.

## **(ii) Education Authority Compliance with the Act**

### **Duty to Encourage, Facilitate and Promote Shared Education (EA)**

- 3.80 The Act commenced the duty placed on the EA in the Education Act (NI) 2014 to *encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education*. Action in compliance with this duty, as reported by the EA over the period of this report, is summarised below.

#### **EA Organisational Structure - Shared Education**

- 3.81 The Education Act (NI) 2014 requires the EA to appoint a standing committee to exercise its function in relation to its duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. A Shared Education Committee was established in September 2016. This Committee met bi-monthly and reported directly to the EA Board. It was chaired by a board member and provided strategic oversight, challenge and leadership in relation to the EA's duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. Minutes of meetings of the EA Shared Education Committee are published on the EA website and can be viewed at [Shared Education Committee Minutes | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.eani.org.uk/Shared-Education-Committee-Minutes).



- 3.82 In April 2021, the EA reorganised its Board committee structure and the functions of the EA Shared Education Committee transferred to the new Performance and Engagement Committee, which on behalf of, and in the name of, the EA Board oversees the management of EA's performance and delivery of agreed outcomes by ensuring the effective delivery of all EA's statutory functions including encouraging, facilitating and promoting shared education and community use of schools. The new Committee meets monthly and receives an update on Shared Education quarterly. Minutes of meetings of the EA Performance and Engagement Committee are published on the EA website and can be viewed at [Performance & Engagement Standing Committee Minutes | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.eani.org.uk/performance-and-engagement-committee-minutes).
- 3.83 The EA leads on the implementation of a number of Shared Education Projects: the DSC SESP; the Shared Education Transition Phase; the PEACE IV CASE Project in partnership with Léargas (RoI); and leadership and co-ordination of the T:BUC Summer Camps programme (Youth Service).

### Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy

- 3.84 During this reporting period, the EA continued to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education through its work in the development of the Mainstreamed Shared Education Strategy.
- 3.85 The EA is involved in a working group with the DE to develop this Strategy and also engaged in the Department of Finance's Innovation Lab to provide assistance with the initial stages of the Strategy development via their Insights Programme. Further details on the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy can be found at paragraphs 3.20 – 3.25.
- 3.86 An analysis of the financial data associated with the DSC SESP, CASE and the 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot has been conducted by the EA in collaboration with DE. This has been used to help inform the development of a Shared Education Funding Model for pupil to pupil engagement. The funding model has been shared with the SRG and comments have been considered and, where appropriate, adjustments have been made to the

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model. The funding model will be finalised before sharing with the wider system in 2022.

- 3.87 A set of Essential Criteria for Mainstreamed Shared Education has been developed by the EA in collaboration with DE. These criteria have also been subject to consultation with the SRG, revised where appropriate and will be applied to partnerships seeking to engage in Mainstreamed Shared Education. The criteria considers the lessons learned from the previous and currently funded projects.
- 3.88 An online Shared Education Hub has been developed by the EA to promote cross-sectoral partnership working, develop an understanding of Shared Education and to build the capacity of the school system to deliver highly effective Shared Education. A range of online TPL Modules have been created with 330+ teachers completing modules to date. A series of Case Studies have been created in order to demonstrate best practice from teachers, school leaders and external partners.
- 3.89 The Network of Shared School Improvement (NSSI) Pathway Project for Learning Leaders has enabled 145 schools to engage in the development, implementation and evaluation of JPD (Joint Practice Development) Programmes. This has helped embed Shared Education and improve outcomes for pupils, teachers and organisations through a collaborative approach. Further information on NSSI can be found in Section 5.
- 3.90 In addition to the above the EA continue to make connections with external partners to explore further opportunities for learning and resourcing for the education system. The EA continues to develop a range of resources and materials to support Shared Education Partnership working.

## PEACE IV Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE) Project

3.91 The CASE project is required to involve 280<sup>17</sup> schools in Shared Education, train 2,000 teachers with the capacity to facilitate Shared Education, and engage 135,000 participants in Shared Education classrooms.

These are addressed through two main delivery streams:

- (i) Shared Education delivery through school partnerships; and
- (ii) Practitioner professional learning, including teachers, school leadership and Boards of Governors/management committees.

3.92 The EA provides a comprehensive support package to CASE schools including supporting schools in key aspects of Shared Education, such as timetabling, action planning and transport issues. The aim is that participants should have the knowledge and skills to ensure that sharing is sustainable once PEACE IV funding ends.

3.93 The project has also invested in training to develop high quality, effective and sustainable practice. The CASE Project Implementation Team has directly delivered TPL workshops for schools on Managing a Shared Education Project; Developing a Shared Vision for your Partnership; and Delivering Shared Education in the Classroom. The project has also supported TPL at a partnership and cluster level.

3.94 A variety of TPL modules have also been developed with a range of educational stakeholders and are being offered to all CASE schools to build further the capacity of teachers and school leaders to deliver Shared Education. These modules cover strategic operational and curricular based topics and support teachers and leaders at all levels.

- Collaborative leadership for Senior leaders
- Collaborative leadership for middle leaders

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17 inc ROI schools, teachers and pupils

- Sharing through the Curriculum
- Delivering effective collaboration and sharing in primary schools
- Supporting intergroup contact through collaboration and shared education
- Understanding and managing diversity within the shared classroom
- Supporting Shared Education through online collaboration

3.95 Additional funding has also been made available through the project for teacher led JPD. This supports schools to develop their collaborative practice to address school improvement areas through partnerships. 43 partnerships have been successful in applications for this funding. This has helped embed Shared Education and improve outcomes for pupils, teachers and organisations through a collaborative approach.

3.96 During this period, the CASE project developed a project extension proposal for the SEUPB to maximise the opportunity for partnerships and pupils in Shared Education, given the impact of COVID-19. The proposal was approved to extend pupil activity until March 2023 for CASE partnerships for an additional 2 terms in the 2022/23 academic year.

3.97 The development of the CASE Shared Education Youth Worker Pilot was progressed during this reporting period with the recruitment of youth workers. The process of agreeing the job description has allowed the project to refine the role of the youth workers in order to ensure maximum impact for the CASE partnerships.

#### Shared Education Campuses (SEC)

3.98 The EA continued to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education through its progression of all four SEC projects. On behalf of the DE, the EA is responsible for all aspects of project management for each of the four SEC projects. In regard to Brookeborough SEC (St Mary's PS and Brookeborough

PS) the business case for this project has been submitted to the DE for approval. Further detail on the SEC can be found at paragraphs 3.53 - 3.59.

## Strule Shared Education Campus Omagh

3.99 During this reporting period, the EA continued to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education through its work in the development of the SSEC:

- Project 1 (Arvalee School and Resource Centre) of the SSEC is now complete. This was the construction of Arvalee School and Resource Centre. Arvalee has been maintained by the EA since 2016;
- Project 2 (Main Works Construction) of the SSEC is at tender stage. The EA is represented on the Project 2 Board and provides continuous input to project 2 progression through work that is interdependent with Project 4;
- Project 3 (Finance and Governance Project) of the SSEC remains under development. EA is represented at the Managing Authorities Liaison Group and provides continuous input to Project 3 progression through work that is interdependent with Project 4. In this reporting period EA completed all processes involved in the revised memorandum of agreement and became a signatory to this document;
- Project 4 (Developing the Education Model) of the SSEC remains under development. EA is the lead body for Project 4 and the EA Director of Education is SRO for this project. An Assistant Director has day to day responsibility for programme management with a support team of three School Improvement Professionals who facilitate weekly meetings with the six School Principals to develop all aspects of the model for the creation of a pathway of shared education for future pupils of the Strule Campus. EA facilitates and services the Project 4 Board which reports directly to the Strule Programme Board;
- Project 5 (Gateway Building) This project is formally closed within the programme;

- Project 6 (Migration and Vacated Sites) of the SSEC remains in progress. EA continues to contribute to meetings of this group and is awaiting the creation of the Migration project element of the programme;
- Project 7 (Strathroy Link Rd and Gortin Rd Enhancement) This project is managed by the Department of Infrastructure and is the only element of the programme where EA does not have direct input.

3.100 The EA has also established a Cross-Directorate working group to promote, facilitate and encourage shared education within the development of all five (including Strule) Shared Campus programmes. This is facilitated by an Assistant Director in the Education Directorate. The work of this group was paused during this reporting period because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### EA Solicitors

3.101 The EA solicitors provide legal support to the EA in terms of shared property arrangements for Ballycastle SEC. The EA Head of Legal Services participates on behalf of the EA in DE Strule Legal Working Group Meetings and advises EA accordingly.

#### School Transport

3.102 While school transport policy facilitates a wide degree of parental choice and EA's school transport service facilitates transport for 92,000 pupils and students, shared education is not a specific eligibility criteria within DE's transport policy.

3.103 The Transport Team within the EA, have connected with the Shared Education Officers responsible for the implementation of the two main funded SE Projects. Initial discussions around the funding for transport, the procurement of transport and the use of the EA's transport fleet have taken place. Further discussions, as we move towards the mainstreaming of Shared Education and education beyond COVID-19, will be required to explore how

the current transportation processes can be maximised to support Shared Education Partnerships.

- 3.104 A Category Council Group has been created which has representatives from Transport, Procurement and Shared Education. This group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss transportation procurement and opportunities moving forward to support Shared Education. A detailed needs analysis of transport requirements within the DSC SESP and CASE PEACE IV has been conducted. This information has been shared with the procurement officer to explore potential savings and value for money options. EA Procurement are now engaging with transport providers, through a pre-market questionnaire, to ensure the needs of Shared Education partnerships are met and services provide at the best value for money.
- 3.105 The EA Fleet is being used to support Shared Education Partnerships engage in face to face pupil contact. The challenges of COVID-19 have halted activity at present but when partnerships reconnect, at a pupil level, available EA transport will be made available.

### SEND Strategic Development Programme

- 3.106 The SEND Strategic Development Programme has 13 first phase projects. The OBC is currently with DE for consideration. The programme has involved and continues to involve stakeholder engagement across all sectors and a wide range of stakeholders. An aspect of this plan is to develop new models of practice. EA cannot pre-empt what these new models will look like. However, if as part of stakeholder co-design, a trend in stakeholder feedback indicates models that have Shared Education approaches this may shape future delivery.

### Education Authority Youth Service

- 3.107 Shared Education is one of the key commitments in the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG). Youth work can support this through providing valuable opportunities for children and young people to build upon

their school-based learning, to learn new skills, to develop new relationships and to develop themselves as citizens.

