

# LEARNING TOGETHER

ISSUE 36 SUMMER 2021



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**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...  
AMANDA MCNAMEE MBE**

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## TINA MERRON – CHIEF EXECUTIVE - INTEGRATED EDUCATION FUND

**T**here is real momentum building for integrated education - in the community, in the media and at a political level.

The approved transformation of three schools to integrated status in the past few months, including the first Catholic school transformation, has generated significant media coverage and interest in integrated education.

With three more Ministerial decisions on schools wanting to transform to integrated status still to come in 2021 and with many more schools engaging with the IEF and NICIE, there is real potential for further expansion of integrated education. There is also a growing sense that we could finally be moving towards a tipping point – a time when integration, inclusion and diversity is recognised as the future for our education system.

The IEF's 'Integrate My School' campaign, combined with the forthcoming high level Independent Review of Education, announced in the last political agreement (New Decade, New Approach), could present the best opportunity for meaningful change in a generation.

However, we know that the Independent Review will not conclude for at least two years and whilst we hope for positive recommendations, we will take nothing for granted.

Now is the time to keep building the momentum from the bottom up, working with parents, schools and local communities on the ground who want integration, not separation, of our schools and our children.

As an independent charity we really appreciate that none of this success could have been achieved without the help of our supporters here and indeed worldwide.

Thank you all.

## INTEGRATED MOVEMENT CONTINUES TO GROW

Integrated education continues to be the fastest growing form of education in Northern Ireland and there is no sign of this momentum slowing down. Over the last few months a number of Development Proposals from schools have been presented to the Minister of Education.

### Strangford Integrated College

The Minister has reversed his original decision to deny expansion of Strangford Integrated College to meet demand for increased places. This means the College can now increase its annual Year 8 pupil enrolment from 110 to 130, with an annual phased increase in enrolment numbers from 670 to 760. Initially the Minister had rejected the Development Proposal but when Strangford sought to challenge his decision, supported by the IEF and the Northern Ireland Council of Integrated Education (NICIE), and with expert legal assistance provided by Public Interest Litigation Support (PILS), the Minister retook his decision and granted approval.

Richard Lemon, Chair of the IEF, said; "This is a great day for Strangford Integrated College and its parents and pupils. Such challenges are nothing new to Strangford. When the College opened in 1997, it did so without any government funding. The IEF through its donors was proud to support the school financially until departmental approval and subsequent funding was secured. It is clear to see that Strangford has gone from strength to strength. The IEF would like to thank PILS for all their support and advice in helping to achieve the right decision for the college."



Strangford Integrated College

### Round Tower Integrated Primary School, Antrim

The Minister has approved the establishment of a statutory nursery unit at Round Tower Integrated Primary School in Antrim. The new nursery unit will provide 26 part time places. Previously Round Tower Community Playgroup, a voluntary provider, had been operating for a number of years from accommodation within the Round Tower building.

### Carrickfergus Central Primary School

Following Ministerial approval for transformation to integrated status, Carrickfergus Central will now join Acorn Integrated Primary School and Ulidia Integrated College in a growing network of integrated schools in the Carrickfergus area, reflecting strong parental demand for more integrated education. The IEF and its supporters, working closely with NICIE, have been pleased to assist the school on its journey to integration.

Nuala Hall, Principal of Carrickfergus Central Primary School, commented:

"We are delighted with the Minister's decision. We can now continue to build on our already inclusive ethos and our commitment to welcoming pupils from all backgrounds. Children are at the heart of the school and the school has been at the heart of the local community for the past 68 years. We look forward to providing a quality, inclusive education for the children of this area for the next 68 years and beyond."

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Harding Memorial Primary School.

### Seaview Primary School, Glenarm

The Minister has approved a Development Proposal that will make Seaview Primary School the first ever Catholic school to transform to integrated status. Seaview will become the latest in a growing network of integrated primary schools, including neighbouring Carnlough IPS and Corran IPS in Larne, which reflects the growing demand for integrated education in the area.

Liam Neeson sent a special video message to all the parents and schools seeking integrated status:

"I am delighted that so many parents across Northern Ireland are choosing an integrated future for their children. The recent news that Seaview Primary School in Glenarm is set to become the first Catholic school to become integrated is a positive step forward on the journey to an inclusive society. I'm delighted to say that Seaview is just one of a number of schools that has conducted a democratic ballot of its parents since the 'Integrate My School Campaign' was launched just a few years ago. I want to congratulate all of the parents, staff and governors in schools right across Northern Ireland, who are taking courageous steps to ensure children from different traditions will get to learn and play together, every day, in the same school. You are actively helping to build inclusive communities. Well done. I am so proud of you all."

### Naiscoil na Seolta, Belfast

Naiscoil na Seolta will become the first integrated Irish-language independent pre-school in East Belfast and is set to open in September 2021. Naiscoil na Seolta has received £73,000 from

Foras na Gaeilge, the North-South body for the promotion of Irish language. The funding will enable the nursery to open for 16 children with two members of staff.

### Harding Memorial Primary School, Belfast

Harding Memorial is the third and latest school to have been approved for integrated status this year. It will transform to integrated status from September 2021. An overwhelming 87% of parents voted in favour of the integrated move in June 2019 and the Education Minister ratified the proposal for change in May.

Stephen Cumper, Principal of Harding Memorial, said: "We are absolutely delighted with the Minister's decision and we look forward to providing a quality, inclusive education for the children of this area for the next 100 years and beyond."

### Other developments

Unfortunately two Development Proposals for transformation to integrated status from Ballyhackett Primary School, Castlerock and St Mary's, Brollagh, were rejected by the Minister after positive parental votes to become integrated.

Announcements are still to be made over the next number of months on transformation proposals from Glengormley High School, Breda Nursery School, Belfast and Bangor Central Nursery.

## BARONESS MAY BLOOD WINS PRESTIGIOUS GOOD RELATIONS AWARD 2021

Congratulations to Baroness May Blood, the IEF's Campaign Chair, on winning the Community Relations Council's Good Relations Award 2021. The Baroness was nominated by Colm Cavanagh, a long-standing advocate of integrated education, and was presented with the award in recognition of her tireless commitment to the Integrated Education Fund for over 20 years.

Speaking to NVTV after receiving the award, Baroness Blood commented; "I am honoured to be the recipient as community relations has been my life one way or another for many years. I accept this award on behalf of the thousands of people doing really good work for community relations across Northern Ireland and who get no recognition at all. For me, integrated education is one of the real building blocks

of a solid foundation for our community."

May worked in linen mills in Belfast for more than 30 years and in 1999 she became the first female from Northern Ireland to be appointed to the House of Lords, in recognition of her community work and her role in the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

In 2000, May joined the IEF's Northern Ireland Fundraising Committee as a volunteer and in 2002 became Chair of the Fund's Campaign Council.

Whenever May retired from the House of Lords in 2018, Hollywood star Liam Neeson sent a surprise video message saying; "I want to thank you for introducing me to the integrated education system. I'm indebted to you. You have been, and still are, a hero of mine."



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## FRESH START: EXCITING NEW BUILDING PLANS



Phoenix Integrated Primary School, Cookstown, celebrates the new build.

rebuild to commence and a complete regeneration of Strangford Integrated College near Newtownards has also been approved.

A number of integrated primary schools have also progressed past the planning approval stage, namely; Phoenix (Cookstown), Millennium (Carrduff/Saintfield), Rowandale (Moira), Enniskillen and Roe Valley (Limavady). All these schools are set to benefit from multi-million brand new school facilities.

Commenting on the developments, Principal of Ulidia Integrated College, Michael Houston, said:

"We have been asked why we are getting a new school when the current buildings are just over 20 years old. The answer is that the current buildings were only ever intended to be temporary and we have vastly outgrown them. When Ulidia opened in 1997 it only had 62 pupils. In September 2021, we will have 700 pupils and around 100 staff, which is how many our new school will be built for."

When Ulidia first opened in 1997 it was denied government approval and therefore became entirely dependent on the IEF and its donors and supporters to get started. The government said an integrated college in Carrickfergus would be unsustainable. How wrong they were!

## KEVIN LAMBE: 27 YEARS OF DEDICATION TO SHIMNA



Kevin Lambe with Shimna Integrated College founder student Siun Carden.

2021 will be a momentous year in the history of Shimna Integrated College. Work begins on the new building on the beautiful Lawnfield site and founding Principal, Kevin Lambe, retires.

On 1st September 1994, Kevin and the founding students, staff and parents, opened Shimna on the first day of the IRA ceasefire, which was followed closely by the Loyalist ceasefire. Since that day he has led a dynamic and pro-active integrated community which has inspired the following tributes from a particular group of students from the early days, who are now, themselves, staff members, parents and governors in Shimna.

### Níamh Lindsay

"Going to work every day in Shimna fills me with a sense of pride and fulfilment - to know that we are inspiring a future generation to grow in a way that Shimna did so brilliantly for me. Kevin's legacy will live on through the staff, students and parents who make up the Shimna family for years to come."

### James Magee

"One of the things I respect most about Kevin is that I have known that his door is always open if I needed him for advice. He has shown faith in me and given me the opportunity to work in a school that is so unique and special to so many people. For that I will always be grateful."

### Rebecca Murphy

"Twenty-seven years on, Kevin has worked tirelessly for the cause of integration, showing passion and determination at every stage. His efforts are not solely for the cause of 'integration' but for every single student who has passed through the doorway of Shimna. He offers students opportunities, respect, care, a listening ear and the value they deserve."

### Neil McGrady

"It is a matter of immense pride to me to work as a Governor with Kevin on this new

building."

### Ria Maguire

"It isn't a coincidence that Shimna has a significant proportion of past students now employed in teaching and teaching support roles. Kevin is a lot of things - storyteller, teacher, listener, asker of the difficult questions, singer of the (Van Morrison) songs, and a trusted and valued friend. It's impossible to have a conversation with the man and not learn something, or at least come away with a new perspective or hilarious anecdote! He is the reason that we are who we are. He is the reason we aren't afraid to use the word 'love' in our classrooms, and he is the person who has encouraged us to see the good in every individual student we are entrusted to educate and care for."

Kevin's judgements are based upon what is right and what is fair, rather than what is expected or what has always been. He is a compassionate colleague and courageous leader. He has proven to us that integration is our only option if we want to move forward as people, communities and societies. He has proven that we must say what we feel, and share what we have. He is the reason that I, like so many others, have a fire in my heart for integrating. Here's to you, boss."

With a further 21 integrated schools across Northern Ireland set to benefit from Fresh Start Agreement funding, there are going to be a lot of exciting construction projects happening over the next few years.

Already pupils and staff at Drumlins and Braidside Integrated Primary Schools are enjoying new 'state of the art' facilities, whilst many other schools are eagerly awaiting further progress following design plans gaining planning approval.

New-Bridge Integrated College in Loughbrickland is absolutely delighted to have received official planning approval for their £17.8 million new school build, whilst planning approval has also been granted to Ulidia Integrated College, Carrickfergus, for its new £19 million school in the town. Moreover, Shimna Integrated College in Newcastle can't wait for its £16.5 million

## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

The Ulster University's 'Transforming Education' research project has attracted considerable media attention and stimulated increased debate on the divided nature of our education system. The University's researchers were supported by the UNESCO Centre, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, the Ireland Funds, Brian and Susan Dickie, the Community Relations Council and by the IEF and its supporters.

The project highlighted the religious and socio-economic segregated nature of the Northern Ireland education system and the need for systemic and structural change for a more inclusive, efficient and effective system, which delivers for all children in Northern Ireland.

A special compilation volume of the work brings together 12 individual research papers that explore the obstacles and challenges which impact upon the delivery of education in Northern Ireland.

### KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Many teachers have passed through every stage of education without having ever had any meaningful experience of schooling alongside a person from a different community identity.

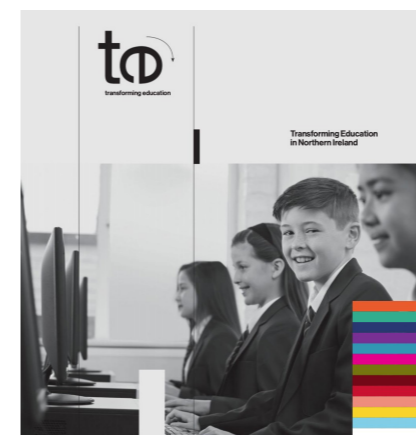
- 32 instances of schools serving different communities are located within walking distance of each other.

- Denominational interests are still embedded in the education system and contribute to the enduring separation of schools.

In helping to officially launch the collection, Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People said:

"I welcome these compelling, interesting and thought-provoking papers from the Transforming Education project. They highlight some of the anomalies in our education system which hark back to a different world and are clearly no longer fit for the education of our children in the 21st century, where we aspire to being inclusive and fairer."