- 3.108 During the period October 2020 to March 2021 the EA Youth Service designed and developed, in consultation with key stakeholders, a number of funding opportunities through its New Funding Scheme to pilot Shared Education projects in four contested areas.
- 3.109 The EA Youth Service provided funding to the pilot projects during the period April 2021 to March 2022 to plan, design and deliver services and provision that would:
- Deliver educational benefits to support children and young people.
  - Promote the efficient and effective use of resources.
  - Promote equality of opportunity.
  - Promote good relations.
  - Promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.
- 3.110 The development of these funding opportunities assisted the EA Youth Service to actively encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education in line with the Shared Education Act 2016.
- 3.111 Four Local Project pilots were developed to engage and co-ordinate Shared Education within the leadership of organisations who would be delivering on specific Local Area based funding opportunities.
- 3.112 These funding opportunities were produced with the intention of providing quality services and Shared Education projects and experiences based on the following themes:
- Health and Wellbeing



- Participation and Social Action
- Living in Safety and Stability
- Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity
- Good Relations and
- Learning and Achieving

3.113 The principles of the DE CRED policy were embedded into all projects.

3.114 In addition a Regional Project funding opportunity was awarded to Corrymeela to support Local Services to deliver Shared Education programmes. The purpose of this funding opportunity was to plan, design and develop training and curriculum resources to support the youth work sector throughout NI on the following themes:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Learn and Achieve
- Participation
- Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity
- Living in Safety and Stability

3.115 This also included regional consultation with stakeholders that challenged social attitudes and prejudices and focus on improving outcomes for children and young people through collaborative working.

3.116 Throughout this period the EA Youth Services continued to deliver Good Relations and Shared Education programmes to children and young people.

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## EA School Improvement Strategy

- 3.117 The EA School Improvement Strategy, currently under development, is shaped by and aims to support the implementation of the NI Executive's Ministerial aims and objectives as set out in the PfG and the key cross cutting policies of (for example) the Departments of Education, Health, Communities and the Economy.
- 3.118 The strategy sets out an ambitious, coherent and integrated approach to securing school and system improvement; an approach to be underpinned by strong partnerships, dynamic collective leadership and the identification and implementation of effective shared solutions. It takes account of the learning and legacy of the Shared Education developmental work and outcomes.
- 3.119 The Pathways to Partnership Framework aims to build, where appropriate, on the primary and nursery clusters and partnerships established within the NSSI.

## Special Schools Area Planning Framework

- 3.120 The aim of the Special Schools Area Planning Framework is to outline the EA's vision and rationale for any future changes to special schools across NI.
- 3.121 This Framework will be the driver for strategic planning of SEN provision in special schools in the same way that Schools for the Future – A Policy for Sustainable Schools is for primary and post-primary schools. The EA has developed criteria, as well as indicators for each of these criteria, to meet the EA's vision for Special Schools. These criteria and indicators will be used to evaluate the special school estate in order to identify need and make suitable provision for future needs of children and young people with special educational needs. Shared Education is referenced in Criterion E Strong links with the Community.

## A Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools

- 3.122 The aim of the Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (Framework) is to outline the EA's vision and rationale for the delivery of specialist provision in early years, primary and post-primary mainstream schools across NI.
- 3.123 In realising the EA's vision for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools, the EA has developed criteria, as well as indicators for each of these criteria to identify the gaps in our existing specialist provision in mainstream schools and to identify mainstream schools in which to establish additional suitable provision for future needs of children and young people with special educational needs. Cognisance will be given to newly established schools progressing towards the criteria. Shared Education is referenced in Criterion E Strong links with the Community.

### **Duty to Consider Shared Education (EA)**

- 3.124 The organisational structure design of the EA, discussed at paragraphs 3.81 - 3.83, ensures that it fulfils its statutory duty to consider Shared Education. Specific, direct responsibility for Shared Education rests with senior officers, and significant resources are directed to create opportunities for its advancement, particularly through the funded programmes. Further assurance is provided through the EA Committee with responsibility for Shared Education which has a formal role in ensuring the duty to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education is fulfilled.

### **(iii) Other Education Bodies Compliance with the Act**

- 3.125 The Act, at Section 4, provides a power to 'other bodies' to encourage and facilitate Shared Education. These are listed at Section 4(2) as:-
- (a) Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
  - (b) Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI);

- (c) Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; and
- (d) any sectoral body<sup>18</sup> (i.e. an organisation recognised by DE as representing the interests of grant-aided schools of a particular description; and (b) to which grants are paid under section 4 of the Education Act (NI) 2014).

Additionally the Act places a duty on the CCMS, the YCNI and the CCEA, to ‘consider shared education’ in policy, planning and service delivery. The non-operation of the YCNI since April 2019 has meant that the duties and powers placed on the YCNI through the Act, have not been actioned since that time. The Minister is considering the results of a survey of youth sector organisations on the future of the YCNI along with the *New Decade, New Approach* commitment to review ALBs with a view to their rationalisation.

- 3.126 The Department, through the annual business planning process, requires its ALBs to include actions in relation to the duties and powers provided by the Act. The ALBs’ 2021/22 and 2022/23 business plans updates are reviewed quarterly by SECRT to consider progress on annual business plan actions in relation to Shared Education, adopting a challenge role as necessary.
- 3.127 The extent to which each of these ‘other bodies’ exercised this power, and for the CCMS and the CCEA, complied with the duty to consider Shared Education, over the reporting period is summarised below. Inputs have been provided by each of the education and sectoral bodies.

#### Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

- 3.128 The CCMS continues to work collaboratively with the EA and the DE to support the delivery of shared education and in particular in the development of the 5 SEC. A Senior Education Adviser has been allocated to oversee

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<sup>18</sup> Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, NI Council for Integrated Education and Controlled Schools’ Support Council, Catholic Schools’ Trustee Service and Governing Bodies Association fall within this definition.

the work on Shared Education with further support from the Building and Development team on the progression of shared campuses.

3.129 Work on shared governance of projects in conjunction with the EA continued where possible in terms of EA and school engagement as listed below.

- Supported primary SEC schools with the collation of qualitative information and robust identification of deliverables against the monetary figures to support Business cases; and with the clear identification of the educational and societal benefits.
- Supported school leaders and governors with identifying the elements of ethos shared across both schools.
- Continued engagement with staff and governors in St John's PS Moy to support project progression, work ongoing with EA to ensure harmonised approach to engaging the staff of both schools involved in Moy SEC; and engagement with school leadership and diocesan trustee to support St John's Moy input into the design team work
- Membership and participation in Strule Programme Board and Project groups and progression of related work such as: Project 4 End to end plan and proposition paper for SIB to support development of Business Case development; and, supporting Project 2 progression of the review and re-signing of the Memorandum of Agreement by trustees.

3.130 As projects progress, work also includes:

- Providing technical support to the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and Trustees; and advice in respect of capital, asset and legal matters, including assistance in the development of/or updating of associated legal and governance documents.
- Participating in Design/Construction review processes and assist in implementation of recommendations; assisting panel members or moderators in the procurement of Consultants/Contractors; and

expeditious progression of signing of contracts, way-leave agreements, warranties, etc.

- Providing technical assistance in the review of designs during the appropriate RIBA design stage.
- Liaison with the Educational Trusts when required.

#### Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

- 3.131 The CCEA continues to comply with its duty to consider shared education and exercise its power to encourage and facilitate shared education, including in the context of post and potential future impact, in line with legislation and DE's Sharing Works Policy.
- 3.132 Due to COVID-19 school closures, the CCEA was not able to carry out some of its planned work to support Shared Education within primary schools. For example, CCEA's training workshops for primary teachers in the Shared Education Partnership was not able to be carried out. The focus of these workshops was on developing practice in ICT/Digital Skills and the World Around Us through collaborative working. However, the work to develop shared education resources for Key Stage 2 continued and a new resource called 'Place names in Northern Ireland' is being developed. The lessons have been adapted to offer opportunities for shared learning which can be delivered either face-to-face or online.
- 3.133 Due to the significant disruption to schools because of COVID-19 and the cancellation of all examinations the CCEA's focus was on producing a significant amount of support for post-primary schools to arrive at centre determined grades for all qualifications in summer 2021, and for 2021 arrangements.
- 3.134 Two new multimedia case studies were developed and published of a post-primary Shared Education partnership in North Belfast and a primary Shared Education partnership in a small rural town.

- 3.135 In addition, the CCEA website shows how existing CCEA resources can be used to promote an understanding of different cultural traditions in NI through shared education partnership working.

## **Sectoral Bodies**

### **Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC)**

- 3.136 The CSSC seeks to raise awareness of Shared Education amongst controlled schools, encouraging and facilitating their participation, assisting with funding applications; and represents the controlled sector on shared education strategic groups.
- 3.137 During the reporting period a number of actions were carried out, these are detailed below. Please note that due to the impact of COVID-19 some activities have been suspended.
- 3.138 A CSSC representative sits on the DE Mainstreaming Shared Education SRG, and responded to the DE's Mainstreaming Shared Education consultation paper on a proposed funding model for pupil to pupil activity. CSSC's response was informed through engagement with a small number of primary and post primary schools, which were formerly involved in the Shared Education Signature Project.
- 3.139 The CSSC Schools' Support Officers participated in the 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 assessment panels for T:BUC Camps applications. The officers worked alongside colleagues from voluntary, statutory and independent organisations to assess applications.
- 3.140 A CSSC Schools' Support Officer represents controlled schools on the Project Teams for the Moneynick/Duneane, Brookeborough/St Mary's shared campuses and provides ongoing support to the principals of the controlled schools, as requested.

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- 3.141 The CSSC Chief Executive is part of the Managing Authorities Liaison Group for the SSEC. Follow up meetings are also held with the Principals.
- 3.142 The Area Planning Working Group (APWG) sub group on shared education has completed its final report. CSSC was represented on this sub group.
- 3.143 The shared education section on the CSSC website contains resources for schools, including a briefing paper on shared education policy in NI and CSSC's 'Learning from each other, sharing in education' report. CSSC advised that it also produces news items and case studies showcasing shared education on the CSSC website and newsletters to schools. During good relations week CSSC showcased the controlled sector's involvement in shared education partnerships, both in 2020 and in 2021.
- 3.144 The CSSC is committed to working and co-operating with the support bodies of other sectors and with other organisations in matters of mutual interest including shared education. In March 2020, the CSSC education team met with the education team from the CCMS. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss continued partnership working between the two organisations over a range of existing initiatives, including shared education. Scope for further collaboration was also discussed.
- 3.145 The CSSC has had ongoing engagement with Community Relations in Schools and the CSSC encourages controlled schools to participate in their GRACE and Buddy Up programmes.

#### Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)

- 3.146 The NICIE Senior Development Officer has attended two meetings of the EA's Shared Education APWG Subgroup during the reporting period. The officer continues to work with the Sectoral Support Officer in EA to discuss any issues regarding Shared Education and Integrated Education and Shared Options.
- 3.147 The NICIE have been instrumental in the production of the INT DIR 21: "International Directory of Joint Protestant - Roman Catholic Schools,



Colleges and Universities: 2021”. The Directory was launched online on 23rd September 2021 during Good Relations week. This was an open invite and NICIE also invited specific organisations i.e. EA, Transferors Representative Council (TRC), CSSC, CCMS – the Directory was sent to all who attended and stakeholder organisations.

- 3.148 The NICIE continues to promote ‘the Pupil Pathway for Shared Education’, and has included the resource in its training. A NICIE official recently did a recorded message for the EA to use on their website on the importance of the document.
- 3.149 The NICIE published its new Anti-Bias Resource ‘Bias Busting for Beginners’. This was sent out to stakeholder organisations, Teachers Unions, Integrated Schools and anyone who has requested it. It is also available on the NICIE website [Bias Busting for Beginners](#). Two EA Shared Education Development Officers are participating in the current training and NICIE are planning with the EA to deliver the training to 20 Shared Education co-ordinators in 2022.

### Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG)

- 3.150 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CnaG report it has been difficult to focus much attention on the promotion of Shared Education within the IM sector.
- 3.151 The CnaG reported the following actions in relation to Shared Education within the Irish-medium sector over the reporting period:-
- Engaged with a range of principals from the sector to discuss barriers, areas for possible/future engagement and partnerships;
  - Raised the need for a strategic action plan to increase involvement within the IM sector in preparation for future funded project(s) internally and with DE/EA when circumstances allowed;
  - CnaG has represented the IM Sector on the EA’s APWG Sub-group for Shared Education.

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## Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (CSTS)

3.152 One of the key objectives of CSTS is to assist Trustees in working with all Catholic schools to develop more cohesive engagement with the sector to DE policy in areas including Shared Education. In delivering this objective, CSTS's key activities over the reporting period have been as follows:-

- Participated in all of the EA's Area Planning groups at which Shared Models are considered; including the Area Planning Shared Education sub-group which has drawn up an option paper for models of shared education;
- Have a Trustee Shared Education policy which encourages schools to participate in shared education;
- Worked with Trustees and the TRC on the development of a Jointly Managed Church school;
- Provided support to Trustees in relation to emerging Shared Education options; including options for a Jointly Managed Church School;
- Provided Trustee representation on the Strule Programme Board and the Managing Authority Liaison Group;
- Participated in Mainstreaming of Shared Education Funding Model consultation process; and
- Participated in 2 day Innovation Lab event in May in relation to Mainstreaming of Shared Education.

## Governing Bodies Association (GBA)

3.153 The GBA listed the following key activities carried out during the reporting period:-

- Encouraged Shared Education by including articles in the GBA's monthly term-time newsletters to member schools throughout the reporting period;
- Requested a meeting with the EA to discuss how to advance initiatives for voluntary grammar schools that have identified an interest in Shared Education.

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## 4. PARTICIPATION IN SHARED EDUCATION

- 4.1 This report, like the 2nd report to the Assembly, is reporting on participation levels at the academic year end. Data on participation levels gathered in-year imposes an additional administrative burden on schools and is subject to review at year end given that numbers may vary across the academic year.
- 4.2 The report provides a comparison between participation at 30 June 2019 and at 30 June 2021, the end of the latest full academic year.
- 4.3 The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Shared Education pupil to pupil activity across all schools.
- 4.4 The DSC SESP funding for classroom activity ended in June 2019. The DE's 2019/20 Shared Education Pilot provided further funding for pupil to pupil engagement for previous DSC SESP schools. Since the closure of the DSC SESP programme in June 2020, those partnerships previously supported through the DSC SESP have entered what has become a two year 'Transition Phase' towards a mainstreamed model of Shared Education.
- 4.5 Due to the impact of the pandemic, support for pupil to pupil activity in those partnerships has been suspended since the 2020/21 academic year. The decision was to afford a degree of certainty in taking forward school planning and to ensure schools could concentrate efforts on recovery and consolidation, as pupils returned to the classroom. The support to these partnerships is focused instead on recovery and TPL, and has resulted in schools/partnerships exploring online approaches to JPD. This has enabled continued connections across clusters, more efficient use of time and resources, greater scope for a wider network development and a sustainable approach to future JPD implementation.
- 4.6 Schools and early years settings involved in PEACE IV were informed that the programme would continue to fund Shared Education activity in 2020/21 and 2021/22. However, given the current COVID-19 pandemic, shared pupil learning engagement in these academic years is at the discretion of each partnership.

- 4.7 The PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation (March 2021) reported that the specific numerical targets (or ‘output indicators’) set for the overall PEACE IV programme by 2023 were already exceeded in respect of the number of pre-school settings and schools taking part, and were on track to be achieved (pre-COVID-19) in respect of the numbers of children and young people participating and those teachers/practitioners trained with the capacity to facilitate Shared Education.

### **Participation Level Data**

- 4.8 Table 1 below provides the breakdown of schools and pupils participating, by Shared Education funded programmes, across phases, and the change in the level of participation between June 2019 and June 2021.

**Table 1: School and pupil participation, by Shared Education Programme  
June 2019, June 2020 and June 2021**

Phase	Schools				Pupils			
	30 June 2019	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	Change between June 2019 and June 2021	30 June 2019	30 June 2020	30 June 2021	Change between June 2019 and June 2021
<b>DSC SESP</b>								
Pre-school	16	16	16	0	615	711	0	-615
Primary Schools	246	246	246	0	40,056	19,496	0	-40,056
Post Primary Schools	99	97	95	-4	24,011	20,553	0	-24,011
Special Schools	10	10	10	0	701	244	0	-701
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>65,383</b>	<b>41,004</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-65,383</b>
<b>PEACE IV</b>								
Pre-school	59	73	44	-15	1,797	2,341	1,038	-759
Primary Schools	254	255	255	1	19,126	21,630	16,050	-3,076
Post Primary Schools	21	22	22	1	748	49	60	-688
Special Schools	11	12	12	1	331	462	328	-3
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>22,002</b>	<b>24,482</b>	<b>17,476</b>	<b>-4,526</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>87,385</b>	<b>65,486</b>	<b>17,476</b>	<b>-69,909</b>

4.9 Table 2 below provides the breakdown of the overall number of schools and pupils participating in Shared Education funded programmes, across phases, and the change in the level of participation between June 2019 and June 2021.

**Table 2: Levels of participation compared to total school/pupil population  
June 2019 and June 2021**

Phase	Schools				Pupils			
	June 2019		June 2021		June 2019		June 2021	
	No. of schools participating in SE	As % of school population	No. of schools participating in SE	As % of school population	No. of pupils participating in SE	As % of pupil population	No. of pupils participating in SE	As % of pupil population
<b>DSC SESP &amp; PEACE IV</b>								
Pre-school <sup>19</sup>	75	16%	60	13%	2,412	10%	1,038	5%
Primary Schools	500	63%	501	64%	59,182	34%	16,050	9%
Post-Primary Schools	120	62%	117	61%	24,759	17%	60	0%
Special Schools	21	54%	22	56%	1,032	17%	328	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>87,385</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>17,476</b>	<b>5%</b>

4.10 At the end of June 2019 there were 716 schools and early years settings involved in Shared Education, accounting for 87,385 pupils, involved in 325 partnerships<sup>20</sup> funded through both the DSC SESP and PEACE IV. This was a considerable increase from the 22,000 pupils involved at the end of June 2016 as a result of the progress and further development of the Shared Education funded programmes. At June 2019, 63% of primary and 62% of post-primary schools were involved, and 16% of pre-schools were involved.

<sup>19</sup> Voluntary and private pre-schools and Nursery schools

<sup>20</sup> This comprises 159 DSC SESP and 166 Peace IV partnerships. All 166 Peace IV partnerships include at least one NI school partnered with schools in NI or RoI. Numbers of schools and pupils are exclusively NI.

- 4.11 COVID-19 and school closures has had a significant impact on the level of participation in Shared Education, with the majority of face to face contact suspended since March 2020. As a result there has been an 80% reduction in the overall number of children and young people involved; falling from 87,385 participating at June 2019 to 17,476 at June 2021. Although the proportion of all schools involved remained at 48% at June 2021, the proportion of the pupil population engaged in Shared Education had fallen from 25% at June 2019 to 5% at June 2021.
- 4.12 There has also been a net decrease in the number of schools involved over the reporting period, from 716 schools to 700, with 3 less post- primary schools, 15 less pre-schools; and the addition of 1 special school and 1 primary school. Special schools continue to be involved in Shared Education, with 22 schools participating, which represents over half (56%) of all special schools. The number of pre-schools involved had increased by almost 20% between June 2019 and June 2020; however by June 2021 the number of pre-schools engaged had fallen to 60, from a previous 3 year high of 89.
- 4.13 Partnerships have, however, sought to maintain relationships and have responded admirably despite the challenges, with many able, for instance, to adapt provision through the enhanced use of online and digital technologies and outdoor activity in line with Public Health Agency (PHA) guidelines.
- 4.14 The level of participation for the children and pre-school settings in the SfS programme was impacted during the period September 2020 – June 2021. The COVID -19 restrictions across both jurisdictions (north and south) impacted on the ability of some settings to continue participating. Changing guidelines from PHA and in response to public health policy also created instability within the sector and made it difficult to deliver day to day services, reducing the time available for programme activity. A significant number of children and staff either contracted COVID-19 or had to isolate which led to the temporary closure of some settings.
- 4.15 In spite of the many difficulties faced, the SfS project managed to ensure the continuity of the programme through enhanced use of online and digital technologies. Staff within settings were provided with training on the use



of various virtual platforms with a focus on ensuring the shared sessions remained as purposeful and meaningful as possible. In addition the support from the Senior Early Years Specialists continued throughout the lockdown, including the facilitation of webinars to support wellbeing of staff. The Project recognises that although this delivery method cannot be used as a long-term replacement for face-to-face contact, it did enable settings to continue to engage remotely.

- 4.16 The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted on CASE as a number of partnerships paused pupil activity while they responded to the delivery of remote learning for pupils. This resulted in a drop in the number of pupils involved in shared learning. Active partnerships responded to the challenge of Shared Education during COVID-19 by utilising online collaboration opportunities through virtual linked classrooms, shared schemes of work with pupils working together online and shared topics jointly developed by partnership staff.
- 4.17 The CASE Programme Implementation Team continued working with school partnerships to provide support on all aspects of CASE and COVID-19 issues. The focus during the pandemic was to support the re-engagement of inactive partnerships and to evaluate and action plan with those partnerships that have been able to continue activity. Between March 2020 and September 2020, at project level, a number of training opportunities for teachers had to be postponed. From October 2020, delivery of the TPL was reinstated on a virtual and online capacity.
- 4.18 Many teachers have advised that the positive professional relationships developed through Shared Education, has been invaluable as the schools work through the impact of COVID-19.
- 4.19 Overall, in terms of pupil numbers, uptake continues to be higher in the primary than in the post-primary phase. Across the education system there are fewer post-primary pupils in total, circa 149,000 compared with 173,000

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primary pupils, and the larger size of classes<sup>21</sup> in primary than in post-primary schools facilitates greater uptake. Experience during the DSC SESP show that the complexity delivering Shared Education varies between primary and post-primary partnerships. Post-primary partnerships present with a different set of organisational and delivery challenges from those facing primary, such as the alignment of timetables, teacher release and transportation of pupils. In light of this, the EA conducted a review of post-primary delivery of Shared Education within the DSC SESP to establish an overview of current post-primary shared education operation, identify the challenges faced by a selection of post-primary partnerships; and offer potential solutions to particular challenges which may inform future Shared Education delivery.