*"Transforming Education in Northern Ireland - Briefing Papers Collection" is available on the IEF website [www.ief.org.uk](http://www.ief.org.uk).*



## INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF EDUCATION

The Independent Review of Northern Ireland's education system will begin this year. The Department of Education has launched a competition to appoint a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and three other members of the Independent Review of Education Panel.

The establishment of an external independent review was a commitment in the "New Decade, New Approach" deal. It recognised that whilst Northern Ireland has a diversity of school types, each with a distinctive ethos and values, this was not sustainable.

Political parties acknowledged progress had been made in developing new models of sharing, cooperation and integration. However they agreed there was a desire to build on this as a basis for delivering more long term improvements in quality, equity and sustainability. The Review's focus is on securing greater efficiency in costs, raising standards, access to the curriculum for all pupils, and the prospect of moving towards a single system. They will start work in the Summer of 2021 and publish a final report within 18 months.

Tina Merron, Chief Executive of the IEF, commented:

"The IEF believes our education system should bring children, parents, staff and governors from Catholic

and Protestant traditions, as well as those of other faiths or none and of other cultures, together. The IEF's position paper on the Independent Review of Education reiterated that the segregated nature of the system must not be the accepted social norm."

The IEF's position paper states:

"A reformed education system is an essential ingredient for an economically prosperous, socially harmonious and truly reconciled Northern Ireland. We believe that educating all children together is an essential part of the reconciliation process and of building a society which celebrates respect, understanding and friendships across traditional divides".



## POLLS SHOW DEMAND FOR MORE INTEGRATED SCHOOLING

Independent polling company Lucid Talk have completed two micro-polls on education among parents in East Belfast and Derry / Londonderry. Responses were received from a representative sample of parents living in each area with at least one child under the age of 12. The results show substantial support for integrated education and were launched at online events hosted by Lucid Talk and the IEF. Those attending the events included parents, political representatives, local schools and community organisations.

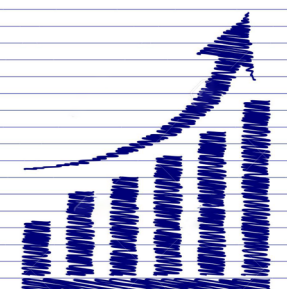
The East Belfast micro-poll results indicate that 82.3% of parents would like a school for their children, which is openly welcoming to pupils from all sections of the community and 76.47% would also be supportive of their local school becoming integrated.

In Derry / Londonderry, 80.6% of parents had a preference for a school for their children which is openly welcoming to pupils from all sections of the community and when it came to their local school transforming to integrated status, 70.97% declared their support.

While parents felt that "good educational standards" is the most important factor when choosing a school (100%), a school "reflecting a particular faith background" was viewed as the least important factor.

Due to over 70% of parents in each area being supportive of their child's/ their local school becoming integrated, the IEF have shared the micro-poll results to all local nursery and primary schools to raise awareness of parental support for integration.

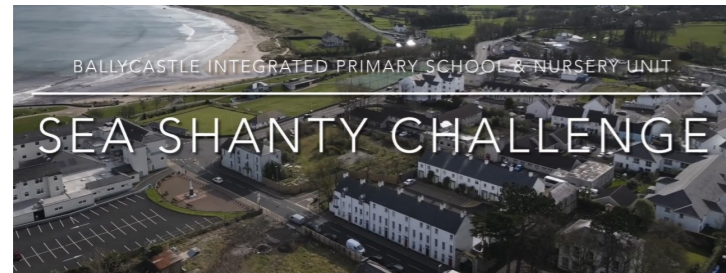
**For more details on this or to find out how your school can transform to integrated status, please contact [jill@ief.org.uk](mailto:jill@ief.org.uk)**



## SEA SHANTY CHALLENGE FROM BALLYCASTLE

To celebrate being back together again, Ballycastle Integrated Primary School created their very own 'Sea Shanty Challenge'!

You can view the video at <https://www.ballycastleintegrated.com/>. They hope you enjoy it!



## CARNLOUGH OUTDOOR LEARNING

Not all classrooms have four walls! Children at Carnlough Integrated Primary School enjoying their beautiful new outdoor learning and picnic benches, thanks to the 88 Foundation's support of the IEF.



## FORT HILL CELEBRATE ST PATRICK'S DAY

Fort Hill Integrated Primary School Nursery Unit, Lisburn, pupils found out all about St Patrick and learned a special Leprechaun song, just in time to take part in a special film project created by P6 during Integrated Education Month.

## MALONE ACHIEVES DIGITAL SCHOOLS STATUS

In an ever-advancing world of technology, Malone Integrated College's commitment to digitally enhanced teaching and learning has been nationally recognised with the award of Digital Schools status by the Department of Education. The Digital Schools Award endorses Malone College's commitment to promote, recognise and encourage a whole school approach to the use of digital technology.

The Digital Schools Award acknowledges that Malone College's digitally enhanced teaching and learning is helping students prepare for living and working in the 21st Century. As a new Digital School, Malone College is ensuring that students are entering the workplace with the technological skills and understanding to succeed. Malone College is now part of the community of digital schools in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This network will ensure that students receive the best possible technological education and opportunities required to succeed in the workplace.



## HAPPILY EVER AFTER AT CORRAN

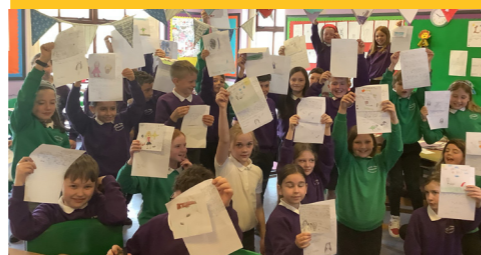


At Corran Integrated Primary School, Larne, the P1 pupils celebrated their "Happily Ever After" topic with a fabulous Banquet and Ball in the school assembly hall. The children came to school dressed in their finery; bow ties, tiaras and flowing capes were the order of the day!

## PENPALS AT LOUGH VIEW AND HAZELWOOD



The Year 5 children from Lough View IPS and Hazelwood IPS (both Belfast) have formed some new friendships through a penpal project. They began writing to each other during lockdown in March to celebrate Integrated Education Month and to incorporate the theme of 'Together' and have exchanged several letters. The Lough View pupils have enjoyed hearing about Hazelwood's Egyptian Day and have been telling their penpals about Titanic Day. They hope to get 'together' in real life in the future, but in the meantime are planning to make some videos for each other.