- 4.20 There are schools who, for a variety of reasons have not been involved in Shared Education to date. It is recognised that there are factors impacting on schools involvement, such as geographical and local demographic limitations in certain areas, and competition for partners. In addition there is a need to address gaps in provision, including under-represented sectors, such as the IM sector. It is important, therefore, to work with stakeholders and relevant sectoral bodies in facilitating enhanced participation, and engage meaningfully with schools and settings not yet involved.
- 4.21 In 2020, there was an opportunity for schools not currently involved in Shared Education to register to attend EA organised conferences to raise awareness of the purpose and benefits of sharing and to lay the groundwork in preparation for them entering a Shared Education partnership. Over 200 schools expressed an interest. Unfortunately these conferences had to be postponed as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak. However, the process of engaging with non-participating schools has recently re-commenced early in 2022 as part of a programme which will help build their capacity to lead and engage in Shared Education partnership working. Similar to the levels of interest in 2020, approximately 215 schools have indicated that they wish to become involved.

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21 The 2020/21 Primary Pupil Teacher Ratio is 21.8 compared to 15.8 for Post Primary. (Source [Teacher workforce statistics in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/workforce-statistics-in-grant-aided-schools-in-northern-ireland))

- 4.22 As touched upon earlier in this report, the PEACE PLUS Programme provides an important opportunity to help expand the reach of, and further develop, the concept of Shared Education which will help to enhance current participation levels going forward.

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## **5. EXTENT TO WHICH THE PURPOSE OF SHARED EDUCATION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED**

5.1 The purpose of Shared Education is set out in the Act as:

- (i) delivering educational benefits to children and young persons;
- (ii) promoting the efficient and effective use of resources;
- (iii) promoting equality of opportunity;
- (iv) promoting good relations; and;
- (v) promoting respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

5.2 Following on from earlier positive findings reflected in the last Report to the Assembly laid in June 2020, a wide range of evidence and research relating to or made available during the period covered by this latest report, continues to demonstrate the impact that Shared Education is having upon children and young people, families and communities, and the educational settings which serve them.

5.3 The extent to which each of the five distinct areas (highlighted above at 5.1) has been achieved is explored in turn below, using information gathered from a number of sources.

### **Delivering educational benefits to children and young persons**

5.4 Despite the obvious limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic involving associated disruption to classroom activity and restricted pupil to pupil engagement during the reporting period, Shared Education is continuing to deliver educational benefits for children and young people, borne out through ETI district visits and observations, reports from schools and other participating educational settings, and relevant programme evaluations.

- 5.5 A key piece of evidence published during this time was the PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation<sup>22</sup> (March 2021), commissioned by the SEUPB and taken forward by SJC consultancy and the National Children’s Bureau (NCB), which is based on analysis of both CASE and SfS project activity in the period January to June 2020.
- 5.6 Research informing the evaluation was undertaken via consultations and interviews with the SEUPB and project delivery partner staff/case officers, focus groups conducted, online surveys completed by early years practitioners in pre-school settings and principals/teachers in schools, examination of relevant data from both the CASE and SfS projects, and information from seven partnership ‘case studies’ identified.
- 5.7 Key findings are summarised as follows within the PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation *“Overall, PEACE IV Shared Education has had a positive impact on the following areas: cross-border collaboration; and outcomes for children, pre-schools/schools, practitioners/teachers, parents, and the wider community.”*
- 5.8 With particular relevance to educational benefits, the survey results underpinning the PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation revealed that:
- Most significantly, almost all (95%) of respondents agreed that CASE/ SfS has led to improved educational outcomes for participating children by providing access to a wider education/curriculum experience.
  - 94% agreed it allowed children to do activities they wouldn’t have been able to do if there was no Shared Education.
  - 94% agreed it improved children’s confidence.

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22 [Special EU Programmes Body Shared Education Impact Evaluation – Executive Summary – PEACE IV Programme – Specific Objective 1 – March 2021, available at PIV Shared Education – Executive Summary publish.pdf \(ncb.org.uk\)](#)

- 93% agreed it improved children’s communication skills.
  - 88% agreed it improved children’s social skills.
  - 78% agreed it eased the transition process.
- 5.9 In respect of teaching and learning, the PEACE IV Impact Evaluation states that *“there is evidence that Shared Education is being translated into quality standards for teaching and learning that enable its values to be embedded into practice in pre-schools and schools. The capacity of pre-school and school leaders has also developed through Shared Education, with increased confidence in the use of quality frameworks to self-evaluate teaching and learning. A review of inspection reports provides evidence that Shared Education is recognised as a valuable intervention to improve teaching and learning.”*
- 5.10 It affirms also that Shared Education has had a positive impact on helping to address curricular priorities in pre-school and School Development Plans in NI.
- 5.11 Furthermore:-
- 96% agreed it provided opportunities for peer support and sharing good practice;
  - 95% of respondents agreed it had enhanced teaching and learning in their pre-school or school; and
  - 94% agreed it improved professional teaching skills and knowledge.
- 5.12 The above survey findings share similarities with a DE Shared Education 2019/20 school survey which sought the views of schools involved in the Shared Education pilot funding model undertaken in the 2019/20 academic

year. Those results too acknowledged the contribution that sharing makes to pupil outcomes with some 80% of respondents either having agreed or strongly agreed that Shared Education had a positive impact on the educational outcomes of pupils and some 76% of respondents who had engaged in Shared Education capacity building, agreed or strongly agreed that this training had impacted positively on pupil outcomes.

- 5.13 It also echoes a previous 2018 ETI evaluation of the DSC SESP<sup>23</sup> which found that the project contributed to improving the learning experiences provided for, and the outcomes attained by, pupils across the phases; recognised the contribution that shared learning experiences made to pupils' personal, social and academic development; and enabled access to a range of creative, vibrant and stimulating learning opportunities that would not have been otherwise possible.
- 5.14 Whilst the ETI did not formally assess Shared Education provision as part of a formal evaluation during this reporting period, and inspection activity has been paused also since March 2020 due to the pandemic, 'phase reports' published by the ETI in March 2021<sup>24</sup> also make positive observations in respect of Shared Education.
- 5.15 These reports replace the previous biennial Chief Inspector's Report, the last of which in 2018<sup>25</sup> had highlighted the opportunities provided by involvement in Shared Education partnerships to extend the children's work and to enhance the children's learning in a range of ways.
- 5.16 The phase reports cover the period September 2018-December 2020, drawing on available inspection evidence, including pupil questionnaires, during that time.

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23 [The Shared Education Signature Project Evaluation Report](#) (Education and Training Inspectorate; October 2018)

24 [Phase Reports – September 2018-December 2020](#) (Education and Training Inspectorate; March 2021)

25 [Chief Inspector's Report 2016-18](#) (Education and Training Inspectorate; November 2018)

5.17 Relevant extracts include:

“Increasingly, the children refer to enjoying learning with children from other schools through shared education programmes.”

Wider skills and dispositions - Primary Phase Report  
September 2018 - December 2020  
(Education and Training Inspectorate; March 2021)

“The pupils’ social skills improved through the opportunities provided for them to work with others, including those facilitated through Shared Education. They enjoyed making friends and collaborating in activities which included sport, drama, music, coding and science.”

Shared Education - Special Schools Phase Report  
September 2018 – December 2020  
(Education and Training Inspectorate; March 2021)

- 5.18 These experiences of the children and young people involved in Shared Education are similar to other recent survey findings such as the latest (2020/21) YLT and KLT<sup>26</sup> which indicates that those who said they had done projects, had classes, and shared equipment with other schools were generally very positive about taking part in such sharing activities. They particularly enjoyed being with those from different backgrounds to themselves; making new friends, learning new things; and doing classes and activities they may not normally have had the opportunity to do otherwise.

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26 [Attitudes to Shared Education: Findings from the 2020/21 Young Life and Times and Kids' Life and Times surveys –ARK \(QUB\); Research Report published by DE 15 March 2022 available at Northern Ireland Kids Life and Times and Young Life Times Shared Education Research Report.pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/attitudes-to-shared-education-findings-from-the-2020-21-young-life-and-times-and-kids-life-and-times-surveys-ark-qub-research-report-published-by-de-15-march-2022)



5.19 This is highlighted in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: YLT/KLT (2020/21): Activities respondents liked a lot or liked a little**

	% saying liked it a lot or a little	
	YLT	KLT
Being taught by different teachers	67	72
Travelling to a different school	78	80
Doing classes we don't normally get to do at our school	90	88
Learning new things with pupils from another school	82	81
Making new friends	84	88
Being with young people (YLT)/children (KLT) who are a different religion to me	90	88
Being with young people who have a different ethnic background (YLT)/children who have a different skin colour or who speak a different language than me (KLT)	92	95
Being with young people who are a different social class to me (YLT)/children who are richer or poorer than me (KLT)	89	87

5.20 The NSSI was established, under the former DSC SESP programme, as a formalised mechanism to help enhance partnership working and bring about school improvement on a collaborative basis within the context of shared education delivery. A key component of this work is the development and delivery of JPD programmes explained in further detail later in this section which deals with the use of resources.

5.21 Using baseline data collected through a large scale survey of schools involved in NSSI, a Queens' University Belfast (QUB) report published in

January 2020<sup>27</sup>, highlighted that: *“the emergent picture is very positive in relation to collaboration and school improvement as a consequence of NSSI”*.

- 5.22 Following on from the initial QUB baseline survey, DE undertook a separate school survey, and an evaluation of the NSSI in 2019/20 to inform the future development of policy around the mainstreaming of Shared Education. According to the results of questions asked specifically about NSSI, the DE Shared Education 2019/20 school survey revealed that 61.4 % of respondents involved in NSSI agreed or strongly agreed that the NSSI has made an effective contribution to the delivery of shared education in their partnership/cluster. In response to the statement that the NSSI has made an effective contribution to school improvement, 60.4% of those respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
- 5.23 Significantly, 82.9% of the NSSI respondents agreed or strongly agreed that shared education continues to have a positive impact on the educational outcomes for pupils. Most (81.2%) of the NSSI respondents stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that Shared Education has become an integral part of life in their school.
- 5.24 Whilst recognised as *“too early in the development of NSSI to fully ascertain the direct benefits to pupils”*, the DE evaluation of NSSI (June 2020) noted that:

“the evaluative written and oral feedback from those involved, including cluster leaders, aligns with the findings from the DE Shared Education Survey, indicating that NSSI has benefitted both the development of shared education and has also contributed to addressing the school improvement priorities of the individual schools involved.”

“In conclusion, the findings from this report and the earlier QUB report present a positive picture on the impact of the NSSI, both in terms of the expansion of shared education relationships and in relation to the benefits of working in clusters to achieve common school improvement priorities.”

Evaluation of the Network for Shared School Improvement  
(Department of Education; June 2020)

27 [Attitudes towards, and experiences of, the Network for Shared School Improvement: a survey of teachers and school leaders](#) (Queen’s University Belfast School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work Working Paper – Summary; January 2020)

- 5.25 The overall conclusion of a later review by QUB, commissioned by the EA, specifically relating to the JPD process facilitated through NSSI (July 2021) reported similar impact in terms of school improvement, stating that *“The evidence of these case studies shows not only the success of collaboration and partnership working in supporting processes for school improvement, but has clearly demonstrated the value of networking teachers in professional learning communities as the basis through which this improvement can not only be achieved, but sustained.”*
- 5.26 That same review of JPD also found that that there were benefits for children in terms of aiding critical transition points between phases of education, noting there were *“serendipitous opportunities for cross-phase learning which, in turn, helped support more effective transition processes, whether this was between nursery and primary schools, or between primary and post-primary schools.”*

## **Promoting the efficient and effective use of resources**

- 5.27 Previous evaluation findings and reports from educational settings have identified the efficient and effective use of resources as a key benefit emanating from participation in Shared Education.

“It has been well documented that participation in Shared Education enables staff to share resources, expertise, build wider networks of professional relationships across different school sectors and engage in alternative forms of collegiality in contexts affected by conflict. It is also recognised that sharing education can offer school improvement benefits as schools work together to address common needs.”

A Review of Joint Professional Development (JPD) - Experiences and Lessons Learned  
(Queen’s University Belfast; July 2021)

5.28 Linked closely with the educational benefits highlighted earlier in this section, the recent PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation from 2021 continues that trend, highlighting that the projects involved have helped in terms of making more effective and efficient use of limited equipment and resources:-

“There are also economic benefits for participating pre-schools/schools. The evidence indicates that the aim to ‘promote the efficient and effective use of resources’ has been met via the following: sharing of resources and indoor/ outdoor facilities; equipment purchased collectively and shared between partnering pre-schools/schools; shared trips/outings and access to external tutors with different specialisms; and shared practitioner/teacher training to enhance teaching and learning.”

“core subjects have been enhanced with the addition of new resources acquired, the access to other teaching staff and in some cases external tutors providing specific expertise, which would not have occurred in the absence of funding”.

SEUPB PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation - Executive Summary (SJC Consultancy & National Children’s Bureau; March 2021)

5.29 This reflects associated survey responses from the PEACE IV Impact Evaluation which found that:-

- 96% of respondents reported that they are more confident in their ability to lead Shared Education activities, consequently adding to the sustainability of such activities in the future;
- 93% agreed that there was increased access to curriculum resources;
- 89% agreed that there was increased access to external professional expertise; and

- 87% agreed that there was increased access to CPD opportunities and training.

5.30 These findings chime with the range of benefits identified as a result of the collaboration facilitated through NSSI structures. Examples include:

“most teachers talked of the confidence and increased competence that they have acquired and how they have benefitted and applied the knowledge from training sessions, peer observation sessions and reviews”

“through working with other skilled professionals, teachers created innovative strategies and resources. For example, in one cluster, teachers developed resources for differentiated learning, problem-solving and giving effective feedback; in another, team teaching and peer review processes were developed. The development of new policies and curriculum resources demonstrated the ability of the schools involved to share their existing expertise and to also work collaboratively to build new expertise to address common areas of concern in their School Development Plans.”

Evaluation of the Network for Shared School Improvement (Department of Education; June 2020)

- 5.31 The DE evaluation of NSSI found that *“Central to the success of the JPD programmes was the ‘upskilling’ of teachers and the contribution that their new skills, understanding and knowledge brought to improved learning and teaching in their classrooms”*.
- 5.32 The aforementioned review of JPD as part of the NSSI project, undertaken by QUB, also reported a range of benefits arising from that specific aspect of collaboration:

“In all our conversations across the case studies we were regaled with a plethora of benefits that had been derived from participation in the JPD activities and virtually all of these related to the process of collaboration, or the experiences that had been enabled by collaboration and networking.”

“Our interviewees described a wide range of forms of collaborative practice they had found rewarding and energizing, from teachers taking each other’s classes across schools, team teaching, and the way they were provided with access to wider reservoirs of ideas, experience, and expertise.”

“One of the clear benefits of developing strong networks of connection across schools in a cluster was the preparedness to share artefacts, such as resources, curriculum materials and policy documents, as well as experience and expertise.”

A Review of Joint Professional Development (JPD) - Experiences and Lessons Learned  
(Queen’s University Belfast; July 2021)

- 5.33 The above QUB report identified time as the most important resource for the effective achievement of JPD outcomes, to take appropriate cognisance of what is required to complete all necessary tasks, e.g. planning time. It also pinpoints the crucial role played by cluster leaders and support needed for teachers and principals in terms of effective monitoring and evaluation.
- 5.34 A key objective for the EA is to transfer the learning from the NSSI Learning Leaders Pathway Project and JPD practices, where relevant, into other areas of work, and in particular, to the School Development Service. Progress has been made to that end in terms of further embedding the JPD process and approach. Across the NSSI JPD programmes, there were 6 areas of focus, as outlined in the below table, that can be shared across the education system by the EA to support school improvement. Almost 100 JPD programmes have been delivered over the period 2018/19 -2020/21.

EA JPD programmes with action plans/delivered since 2018-2021				
Area of Focus	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
Leadership development	1	4	3	8
Special Needs	7	10	7	24
Teaching and Learning	9	13	12	34
Pastoral Care/Health and well-being	2	7	7	16
Cross-curricular themes	3	3	3	9
Curricular Subject	1	3	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>97</b>

- 5.35 In response to an identified gap, the EA is also in the process of developing and piloting a JPD programme focused on dealing with sensitive and controversial issues such as in local history, politics or matters related to relationship and sex education.
- 5.36 Clearly, the onset, and continuing impact, of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the exploration of innovative and creative online adaptations or solutions to help facilitate Shared Education. A range of digital platforms have been employed during this time at partnership level, vital in terms of maintaining relationships, or in terms of re-connecting partnerships in preparation for the resumption of normal shared classroom activity.
- 5.37 As previously mentioned in earlier sections of this report, the SfS project, for instance, distributed IT equipment as part of their COVID-19 response efforts to ensure that participating pre-school settings had appropriate digital access and to enable continued engagement alongside webinars, peer cluster sessions, support from senior Early Years Specialists, and the development of complementary training resources.
- 5.38 Alongside a comprehensive suite of ‘Supporting Learning’ materials to assist teachers and schools in meeting professional learning needs during a time of remote and blended learning (which included resources related to Shared

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Education), a critical development has been the recent launch of the EA's [Shared Education Hub](#).

- 5.39 The 'Hub' is an electronic central resource which brings together a wide range of easily accessible information, support, and guidance to assist partnerships and settings in the context of sharing and to enhance and improve delivery. This incorporates a comprehensive set of online TPL modules/tutorials and dissemination of case study examples highlighting effective practice. The Hub is open and available across all phases and sectors.
- 5.40 This is coupled with the continued promotion and use of other shared resources during the reporting period, such as:-
- the **Developing Shared Education Frameworks**<sup>28</sup>, for schools, early years and youth settings to support the embedding and mainstreaming of Shared Education. The ETI are progressing a review of the school Framework and this will be informed by the views of principals, lead practitioners and learners.
  - the **Pupil Pathway**<sup>29</sup>, a resource to support teachers in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Shared Education. Launched in 2019, the Pupil Pathway was developed collaboratively between a number of key educational stakeholder bodies including the DE, the EA, the CCEA, the NICIE and the ETI. The document emphasises that Shared Education complements the objectives of the NI Curriculum to develop learners as individuals, as contributors to society and as contributors to the economy and the environment; and
  - the **JPD Toolkit** designed to support schools/partnerships who are engaging in clusters to address areas of common need.

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28 Developing Shared Education - A Framework for School Partnerships - November 2014  
Developing Shared Education in Early Years Settings - A Framework for Collaborative Partnerships 2016-2017  
Developing Shared Education - A Framework for Youth Provision Partnerships  
Available at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/what-shared-education>

29 Pupil Pathway Shared Education available at <https://www.eani.org.uk/publications/school-document/a-pupil-pathway-shared-education>



- 5.41 With regard to resources, previous Reports to the Assembly have drawn on information from DE School Omnibus Survey results<sup>30</sup>. A School Omnibus Survey, due to include questions on Shared Education, had initially been planned for 2020 but was put on hold in an attempt to avoid placing additional burden on schools during the pandemic. The timing of release of the next School Omnibus Survey is being kept under review.
- 5.42 As identified in evaluation findings to date such as the 2018 ETI evaluation of the DSC SESP, distance between schools can act as a barrier to joint working, which can impact negatively on learning time and incur excessive travel costs. As noted earlier in this report, the SEC Programme is aimed at providing capital assistance to schools to facilitate Shared Education. In the longer term, the use of SECs should allow schools to share resources and equipment, and the placement of new Shared Education campuses will also remove the need for transportation between participating schools.
- 5.43 The SEC Programme is in the early stage of development and will explore the purpose of Shared Education, as outlined in the Act, including the promotion of the efficient and effective use of resources.

### **Promoting equality of opportunity**

- 5.44 The introduction of both the PEACE IV Shared Education projects in 2017, supplementing the earlier DSC SESP programme, has enabled significant growth to be made over recent years in terms of participation levels. This includes strategic inroads made into the pre-school sector in addition to Shared Education, at June 2021, reaching 64% of primary, 61% of post primary and 56% of special schools.
- 5.45 That overall growth, as reflected in the last Report to the Assembly (at that stage using data from June 2019) was acknowledged as very encouraging and continued to be built upon up to March 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has obviously impacted since then, disrupting further natural progression as we might otherwise have expected to see at this point.

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30 [2018 DE School Omnibus Survey \(latest available\)](#)

As highlighted in the earlier participation section, there has been an 80% reduction in the overall number of children and young people involved; falling from 87,385 participating at June 2019 to 17,476 at June 2021. Once the health situation allows, it is anticipated that the numbers of children and young people engaged in Shared Education will return, and in time exceed, pre-COVID levels.