## INTEGRATED EDUCATION MONTH AT PARKHALL



Pupils from Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim, jumped at the chance to show their creativity during March 2021 at the height of the Pandemic. They enjoyed writing poems, designing digital posters and drawing and painting landscapes on the theme of 'Together' to celebrate Integrated Education Month 2021. It was a fabulous opportunity for pupils to reflect on the importance of being with others and the need for interaction and collaboration which was difficult for them due to the Pandemic. Despite this,

the challenges were managed in creative, alternative and effective ways at Parkhall Integrated College.

## CLIFTONVILLE PUPILS ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS

P7 pupils at Cliftonville Integrated Primary School are making the most of their superb outdoor space. On a weekly basis, the pupils enjoy working with Vikki from "Plant and Play" to help develop the fabulous outdoor learning area that was generously part-funded by the ARN Foundation and the Irish American Partnership through the IEF.



Pupils work in the polytunnel and plant a range of edible produce. They can't wait to see what grows and sample some! Whilst working outside with Vikki, P7 Eco-Council representatives ensure their fellow classmates follow the school's Eco-Council Pledge and contribute towards the school's progress in gaining the much sought-after Green Flag Award. Not only are the pupils becoming great eco-warriors, they also enjoy taking part in sessions lead by the Belfast Activity Centre.

During these energetic sessions, the pupils learn to appreciate the importance of working collaboratively, respecting each other's opinions whilst trying out new activities to develop a love of outdoor sports!

## SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING AT ERNE

Amanda Coffey, Year 13 at Erne Integrated College, Enniskillen, was part of a group of young people who identified a need for recognition of the stresses faced by students within school communities, particularly those in key exam stages such as GCSE and AS/A2.

The group successfully applied to the Small Grants Programme of the Education Authority (EA), and £1,900 was made available to fund their idea of Wellbeing Packs. The packs contain a variety of mindfulness materials, treats, stress relief and relaxation articles and sweet treats to provide a welcome distraction from COVID -19 and all things related. Erne would like to extend their

thanks to the group, Sean McCusker EAWR Lakeland Youth Service and most especially to Amanda for her kindness and creativity benefitting her fellow students in this venture.



## TOGETHER WHILE WE WERE APART AT KIRCUBBIN

During Integrated Education Month the pupils in Kircubbin Integrated Primary School had fun learning about the theme of "Together". Over the past year we have found it difficult to connect with each other because of COVID - 19. Many of us have missed seeing our friends,

being able to do activities as a class, being able to complete Star Reader Test and not being in the same routine and PE. However, as a school we have been focusing on the 5 ways to well-being, one of which is to learn new ways to connect with people.

We were able to meet together on Google Meet, we answered questions together on Jam Board and we designed posters and art work which we then posted on our class Google Classroom Stream for the rest of our class to see. We also thought about what Together means to us. We now know that working together helps us to listen and share ideas, it makes us feel happy and helps us to achieve and complete things quicker.

Even though we weren't able to be together in class for some of this month, we still had lots of fun working with our teachers and friends online and also being able to be together and work together with our families at home.

Being part of an integrated school means we include everyone and we will always help a friend in need. Together is better.

Written by KIPS School Council Members.



## ECO SCHOOL FUN AT OAKGROVE



P6 pupils at Oakgrove Integrated Primary School have been working with Eco-schools Northern Ireland to create a wonderful bio-diversity garden. The children have been planting fruit trees, bushes and sowing wild seeds. The project has been generously supported by Radius Housing and all the pupils are looking forward to maintaining the garden, watching the animals it attracts and harvesting all the fruit.

# PUNK ROCK AND INTEGRATED EDUCATION

## THE SECRET HISTORY

**Dermot Campbell, editor of punk rock fanzine "We're into Chaos" and writer for leading UK national rock magazine "Vive Le Rock", explores the connection between punk rock in Northern Ireland and integrated education.**

By the mid 1970s Northern Ireland was at war with itself. 'The Troubles' had begun in 1969 and tragically the image that the world's media projected about the country was complete religious intolerance. Belfast, the capital city of Northern Ireland, had been torn apart physically. 'Peace Walls'-stretches of corrugated iron and bricks-sliced their way through the city, looking like horrendous scars, keeping Catholic and Protestant communities apart. People from either side of the community did not venture out of their own areas for entertainment purposes for fear of violence. Certainly, popular music concerts were scarce on the ground.

By the mid 1970s in London a new generation of bands had begun to form. This became christened by the music press as 'Punk Rock.' To the mainstream media it was basically seen as crass nihilism, anti-authoritarian and having the propensity to destroy the morals of society. To supporters of the



Ruefrefx featuring Paul Burgess back stage at Kings Hall, Belfast.

bands it was considered to be individuals having a "do it yourself" (DIY) type mentality.

In Northern Ireland, the British government had tried various initiatives to create desperately needed jobs, in the hope of eradicating religious intolerance. One of the most notable efforts was the De Lorean car debacle, which brought a workforce of Catholics and Protestants together in the late 1970's - pumping millions of pounds into the project, which eventually collapsed. Reuniting factions often happened 'inorganically', through sport. For example, people from all sides followed boxer Barry McGuigan in the 1980's.

Modern or popular music was also a significant inter-community gelling agent.

By the late 70s, local punk bands began forming in Northern Ireland. They gave many young people from differing backgrounds a sense of community and somewhere to gather together - notably The Harp Bar and The Pound in Belfast. To the soldiers and the police it seemed inconceivable that the two communities could mix.

Three of the bands that formed around

this turbulent time were Stiff Little Fingers, Ruefrefx and Shock Treatment. Members of these bands are vocal in their support for the Integrated Education Fund (IEF).

A fair question to be considered is "Did the Punk Movement in Northern Ireland help young people transcend religious boundaries?"

Ali McMordie, the bassist in Stiff Little Fingers, concurs.

"Absolutely, I did think religious boundaries were being broken. All the motley crews like skinheads and punks would get together in the city centre, away from the areas that were designated one tradition or the other. When we got to the door where we were playing, everything was left there. Any references to politics or religious bigotry wouldn't be tolerated." Ali's views on religious intolerance were reinforced from an early age. As a teenager when he was seeing a young girl from Killeel, he was met with barbed comments like, "So you're going out with a Catholic are you?" It was also frowned upon by his family when his sister was to marry someone from the 'other side'. As a young child walking home from school Ali would get panicky being in certain areas due to being identified as Catholic or Protestant because of his school uniform.

Barry McIlheney, the singer with Shock Treatment, says -

"For once your religion wasn't even mentioned, not that I even cared about it. I still wouldn't be sure as to which side this band or that band came from."

Paul Burgess, the drummer in the band Ruefrefx, can identify with these comments, being from the staunchly loyalist Shankill area and attending a school in a Protestant area. Paul says -

"I had to struggle going to school wearing a uniform indicating where you came from. Although many bands were non-sectarian, we were openly anti-sectarian. This is what my band was about. We chose to be pro-actively involved in challenging sectarianism."

Although events seemed somewhat rosy for bands in those times, while Ruefrefx played one evening, the band was threatened with a firearm. Following this incident they continued playing wherever they could.

"We put ourselves out there as that's what we did to actively oppose sectarianism. We played in hard-line Republican and Loyalist areas. I think that it was more anti-sectarianism and certainly during interviews we always give an anti-sectarian stance."

In 1976 with the punk movement gaining traction, ACT (All Children Together) published a paper for shared management



Shock Treatment featuring Barry McIlheney.

of schools in Northern Ireland. By 1981 the first integrated school in Northern Ireland, Lagan College in Belfast, opened its doors to 28 children, with one full time teacher and 5 part time teachers. The roots of the IEF can be directly linked to the Belfast bands.

"We did a gig for Lagan College and a Development Officer with ACT was very enthusiastic about getting us involved and that encouraged us at the time as well," states Paul.

Ali McMordie had been encouraged upon reading an article about his old primary school raising money from a charity walk. Remarks Ali, upon asking him how he got involved with the IEF. "I thought, here I am from north Belfast in a band. I could be doing something here and it led on from that. It was a gradual involvement."

Barry McIlheney's path to the IEF is somewhat similar. "I heard about it about 20 years ago from friends and family living in Northern Ireland. It always seemed a no brainer to me that children should be educated together, irrespective of religion,

creed or whatever, so it was a natural step to get involved."

Barry McIlheney's first involvement with the IEF was in 2004, when he hosted a dinner party in Soho with guest speakers Baroness May Blood and former Northern Ireland Secretary of State Mo Mowlam.

Since then, other celebrities have raised the profile of the IEF, with the likes of the actors Liam Neeson and Adrian Dunbar adding their support to integrated education.

Paul Burgess remarks, "integrated education still has a battle to fight".

Today there are more than 25,000 pupils in integrated education from primary schools to post primary level education, so the numbers show positive results and the IEF is winning the battle.

My thanks to Ali McMordie, Paul Burgess and Barry McIlheney for the interviews.

**Dermot Campbell.**



Stiff Little Fingers featuring Ali McMordie at Ulster Hall, Belfast.

## A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS...

### DELIGHT AS INTEGRATED MOVE APPROVED FOR CARRICKFERGUS CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



On 19th April 2021, the Education Minister, Peter Weir, approved a Development Proposal for Carrickfergus Central Primary School to become integrated school, following an overwhelming 86% of parents voting in favour of the integrated move. In September, Carrickfergus Central will join Acorn Integrated Primary School and Ulidia Integrated College in a growing network of integrated schools in the Carrickfergus area, reflecting strong parental demand for more integrated education.

Speaking exclusively to Learning Together, Nuala Hall, Principal of Carrickfergus Central School commented; "I became Principal of Carrickfergus Central in 2015, with my last post having been as the Vice Principal of Crumlin Integrated Primary. In fact I was on the Senior Management Team of Crumlin when it also went through the transformation process!

Many people were of the opinion that there was no need for a second integrated primary school in Carrickfergus but the Board of Governors were keen to explore the transformation process.

The Board met with the IEF and NICIE in 2017 and soon afterwards we applied and received a transformation grant from the IEF to help us explore becoming integrated.

There was an appetite for a new integrated school with Acorn Integrated primary school being almost at capacity.

We engaged the whole school population, and the local community, and we even had Philip Scott, a former Principal of Round Tower Integrated Primary and a NICIE Associate run a workshop for parents.

When the parents' vote took place in February 2019, we had a massive 86% of parents voting in favour for the school to become integrated.

The whole school was then involved in writing the Development Proposal for the Department of Education and we were delighted when this was approved; in fact once I got the call I went racing down the corridor to tell the Vice Principal.

Since then we have been busy with preparing for the school to open as an integrated school, including changing policies and designing a new logo!

The integrated journey has really engaged our entire school community and we have seen our school enrolment grow from 72 in 2015 to 131 today."

Lucinda Wilson, a parent and Chair of the Parent Teacher Association (Lucinda's eldest son is in P5 and her daughter is due to start in September 2021 and her youngest son in September 2021), says:

"The school couldn't have been more helpful in supporting my family. My eldest son loves coming to the school and always has a smile on his face. I was delighted to get involved in all aspects of school life and in particular the journey



to become integrated. I was a member of the Transformation Action Group and was involved with the whole school engagement process, which included writing to the local business community to support the move.

What I would say to any parent thinking about their school becoming integrated is - don't hesitate! Register your interest and have those conversations with the parents and teachers and see if it is an option for your school."

Pupils at Carrickfergus Central are also pleased with the integration move with the following P7 pupils commenting on what integration means to them;

Ibrahim - "It's great that all children come together and get to know all traditions."

Lydon - "It's good to unite and all religions come together."

Abbie - "Learn respect for other people."

Olivia - "All come together as one instead of different religions."

## SEAVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, GLENARM - FIRST CATHOLIC SCHOOL TO TRANSFORM TO INTEGRATED STATUS

In March, the Education Minister, Peter Weir, made the historic decision to approve a Development Proposal that will make Seaview Primary School, Glenarm, the first ever Catholic school to transform to integrated status.

Seaview will become the latest in a growing network of integrated primary schools on the Antrim Coast, including neighbouring Carnlough IPS, Ballycastle IPS and Corran IPS in Larne, which reflects the growing demand for integrated education in the area.

Speaking to Learning Together, Barry Corr, Principal of Seaview Primary School said;

"Seaview Primary School is almost 100 years old and the current building was built in 1966. It is at the heart of the local community in Glenarm. It is situated just 20 metres from the Catholic Church, and 100 meters from the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Churches.