- 5.46 In line with DE's statutory duty to '*encourage, facilitate and promote*' Shared Education and prior commitments made within Sharing Works to consider long term delivery arrangements for Shared Education, the DE, working closely with the EA and following a process of co-design with a range of other key stakeholders, has been developing a comprehensive Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy. This is covered in more detail within Section 3 of this report.
- 5.47 A primary objective of the planned Strategy is to provide the opportunity for all children and young people to participate in quality Shared Education on a continued and progressive basis. The promotion of equality of opportunity, good relations and respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion are also part of the 'guiding principles' underpinning the development of the Strategy.
- 5.48 This approach not only reinforces the definition and purposes of Shared Education as set out in the 2016 Act but also the preceding Sharing Works policy in 2015 which outlined that:-

"It is DE's objective that all children and young people have an opportunity to participate in Shared Education", incorporating "both statutory and voluntary early years educational settings; Primary, Post Primary and Special schools; and non-formal educational environments, such as statutory and voluntary youth work settings."

Sharing Works (Department of Education; 2015)

- 5.49 It is acknowledged that we still have some way to go in terms of further advancing Shared Education right across our education system and ensure that all of our educational settings and children and young people have the opportunity to realise the full range of benefits. There is evidence of a clear appetite amongst those not yet participating to become involved in Shared Education, highlighted, for example, by the current process of engagement being undertaken by the EA which has yielded more than 200 expressions of interest from new schools.
- 5.50 Going forward, it remains a priority for the DE to address current gaps in provision and, working with relevant stakeholder and sectoral bodies, tackle any potential barriers which may be impacting on the participation and/ or uptake of Shared Education by schools and other education providers. The youth sector, for example, offers great potential for further expansion and development of Shared Education. So too, EOTAS settings have not yet had an opportunity to become involved in the funded Shared Education programmes to date.
- 5.51 Crucially, there will be opportunities through the upcoming PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme to extend upon the current reach of Shared Education.

### **Promoting good relations**

- 5.52 As noted in the DE Shared Education 2019/20 school survey, across all school stages, the majority of respondents (80.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed Shared Education continues to have a positive impact on community relations. Overall, 81.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their partnership's 2019/20 Shared Education Action Plan contributed to improving both educational and community relations outcomes.
- 5.53 Specific analysis of NSSI participants in that same survey revealed slightly higher results with 83.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing that Shared Education is continuing to have a positive impact on community relations. The vast majority (85.9%) also agreed that it is essential that pupils in a

Shared Education partnership explore good relations, identity, diversity and community cohesion.

- 5.54 Collaboration facilitated through Shared Education can, in turn, support the development of both professional and personal relationships across settings. For instance, the 2021 QUB review of JPD reported that:-

“Locally based JPD activity also provided informal opportunities to get to know one another to develop deeper professional relationships, and sometimes friendships. Collaborative practice involved more than teachers, with pupils and parents having opportunities in some clusters to experience time in other schools.”

A Review of Joint Professional Development (JPD) - Experiences and Lessons Learned  
(Queen’s University Belfast; July 2021)

- 5.55 The PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation also provides evidence of positive impact on good relations, reporting:-

“significant uplift in the number of pre-schools/schools having the opportunity to experience Shared Education, and as such has positively contributed to meeting this Programme aim ‘To reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society through the promotion of reconciliation amongst all communities across Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland’.

“Based on the impact data, there is strong evidence of improved shared/reconciliation outcomes being achieved through the development of cross-community relationships and friendships between children, as well as between practitioners/teachers in partner schools.”

SEUPB PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation - Executive Summary  
(SJC Consultancy & National Children’s Bureau; March 2021)

5.56 The PEACE IV Impact Evaluation highlights the results of a survey of teachers/practitioners involved in the SfS and CASE projects, indicating that:

- 93% agreed it has led to children making friends in the shared class room, with teachers observing social development and many close relationships emerging over the duration of the programme
- 61% agreed that these friendships extend into home/community life
- 95% agreed it improved cross-community understanding and relationships, e.g. specific mention of cross border collaboration
- 75% agreed that there has been increased integration of our pre-school/ school within the wider community
- 65% agreed that there has been increased opportunities for cross-community engagement for parents.

5.57 It also notes that there is “tangible support” for both SfS and CASE projects amongst parents, though *“there are differences between both models with more parental engagement evident as part of the SFTS project i.e., 85% agreed that SFTS increased opportunities for cross-community engagement for parents, compared to CASE where 56% agreed with this statement. The SFTS model has an intentional focus on parental and community engagement (parents attending training/workshops), whereas CASE did not focus on delivering activities/workshops specifically for parents.”*

5.58 The PEACE IV Impact Evaluation comments that *“the involvement of parents has the potential for greater impact and achievement of PEACE IV peace and reconciliation aims”* as it can create a ripple effect into home life, can help remove any barriers or concerns of parents, and lead to greater parental support and subsequent outcomes for children taking part in Shared Education activities. It goes on to recommend adopting a parental/community engagement model more widely.

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- 5.59 These findings share some parallels with the earlier 2018 ETI evaluation of the DSC SESP which identified that, of the four pillars outlined in the respective Shared Education Self Evaluation Frameworks<sup>31</sup>, themselves based on the overarching policy for school improvement Every School a Good School, ‘Community Connections’ was found to be the one with the least progress made; and that many partnerships experienced challenges in this regard.
- 5.60 Whilst schools and other educational settings are already encouraged to engage more widely through Sharing Works policy and funded programmes, making greater connections with local communities is acknowledged as a key area for future development. As we move forward with efforts to further embed Shared Education both within the education system and beyond, cognisance will be taken of the crucial role played by parents and the wider community in terms of securing enhanced participation and collaboration, and in promoting understanding and acceptance of the concept across society.
- 5.61 The PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme also is expected to allow opportunities to further support parental and community engagement as it seeks to *“incorporate a broader participant base, to include the wider school community”*<sup>32</sup> with an active role, in particular, envisaged in terms of upskilling parents so they can better support their children’s learning.
- 5.62 Findings from the most recent YLT and KLT surveys also help to paint a picture with regards to how Shared Education might influence good relations.
- 5.63 For example, in answer to a question about the number of close friends of a different religion made as a result of taking part in Shared Education, the

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31 The ETI Shared Education Self-evaluation Frameworks for schools, early year and youth settings support partnerships to assess the quality of their Shared Education provision against the four pillars of (1) ‘Learner Centred’, (2) ‘High Quality Teaching and Learning’, (3) ‘Effective Leadership’ and (4) ‘Community Connections’.

32 [European Territorial Co-operation 2021-2027 - Preparing for the EU PEACE PLUS Programme for the 2021-2027 period – Consultation Information Document](#) (Special EU Programmes Body; 10 March -12 May 2021)

2020/21 surveys reported that 55% of KLT and 36% of YLT respondents indicated that they had made at least one friend (was 49% and 43% respectively in the previous 2018 surveys). This is illustrated in the below table.

**Table 4: YLT/KLT (2020/21): Number of close friends from a different religion made as a result of Shared Education**

Close friends from a different religion	YLT %	KLT %
None	44	29
One	6	14
2-4	22	27
5-9	4	8
10 or more	4	6
I don't know the religion of the friends I made	11	7
I don't know how many close friends I made	10	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

5.64 More detailed information on YLT and KLT findings are available in the next section which deals with identity, diversity and community cohesion.

**Promoting respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion**

5.65 Some of the key findings of the latest 2020/21 YLT and KLT surveys are set out below representing the results from two modules of questions commissioned by DE on Shared Education and lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society (CRED).

5.66 This allowed comparison of attitudes towards those from Section 75 groups between those who had experience of Shared Education and those who had not, as well as comparison with corresponding results from earlier surveys.

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## Summary of key findings from the 2020/21 KLT and YLT surveys

- Fifty-three per cent of YLT and 67 per cent of KLT respondents said they had been involved in Shared Education.
- Doing projects with pupils from other schools was the most common activity (81% of YLT and 74% of KLT respondents).
- Whilst very positive overall, YLT respondents enjoyed sharing equipment (82%) with other schools slightly more than doing projects (80%) or having classes (74%). The pattern was similar for KLT respondents (84%, 84% and 75% respectively).
- Over one half of KLT (55%) and 36 per cent of YLT respondents had made at least one close friend from a different religion as a result of taking part in Shared Education.
- Two thirds of YLT respondents (66%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they were better able to respect the views of other people since taking part in Shared Education.
- Over half of KLT and YLT respondents said they were very favourable or favourable about Shared Education (58% KLT and 55% YLT).
- In the primary school setting, the lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society topic the children were most likely to have had in school was gender; least discussed was political opinion.
- Seventy-one per cent of YLT respondents said they have had lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society either in school or in their youth project/centre. One half (53%) of them said they have had these lessons and discussion in school only, 10 per cent said they have had them in the youth project/centre only, and 8 per cent have had them in both settings.
- The topics YLT respondents had covered most often in the school setting were ethnicity and disability (80% each). In the youth setting, the topic covered most often was religious beliefs (66%).



5.67 Respondents were asked, as in 2018, whether they felt better able to respect the views of other people since taking part in Shared Education. Around two thirds of YLT respondents (66%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they had, compared to 65% in 2018. Due to technical difficulties, responses to this question were not recorded for KLT respondents.

**Table 5: YLT (2020/21): Better able to respect the views of others as a result of Shared Education**

	YLT %
Strongly agree	28
Agree	38
Neither agree nor disagree	25
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
I don't know	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

5.68 KLT and YLT respondents were also asked if they had taken part in lessons and discussion about different groups of people in society in their school (and/or youth setting in YLT). The majority (around 85% in KLT and 70% in YLT) said they had. Children and young people who had been involved in Shared Education were more likely to say they had taken part in lessons and discussion about different groups of people in society than their counterparts who had not been involved in Shared Education.

5.69 A higher percentage of YLT respondents who had done Shared Education said they had become more favourable towards all of the Section 75 groups as a result of having lessons and discussion about different groups of people in society than their peers who had not done Shared Education, highlighted in Table 6.

**Table 6: YLT/KLT (2020/21): Whether or not YLT respondents' attitudes have changed as a result of lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society, by whether or not they have taken part in Shared Education**

Attitudes towards people ...	Favourable %				Unfavourable %			
	More favourable		No change – as favourable as I was		No change – as unfavourable as I was		More unfavourable	
	Has done Shared Education	Has not done Shared Education	Has done Shared Education	Has not done Shared Education	Has done Shared Education	Has not done Shared Education	Has done Shared Education	Has not done Shared Education
With different political opinions	25	19	66	71	8	8	1	1
With different religious beliefs	33	24	60	69	6	6	1	1
From different ethnic groups	31	25	62	70	6	5	1	<1
Of different ages (older and younger people/ children)	26	16	67	75	6	8	1	1
Who are single, cohabiting, married or divorced	24	18	70	75	6	5	<1	1
With different sexual orientations	29	16	62	72	8	10	2	1
Men and women	27	18	67	77	5	5	1	1
With a disability and those without a disability	32	27	62	69	5	4	<1	<1
People with dependents (e.g. children) and those without	26	19	69	75	5	6	1	<1
People with, and those without, caring responsibilities	28	22	66	73	5	4	<1	1

- 5.70 For KLT respondents who were asked similar questions, a slightly higher percentage of KLT children who had done Shared Education said they had become more positive in relation to all of the Section 75 groups as a result of having lessons and discussion in school than their peers who had not done Shared Education. The differences were statistically significant for all six groups. Where children indicated that their attitude had not changed it is not clear whether they were already positive or negative towards any of these groups before having had lessons and discussion in school.
- 5.71 Note that, reflecting their age, KLT respondents were not asked about sexual orientation, marital status or people with dependents or caring responsibilities.

**Table 7: YLT/KLT (2020/21): Whether or not KLT respondents' attitudes have changed as a result of lessons and discussion about different groups of people in our society, by whether or not they have taken part in Shared Education**

	More positive (%)	Attitude has not changed (%)	More negative (%)
People with different religious beliefs*			
Has done Shared Education	49	47	4
Has not done Shared Education	43	51	6
People from different ethnic groups**			
Has done Shared Education	59	38	3
Has not done Shared Education	51	46	2
People of different ages (older and younger people/children)**			
Has done Shared Education	49	48	3
Has not done Shared Education	42	53	5
Girls and boys**			
Has done Shared Education	49	48	2
Has not done Shared Education	44	55	1
People with a disability and those without a disability*			
Has done Shared Education	63	35	2
Has not done Shared Education	57	39	4
People with different political opinions***			
Has done Shared Education	40	50	9
Has not done Shared Education	29	62	9

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (Effect sizes range from 0.061 to 0.111 (small))

5.72 The majority of both YLT (55%) and KLT (58%) respondents, who had done Shared Education, were either favourable or very favourable to Shared Education in general. Among KLT respondents who said they were in favour, the main reasons were meeting new people who were different to them, making new friends and that sharing was fun. Among YLT respondents, the

main reasons given by those in favour of Shared Education were around inclusivity and breaking down barriers.

- 5.73 As noted on the NCB website<sup>33</sup>, the PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation also had positive findings in this area, outlining that the Programme benefits included *“Equipping education providers and children with the skills and attitudes needed to promote a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding, achieved through regular, sustained contact, and learning with those from different community backgrounds and between pre-schools/schools and the wider community.”*
- 5.74 Related survey findings for the PEACE IV Impact Evaluation grouped under ‘*dealing with differences*’ revealed:-
- 96% of teachers/practitioners agreed it allowed children to meet other adults and feel comfortable with them.
  - 93% agreed children feel comfortable and at ease when in their partner pre-school/school.
  - 85% agreed that children can describe ways that they are similar and different to others in a shared classroom.
- 5.75 Furthermore, it also reported that 92% of teachers/practitioners agreed children have a greater sense of the wider community for example, explore the wider community through shared learning, knowledge of different areas in the locality, travelling on a bus, customs, festivals, celebrations etc.
- 5.76 In addition, according to the DE Shared Education 2019/20 school survey, around three quarters (75.9%) of respondents who had engaged in a capacity building model agreed or strongly agreed it had improved their knowledge, skills and understanding of good relations, identity, diversity and community cohesion. For NSSI respondents, this rose to 77.5%.

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33 <https://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/research-evidence/research-reports/peace-iv-shared-education-launch-impact-evaluation>

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## 6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 In the context of COVID-19 recovery, the constraints on the education budget and the political and educational landscape over the next two years, the Department, building on the successful collaboration with stakeholders in delivering funded programmes to date, will continue to strengthen relationships and partnership working across the system, as we move towards the next stages of advancing Shared Education.
- 6.2 With Ministerial approval, the Department aims to finalise and launch the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy which will outline the longer term vision, aims and objectives for Shared Education and create the conditions so that, in the future, partnership working across religious and socio-economic divides becomes normal and accepted practice throughout the education system.
- 6.3 Recognising the impact of COVID-19 on Shared Education over the reporting period the Department, in partnership with key stakeholders, will seek to re-energise Shared Education, building on the success to date, and rebuild and expand participation levels; whilst also having a focus on those areas of the education system which, as yet, have not had the opportunity to be involved in Shared Education.
- 6.4 The Department will continue to engage with the PEACE IV Shared Education projects, CASE and SfS, and provide support in regard to the delivery and closure of the projects.
- 6.5 In relation to PEACE PLUS, the Department will continue to engage with the SEUPB and Rol colleagues to further develop and plan for the implementation of the new Shared Learning Together programme.
- 6.6 Moving forward, the Department, working with key stakeholders, will seek to put in place the necessary support and resources to enable Shared Education partnerships to deliver quality shared learning experiences for children and young people.

- 6.7 The development of the education workforce will also continue to be a key area of focus, so that all those involved in delivering or supporting Shared Education have the requisite skills, experience, and ability to carry out their role.
- 6.8 We will bring forward information programmes and capacity building for non-participating schools.
- 6.9 A Communication strategy will be developed to improve the promotion of Shared Education within and beyond the education system, so that the purpose, benefits and impact of Shared Education are communicated and understood widely.
- 6.10 Monitoring and Evaluation will be further developed, including in terms of consistent measurement of educational benefits and attitudinal change. The views of children and young people and key stakeholders, to help inform policy development and continuous improvement, will continue to be sought.
- 6.11 The Department will consider governance and accountability arrangements to support leaders in the education system to provide quality shared learning experiences which provide value for money.
- 6.12 Work will continue to further develop the community connections dimension of Shared Education partnerships through closer working relationships with District Councils and other key stakeholders.
- 6.13 The Strule and SEC projects will continue to be progressed in line with confirmation of access to funding and approved business cases. Evaluating the SECs will be a key consideration as they come into operation.

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## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 As explored within this Report to the Assembly, significant progress has been made over recent years in advancing Shared Education through the continued delivery of related funded Shared Education programmes alongside planning for the new PEACE PLUS programme.
- 7.2 As was the case in previous reports, both the DE and the EA continue to comply with their respective duties to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. So too, the other educational and sectoral bodies impacted by the legislation have utilised the powers granted by the Act to encourage and facilitate Shared Education and, where required, have also complied with the statutory duty to consider Shared Education.
- 7.3 The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably impacted heavily on Shared Education delivery during the course of this reporting period, as reflected in the latest available participation numbers of settings and children and young people taking part. However the collaborative structures and the positive relationships developed through Shared Education partnerships and networks have provided vital opportunities for many schools and other settings to address the challenges together. The PEACE IV projects recognised that on-line delivery enabled children and young people to continue to engage remotely, but emphasised that this method cannot be used as a long-term replacement for face-to-face contact. Once the health situation allows, it is anticipated that the numbers of children and young people engaged in Shared Education will return, and in time exceed, pre-COVID levels.
- 7.4 The benefits of sharing are well established. A variety of sources, including recent programme evaluations, research and surveys, have provided further evidence of the impact of the collaboration and shared learning experiences across religious and socio-economic divides, facilitated through Shared Education provision.



- 7.5 The below excerpt from the 2021 PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation is helpful in summarising the effectiveness of Shared Education, in line with the purpose of Shared Education as set out in the Act.

*Overall, PEACE IV Shared Education has had a positive impact, to include:*

- *Enhanced cross-community and cross-border collaboration at a strategic and operational level.*
- *Improved quality standards in teaching and learning.*
- *Enriched the CCEA Curriculum (NI) and NCCA Curriculum (RoI) offer, with subsequent benefits for children in improved educational outcomes.*
- *Contributed to meeting objectives in Pre-school/School Development Plans and Inclusion/Shared Policies.*
- *The efficient and effective use of resources through adopting a shared model (sharing equipment, resources, joint training).*
- *Developed cross-community friendships and supported children's ability to acknowledge and promote differences*
- *Increased opportunities for parents to generate cross-community connections.*
- *Increased community connections with and across the wider community through the involvement of parents and use of local facilities/community venues.*

- 7.6 Whilst the progress to date remains very encouraging, it is recognised that given the impact of COVID-19 there is a need to re-build and expand on the participation levels and that more needs to be done to further embed Shared Education so that all educational settings, children and young people and their families, as well as wider society, have the opportunity to reap the

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rewards of what Shared Education can offer. Positively, we know that there are many other schools and settings that are keen to become involved.

- 7.7 The development of a draft Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy, a key piece of work taken forward over this reporting period, has drawn on lessons learned from related funded programmes. It will seek to build upon the success of Shared Education thus far and aims to plot the way forward for the sustainable long term delivery arrangements for Shared Education.
- 7.8 The continuing impact of COVID-19 notwithstanding, a range of challenges and gaps in provision are recognised which will need to be addressed as we move forward. These are not just limited to enhancements in participation levels; they include the continued need to build capacity across the workforce, provide the necessary support and infrastructure to deliver quality shared learning experiences, monitor and evaluate impact, and to raise awareness of and promote Shared Education both within and beyond the education sector.
- 7.9 With Ministerial approval, implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy is envisaged through related delivery and communication plans, and these will be a key priority for the DE over the short, medium and long term to support the continued development of Shared Education.
- 7.10 Another critical development over the next reporting period will be preparation for the commencement of the PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme. The DE will continue to engage closely with colleagues in SEUPB and counterparts in the RoI through the planning and development phase for the new programme.
- 7.11 In conclusion, progress has continued to be made in advancing Shared Education over the course of the reporting period. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, partnerships have responded admirably and sought to maintain relationships through digital means. The implementation of mainstreamed Shared Education would represent a significant step forward in the further advancement of Shared Education.

I think the programme is fantastic!! Our pupils have learnt how to make friends, move out of their comfort zones, and see a new perspective in a fun and supportive environment. We, as teachers enjoy the same. Please let it grow so more schools, children, teachers, parents, and communities will join together and benefit.