The local controlled school was closed 20 years ago, with over 50 children each day being transported to schools outside of Glenarm. In fact, every day I saw out of my window the children getting on the yellow buses and thinking it would be great if they could stay in the village.

I became Principal in 2013 and the following year the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) decided to close the school as the numbers were low and they regarded the school as just a building and the children could go to the next town.

The Board of Governors felt the school was more than just a building and was the heart and soul of the local community. We decided to investigate the option of becoming integrated and we met with NICIE.

We continued to work with other schools in the area on a shared education project and got involved in the University of Ulster Community Conversation Project.

However, even with these initiatives, in 2019, CCMS told us that the school was going to close. This spurred us into further action with parents leading the way and registering on the IEF's 'Integrate My

School' website.

Once we reached 20% of parents registering in support of the school becoming integrated, this triggered formal consideration of integrated status via a parental vote. We also had a 'Pop-Up' Day. This allowed us to inform the public of our plans to become integrated and what this would involve for the school. Concurrently our governors unanimously voted to support integration.

The democratic ballot was a great success, with over 95% of parents in favour of the school becoming integrated.

In the meantime, with the local community becoming aware of our plans to become integrated, we saw a surge in school numbers growing from 42 in 2018 to 80 today.

We then had to submit our Development Proposal to the Department of Education, to approve the school becoming integrated and at the same time CCMS had a Development Proposal to close us!

We received fantastic support from across the community, including a local DUP Councillor who visited our school and discussed our plans.

I heard the news on a Friday afternoon as I went to my dentist but had to wait for the story to break in the media the following Monday before the media frenzy started.

The response was amazing with TV, radio and local press all keen to report the story of the first Catholic school to become integrated in Northern Ireland!

Since then we have been busy preparing the school for the transformation in September. This has involved widening the school curriculum, including a fuller range of sports; hurling, Gaelic football, cricket, hockey and soccer. We are even running a competition to design the new school badge and decide on our new name!

Even simple things such as prayers have



changed- so instead of asking the children to bless themselves we now say prepare for prayer the way your parents taught you. We also composed our own morning and afternoon prayers.

What I would say to any school considering this journey is to give it serious consideration as integrated education is a great way for communities to celebrate differences in a loving and respectful way."

**There are 65 integrated schools in Northern Ireland today and 25 of these have undergone the transformation process to become formally integrated. Parents have used the 'Integrate My School' website to register their support for their school to become integrated. For more information and to register your support visit [www.integratemyschool.com](http://www.integratemyschool.com)**



## WHEN ART MEETS TV ROYALTY

The IEF's Carson Awards Programme continues to go from strength to strength. In December 2020 a further 16 Carson Bursaries, totalling £15,924, were awarded to pupils celebrating integrated education through the medium of the creative arts.

One former recipient is Roksana Dawidowska, a past pupil of Erne Integrated College. Roksana, originally from Poland, is a multi-talented artist and photographer now undertaking a degree in Fine Art. In a recent interview with the Impartial Reporter, Roksana commented;

"My biggest influences are Rembrandt, Jelena Bulajic and John Singer Sargent with their oil painting skills. I also get influenced by photographers such as Hellen Van Meene who

creates absolutely breathtaking portraits which often look like paintings in a very surreal style, with very strong modern aesthetics".

The Carson Awards are named in honour of the legendary Northern Ireland comedian the late Frank Carson and his son Tony. Frank was a passionate supporter of integrated education and that continues through the Carson Awards. Sponsored by Tony, the Awards are now in their thirteenth year.

Pictured are loyal IEF supporters Tony Carson and Adrian Dunbar, known to many as Superintendent Ted Hastings of the hit BBC TV drama 'Line of Duty', with Roksana and some of her outstanding work.

## SCHOOLS BUILDING "TRUST"

As part of the IEF's Trust Programme which was generously supported by the Pears Foundation, Ulster Garden Villages and Rory Cameron from the Ireland Fund of America, integrated schools have been carrying out a range of activities and projects aimed at developing trust, mutual respect and shared understanding.

The IEF's Trust Programme (Round Five) supported 20 projects in total and despite some inevitable challenges presented by the pandemic regarding implementation, the overwhelming majority of schools were able to eventually complete their projects. Many more schools are currently in receipt of Trust (Round Six) grants and we look forward to seeing how beneficial these projects have been in terms of strengthening their integrated ethos and good practice. Below are some quotes from the beneficiaries of the IEF Trust Programme:

Mrs Jo Thompson, Principal, Loughries Integrated Primary School, Newtownards:

"A range of materials has been purchased to support the teaching of world religions, celebrating differences and the exploration of morals and values. These have been allocated by year group, meaning that each teacher has access to materials to support teaching and learning and the children experience a broader curriculum. I feel that this has led and will continue to lead, to deeper and more meaningful understanding amongst our pupils of themselves and others."

Mrs Debbie Shannon, Dinner Supervisor, Rowandale



Integrated Primary School, Moira:

"I found the training very interesting and beneficial. It was great to get a better understanding of working in an integrated school. I really enjoyed the fact that we all come together as a staff for the training".

P7 Pupil, Saints and Scholars Integrated Primary School, Armagh: "I liked the 'Wear your Own Shirt to School' day because we learnt about lots of different clubs people belonged to."

## HAGAN HOMES DONATE £100,000 TO IEF

Hagan Homes, the NI homebuilder which has built more than 4,000 local homes and created vibrant new neighbourhoods in some of the most neglected areas of the Province, has pledged to support the Integrated Education Fund to ensure NI children have more opportunities to be educated together.

Inspired by the charity's efforts and drive, James Hagan has been supporting the IEF for two decades. This, however, is his biggest investment to date into the organisation to ensure its tireless work produces even more societal change here.

Speaking about the donation, Mr Hagan said:

"I have always been an advocate of integrated education here. I think it is wrong to divide children according to their religious backgrounds and the impact of that division can have financial and societal implications on not just in our immediate future but for generations to come. It is a pleasure to be in a position to support the IEF and we do it because at Hagan Homes



James Hagan, Chair and Founder, Hagan Homes, Brian Small, Fundraising Manager, IEF, Paul Caskey, Head of Campaign, IEF, and Baroness May Blood, Campaign Chair, IEF.

we believe in cohesive neighbourhoods." Baroness May Blood, Campaign Chair at the IEF said:

"In thanking James for this exceptional investment, it strikes me that it's no coincidence that someone who builds houses appreciates the importance of a firm foundation. Hagan Homes' support over the years highlights the importance they attach to integrated education in building the basis for a more economically

sound education system and a more understanding school setting for our children here. I also pay tribute to James and all at Hagan Homes for their steadfast commitment to local charities - especially those, like us, who rely totally on the generosity of business leaders and the general public. Thank you from all at the Integrated Education Fund. This donation will make a huge difference."

## INTEGRATED EDUCATION - THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE



Nicole Parkinson Kelly (Bridge Integrated Primary School Alumni) filming Integrated Education - Through the Eyes of Young People.

The IEF, in conjunction with the Integrated AlumNI, secured funding from the Community Relations Council's Media Grant Scheme to make a film exploring integrated education with current and past pupils of integrated schools.

Independent film maker Michael MacBroom worked with a diverse

group of young people, talking to them about their experiences of integrated education.

Members of the Integrated AlumNI who took part were Tara Curran, formerly of New-Bridge IC and Bridge IPS, and Nicole Parkinson Kelly who also attended Bridge IPS. In addition, the film will feature some current pupils from Shimna IC, New-Bridge IC and Malone IC.

Final details of the final film will be announced on the [www.ief.org.uk](http://www.ief.org.uk) and [www.integratedalumni.org.uk](http://www.integratedalumni.org.uk)



Tara Curran (New-Bridge Integrated College Alumni) filming Integrated Education - Through the Eyes of Young People.

## CELEBRATING INCLUSION OUTDOORS AT BRIDGE IPS



Thanks to a grant from the IEF's Trust Programme, pupils, staff and the school community at Bridge IPS are benefiting from two inclusive garden spaces, focusing on diversity of use, in terms of age, ability and need and where adults and children can enjoy gardening, quiet reading, music, drama and yoga.

"This has been an incredible journey from the start of the project to recent completion, with whole school family and community involvement," commented Tanya Davis, who is Inclusion, Diversity and Global Learning Coordinator at Bridge IPS.

## FORMER LAGAN COLLEGE PUPIL WINS TOP UK ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Former Lagan College pupil and member of the Integrated Alumni, Adam McGibbon, who led a campaign that saw the UK Government vow to stop investing in fossil fuels, has won a prestigious David vs Goliath Award.

The 33-year-old Lagan College and Queen's graduate said it all started when he was horrified to learn that billions in taxpayers' money was being used to fund fossil fuel projects all over the world - and he felt he had to do something about it.

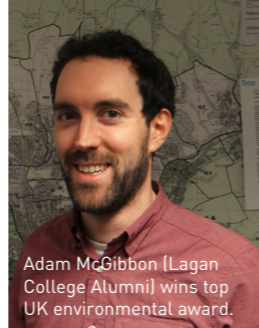
The UK Overseas Fossil Fuel Campaign, led by a small number of campaigners from a diverse range of organisations, 'used every tool in the box' to bring taxpayer funding of overseas fossil fuels to an end, from lobbying MPs to noisy protests. The campaign has set a new global standard for climate action and produced a 'domino effect'. After the UK Government made this commitment, US President Joe Biden announced the United States would follow, with several European governments known to be making similar plans.

For decades, the UK provided billions of taxpayers' money for fossil fuel projects all over the world. The UK taxpayer has helped

support coal mines in Russia, oil refineries in Bahrain and gas projects in war-torn Mozambique. This financial support has made climate change worse and locked developing countries into fossil fuel use instead of moving towards clean energy.

Adam McGibbon, campaign coordinator, says: "It's really exciting to win the David vs Goliath Award! In just three years, stopping the UK Government's multi-billion taxpayer finance for fossil fuels overseas moved from being an 'impossible' idea to a reality. This was a campaign run on a shoestring budget, but with a massive global impact. It's been really encouraging to hear about other governments who are set to follow the UK's lead. The fossil fuel era is ending - this campaign hopefully will help bring that end date a little closer."

Organisations involved in the campaign were Global Witness, E3G, Tearfund, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth (EWN), Greenpeace, Bretton Woods Project, Oil Change International and Global Justice Now.



Adam McGibbon (Lagan College Alumni) wins top UK environmental award.

## INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL LYNCH – CHAIR OF INTEGRATED ALUMNI

Learning Together recently caught up with Michael Lynch, ex-Head Boy at Lagan College and incoming Chair of the Integrated Alumni.



**Q: So Michael, what have you done since leaving Lagan College?**

**A:** I left Lagan College in 2014 which is somewhat hard to fathom! I studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Queen's University Belfast, graduating in 2017.

After spending some time away from Belfast (procrastinating about getting a big boy job), I arrived home and joined PwC, where I spent three years working with their Operate team.

More recently, I have moved into the tech industry, working for a

data quality software vendor called Datactics, based in Belfast.

**Q: How did you get involved with the Integrated Alumni?**

**A:** The first official Alumni event that I attended was a hustings event in 2016. It was then that I had engaged with various likeminded people and discovered that we all had shared experiences. I was inspired to become more involved in the Alumni by just witnessing the passion and mutual motivation of members to create a better and more prosperous Northern Ireland.

**Q: What has been your highlight of your time in the Integrated Alumni to date?**

**A:** In November 2018, we ran a campaign entitled "ListenUP" and this was a real high point. We had approximately 100 young people, in a room together, to discuss education, health and social matters that were important to them. We had representatives from all major political parties, businesses and other civic leaders. It was a frank discussion and all the young people articulated themselves with authenticity and clout. It was an amazing experience to be part of.

**Q: What are your key objectives for the incoming year?**

**A:** With COVID-19, in the last year, we had to cut back on our social calendar, apart from a few zoom quizzes and bingo nights! We want to re-energise the group with some new social events, where we can

meet up again and see some familiar and new faces.

The other big challenge will be to ensure our voice is heard in the "Independent Review of Education"; as well as launching our new Strategic Plan. We also have plans in motion to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Integrated Education.

**Q: What would you say to anyone thinking of joining Integrated Alumni?**

**A:** The Alumni has three main strands of activity:

- Our campaign – for the further provision of integrated education in Northern Ireland
- Our school engagement – giving back to integrated schools
- Our network – connecting and socialising with our wider network

We all join for different reasons and have different motivations for being involved, but I firmly believe that there is immense value in being part of this organisation and getting to know some of our members, whatever your personal aspirations might be.