**Principal, Primary School**

(PEACE IV Shared Education Impact Evaluation 2021)



## Appendix 1

### Numbers of Schools and Pupils

**Table 1a Number of Educational Establishments in NI by Management Type 2020/21**

	Management Type	Schools
<b>Nursery Schools</b>	Controlled	64
	Catholic Maintained	31
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Primary Schools</b>	Controlled <sup>34</sup>	360
	Catholic Maintained <sup>35</sup>	358
	Other Maintained - Irish Medium <sup>36</sup>	25
	Other Maintained - Other	3
	Controlled Integrated	22
	Grant Maintained Integrated	23
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>791</b>
	<i>Grammar school prep depts.<sup>37</sup></i>	12
	<b>Total Including Prep Departments</b>	<b>803</b>
<b>Post Primary Schools - Secondary</b>	Controlled	48
	Catholic Maintained	57
	Other Maintained - Irish Medium	2
	Controlled Integrated	5
	Grant Maintained Integrated	15
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Post Primary Schools - Grammar</b>	Controlled	16
	Voluntary Schools under Catholic management	29
	Voluntary Schools under other management	21
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>Total Post Primary Schools</b>	<b>193</b>
	Special Schools	39
Hospital Schools	1	
Independent Schools	15	
	<b>All schools GRAND TOTAL (excl Prep Depts)</b>	<b>1,134</b>
<b>Voluntary and Private Pre-schools</b>		362
<b>Total schools and Pre-school education centres</b>		<b>1,496</b>

Source: NI school census

34 Includes one Irish Medium Controlled school

35 Includes one Irish Medium Catholic Maintained school

36 Excludes one Irish Medium Controlled school and one Irish Medium Catholic Maintained school

37 Part of Grammar Schools

**Table 1b Number of Educational Establishments in NI by Management Type  
2021/22**

	Management Type	Schools
<b>Nursery Schools</b>	Controlled	62
	Catholic Maintained	31
	Controlled Integrated	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Primary Schools</b>	Controlled <sup>38</sup>	355
	Catholic Maintained <sup>39</sup>	355
	Other Maintained - Irish Medium <sup>40, 41</sup>	25
	Other Maintained - Other	2
	Controlled Integrated	24
	Grant Maintained Integrated	23
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>784</b>
	<i>Grammar school prep depts.</i> <sup>42</sup>	12
<b>Total Including Prep Departments</b>	<b>796</b>	
<b>Post Primary Schools - Secondary</b>	Controlled	48
	Catholic Maintained <sup>43</sup>	56
	Other Maintained - Irish Medium	2
	Controlled Integrated	5
	Grant Maintained Integrated	15
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Post Primary Schools - Grammar</b>	Controlled	16
	Voluntary Schools under Catholic management <sup>44</sup>	29
	Voluntary Schools under other management	21
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>Total Post Primary Schools</b>	<b>192</b>
	Special Schools	39
	Hospital Schools	1
Independent Schools	14	
	<b>All schools GRAND TOTAL (excl Prep Depts)</b>	<b>1,124</b>
<b>Voluntary and Private Pre-schools</b>		356
<b>Total schools and Pre-school education centres</b>		<b>1,480</b>

Source: NI school census

38 Includes two Irish Medium Controlled school

39 Includes one Irish Medium Catholic Maintained school

40 Includes seven schools with Irish Medium units

41 Excludes two Irish Medium Controlled schools and one Irish Medium Catholic Maintained school

42 Part of Grammar Schools

43 Includes two schools with Irish Medium units

44 Includes one school with Irish Medium unit

**Table 2a Number of Pupils by School Type and Management Type 2020/21**

	Management Type	Protestant	Catholic	Other/Not Recorded	Total
<b>Voluntary and Private Pre-school Centres (funded children only)</b>	Voluntary	1,499	3,099	1,752	6,350
	Private	383	307	424	1,114
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,882</b>	<b>3,406</b>	<b>2,176</b>	<b>7,464</b>
<b>Nursery Schools</b>	Controlled	1,856	1,141	1,113	4,110
	Catholic Maintained	40	1,465	220	1,725
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,896</b>	<b>2,606</b>	<b>1,333</b>	<b>5,835</b>
<b>Nursery Classes &amp; Reception</b>	Controlled	2,214	539	1,838	4,591
	Catholic Maintained	81	3,623	296	4,000
	Other Maintained	34	333	101	468
	Controlled Integrated	47	52	51	150
	Grant Maintained Integrated	179	220	205	604
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,574</b>	<b>4,767</b>	<b>2,491</b>	<b>9,813</b>
<b>Primary Schools (Years 1 - 7)</b>	Controlled	46,896	6,281	25,453	78,630
	Catholic Maintained	672	74,171	3,923	78,766
	Other Maintained	253	3,093	324	3,670
	Controlled Integrated	1,486	1,184	1,636	4,306
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,837	2,530	1,967	6,334
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51,114</b>	<b>87,259</b>	<b>33,303</b>	<b>171,706</b>
<b>Prep. Departments (Years 1 - 7)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>1,560</b>
<b>Secondary Schools (Non Grammar)</b>	Controlled	22,998	1,330	6,353	30,681
	Catholic Maintained	#	36,837	#	39,353
	Other Maintained	*	962	#	1,019
	Controlled Integrated	1,642	523	940	3,105
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,770	4,236	2,356	10,362
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,111</b>	<b>43,888</b>	<b>11,521</b>	<b>84,520</b>
<b>Grammar Schools (Year 8-Year 14)</b>	Controlled	9,614	1,578	3,319	14,511
	Voluntary - Catholic Maintained	409	27,732	1,064	29,205
	Voluntary - Other Maintained	12,091	3,002	5,589	20,682
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,114</b>	<b>32,312</b>	<b>9,972</b>	<b>64,398</b>
<b>Special Schools</b>	Controlled	2,079	2,452	1,463	5,994
	Catholic Maintained	12	297	24	333
	Other Maintained	24	27	25	76
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,115</b>	<b>2,776</b>	<b>1,512</b>	<b>6,403</b>
<b>EOTAS Centres</b>		11	21	8	40
<b>ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS Centres</b>		<b>111,448</b>	<b>177,266</b>	<b>63,025</b>	<b>351,739</b>

Source: NI school census

Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day.

\* Fewer than 5 cases

# Number suppressed

**Table 2b Religion of Pupils by School Type and Management Type 2021/22**

	Management Type	Protestant	Catholic	Other/Not Recorded	Total
<b>Voluntary and Private Pre-school Centres (funded children only)</b>	Voluntary	1,525	3,059	1,683	6,267
	Private	341	339	380	1,060
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,866</b>	<b>3,398</b>	<b>2,063</b>	<b>7,327</b>
<b>Nursery Schools</b>	Controlled	1,677	1,110	1,252	4,039
	Catholic Maintained	21	1,445	264	1,730
	Controlled Maintained	6	15	5	26
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,704</b>	<b>2,570</b>	<b>1,521</b>	<b>5,795</b>
<b>Nursery Classes &amp; Reception</b>	Controlled	2,094	570	1,963	4,627
	Catholic Maintained	61	3,610	312	3,983
	Other Maintained	40	344	76	460
	Controlled Integrated	39	44	56	139
	Grant Maintained Integrated	160	229	219	608
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,394</b>	<b>4,797</b>	<b>2,626</b>	<b>9,817</b>
<b>Primary Schools (Years 1 - 7)</b>	Controlled	45,569	6,120	26,206	77,895
	Catholic Maintained	650	73,209	4,157	78,016
	Other Maintained	251	3,110	356	3,717
	Controlled Integrated	1,620	1,260	1,855	4,735
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,865	2,496	2,071	6,432
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,955</b>	<b>86,195</b>	<b>34,645</b>	<b>170,795</b>
<b>Prep. Departments (Years 1 - 7)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>1,530</b>
<b>Secondary Schools (Non Grammar)</b>	Controlled	23,072	1,457	6,949	31,478
	Catholic Maintained	724	37,378	2,041	40,143
	Other Maintained	5	1,042	66	1,113
	Controlled Integrated	1,656	592	992	3,240
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,741	4,326	2,547	10,614
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,198</b>	<b>44,795</b>	<b>12,595</b>	<b>86,588</b>
<b>Grammar Schools (Year 8-Year 14)</b>	Controlled	9,457	1,697	3,514	14,668
	Voluntary - Catholic Maintained	420	28,120	1,208	29,748
	Voluntary - Other Maintained	11,828	3,173	5,896	20,897
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,705</b>	<b>32,990</b>	<b>10,618</b>	<b>65,313</b>
<b>Special Schools</b>	Controlled	2,059	2,531	1,627	6,217
	Catholic Maintained	9	314	29	352
	Other Maintained	26	28	30	84
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,094</b>	<b>2,873</b>	<b>1,686</b>	<b>6,653</b>
<b>EOTAS Centres</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS Centres</b>		<b>109,481</b>	<b>177,856</b>	<b>66,509</b>	<b>353,846</b>

Source: NI school census

Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day.



**Table 3a Free School Meal Entitlement by School Type and Management Type 2020/21**

School Type	Number	Enrolment	Percentage
Nursery Schools (Full-time and Part-time)	2,064	5,835	35.4
Nursery Classes (Full-time and Part-time)	2,442	9,633	25.4
Reception	17	180	9.4
Vol & Private Pre-school centres	590	7,464	7.9
<b>Total Pre-school</b>	<b>5,113</b>	<b>23,112</b>	<b>22.1</b>
Primary Schools (Year 1-7)	49,610	171,706	28.9
Prep Departments	19	1,560	1.2
<b>Total Primary &amp; Prep Year 1-7</b>	<b>49,629</b>	<b>173,266</b>	<b>28.6</b>
Secondary	31,372	84,520	37.1
Grammar	8,793	64,398	13.7
<b>Total Post-Primary</b>	<b>40,165</b>	<b>148,918</b>	<b>27.0</b>
<b>Total Primary &amp; Post-Primary Schools</b>	<b>89,794</b>	<b>322,184</b>	<b>27.9</b>
<b>Total Special</b>	<b>3,257</b>	<b>6,403</b>	<b>50.9</b>
EOTAS Centres	18	40	45.0
<b>All Nursery, Primary, Post-Primary, Special Schools and EOTAS Centres <sup>45</sup></b>	<b>97,592</b>	<b>344,275</b>	<b>28.3</b>

Source: NI school census

Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day.

<sup>45</sup> Excludes Vol & Private Pre-school centres

**Table 3b Free School Meal Entitlement by School Type and Management Type 2021/22**

School Type	Number	Enrolment	Percentage
Nursery Schools (Full-time and Part-time)	2,259	5,795	39.0
Nursery Classes (Full-time and Part-time)	2,951	9,668	30.5
Reception	21	149	10.3
Vol & Private Pre-school centres	1,078	7,327	14.3
<b>Total Pre-school</b>	<b>6,309</b>	<b>22,939</b>	<b>27.5</b>
Primary Schools (Year 1-7)	49,985	170,795	29.3
Prep Departments	19	1,530	1.2
<b>Total Primary &amp; Prep Year 1-7</b>	<b>50,004</b>	<b>172,325</b>	<b>29.0</b>
Secondary	31,292	86,588	36.1
Grammar	8,760	65,313	13.4
<b>Total Post-Primary</b>	<b>40,052</b>	<b>151,901</b>	<b>26.4</b>
<b>Total Primary &amp; Post-Primary Schools</b>	<b>90,056</b>	<b>324,226</b>	<b>27.8</b>
<b>Total Special</b>	<b>3,515</b>	<b>6,653</b>	<b>52.8</b>
EOTAS Centres	0	28	0.0
<b>All Nursery, Primary, Post-Primary, Special Schools and EOTAS Centres<sup>46</sup></b>	<b>98,802</b>	<b>346,519</b>	<b>28.5</b>

Source: NI school census

Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day.

<sup>46</sup> Excludes Vol & Private Pre-school centres



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