**So if you want to get involved, it would be great to have you. Please connect with us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and sign up via our website [www.integratedalumni.org](http://www.integratedalumni.org). You can also email us at [hello@integratedalumni.org](mailto:hello@integratedalumni.org) – it would be great to hear from you!**

### The other Trustees of Integrated Alumni are:

Tara Curran (formerly New-Bridge IC)

Shane Greer (formerly Lagan College)

Lise McCaffrey (formerly Hazelwood IC)

Nicole McNeilly (formerly Braidside IPS)

Shawn Clarke (formerly Ulidia IC)

Matt O'Neill (formerly Hazelwood IC and North Coast IC)

Patrick Hanley (Supporter)

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AMANDA MCNAMEE MBE, PRINCIPAL, LAGAN COLLEGE



**Q: What is your morning routine?**

**A:** I love my job and coming to school is made even more special as I travel with my daughter who is in Year 11. We usually arrive at around 8.00am to begin the day ahead. I enjoy walking through the beautiful school grounds spotting rabbits and squirrels as I make my way to the office before the day begins.

**Q: How do you prepare for the day ahead?**

**A:** I am a bit old-fashioned in the sense that I love making priority lists for the day, week and month ahead and using my diary and visual school annual planner. I am fortunate to have access to many forms of technology to help with my planning, time keeping and organisational skills. I also have the wonderful support of Carol, my PA, who has worked with me for over 10 years and knows me so well! No two days are ever the same in my role so you have to be visionary, manage change and be flexible and resilient.

**Q: What are the first tasks you do when you arrive in school?**

**A:** Every morning I meet with our two Vice

Principals and Carol to discuss the day ahead at 8.30am. I then usually go out on duty at about 8.50am-9.20am to welcome our students off their buses and from the parental drop-off area. I enjoy welcoming our students in person and asking how their evening or weekend has been. It is also a great opportunity for our students to see me out and about as I never wanted a desk job!

**Q: What activities do you do in the morning?**

**A:** Every day is so varied as a Principal of a large learning school community. In the morning I could be multi-tasking and involved in a variety of things from team meetings, zoom calls, supporting individual students with learning or pastoral matters, leading staff training, recruiting new staff... the list is endless. I always ensure that I make time to walk around the school to see our young people and staff engaged in their learning and teaching.

**Q: What do you have for lunch each day?**

**A:** Usually I bring a sandwich but in Lagan there is always tea and buns! We are really well looked after by Robert, our canteen manager. He will often remind me to stop and have lunch because I have to work at a very fast pace!

**Q: What do you do in the afternoons?**

**A:** My afternoons are as varied as my mornings but I love getting out and about as mentioned. It would not be unusual for me to be seen playing rounders or football with our Year 12s or joining in an art class in the courtyard with our Year 10s! I like to support people in any way that I can. I love just being with students and encouraging them to be the best that they possible can be.

During the past 11 years in my role as Principal of Lagan College, I have still tried to teach every year in some capacity, be that in Drama, English, Prince's Trust or standing in for a colleague. I will always be a teacher by heart and I don't think that will ever change.

**Q: What time do you finish?**

**A:** At 3.15pm I usually go out on bus duty to say farewell to our students and see them off on their journey home. I then turn my attention to a variety of meetings and catching up on emails and phone calls. I consider myself a real people person but I have a very demanding leadership and management role and the administrative side of my job has to be done.

In truth, my job doesn't ever really finish. I am always contactable now via email and phone and I am involved in a variety of school events, Board meetings and NICIE meetings in the evening and sometimes at the weekend, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

**Q: How do you unwind in the evenings?**

**A:** When I get the chance, I enjoy reading, watching films and I have a guilty pleasure for all things DIY and build/ home improvement. I could definitely see myself helping Kirsty and Phil out to locate dream homes for people! I also enjoy spending time with my family and friends in the great outdoors and walking my trusty Labrador, 'Tessie Bear', at the beach. In recent years I have taken up acrylic painting and I am studying counselling now, as I value my own wellbeing and that of all the people I care for.

**Best Advice I was given**

'Kindness costs nothing and hard work will pay off.'

**Advice I'd Give**

'Be yourself, be happy and make a difference in the world.'

**What I wish I'd known**

I am turning fifty next year and I wish I'd known that 'Life goes faster, the older you get' – so seize the day and enjoy every minute!

I think that the Covid years have made me more reflective and mindful of the simple things in life like health, happiness, family and friendship.

## BIG CHANGES AT THE IEF

### Sam Fitzsimmons

The IEF was sorry to lose one of its most dedicated members of staff recently, Sam Fitzsimmons, Head of Communications and Advocacy, who retired from the IEF after 18 years of dedicated service and commitment.

Sam was the man who did so much for our advocacy and communications. From overseeing US Presidential visits to manning the stand at Party Political Conferences, he was the consummate diplomat who engaged regularly with policy officers, politicians, the media and the wider civic society.

We are going to miss him terribly and wish him well in future ventures.

### Leo Swift

The IEF is also saying goodbye to Leo Swift, our digital advocacy officer, after five years. Leo was responsible for driving forward our digital communications strategy and can be credited with increasing our profile on all social media channels and our online presence.

We wish him every success for the future.

### Maddy Bridgman

In April 2020, the IEF also said farewell to our Public Affairs and Advocacy Officer, Maddy Bridgman. Among many things it was Maddy that brought us so many issues of Learning Together and we wish her well in her new role with the South Eastern Regional College.

### Thanks

For this edition, a special thank you to Paul Collins for stepping into the breach as the Editor of Learning Together. Of course, a huge thank you to all the contributors and our sponsor Adam Jaffe of Gentle Dental Care.



# Fixed Teeth in a Day



If you have lost many teeth and reached a tipping point where you can no longer eat or smile normally there's now an exciting new treatment which could help. The treatment is also for people who still have many teeth but they're so loose or broken down that eating is difficult and the appearance is often no longer up to scratch. Not being able to enjoy food, smile and talk to people with ease, regularly gets people down. For some people the idea of having removable dentures to replace their teeth is unacceptable. This treatment avoids the need for dentures at any stage of the treatment.

Gentle Dental Care is offering the 'All-on-4' treatment which puts back fixed teeth in one day. The treatment uses dental implants which are metal roots that support replacement teeth. Any remaining hopeless teeth are gently removed and 4 dental implants are placed. A temporary bridge with 10 teeth on it is made and fitted to the implants the same day, so you walk out with fixed teeth that look better and feel secure. After a period

of healing the final bridge is made. Comfort when eating is restored and people often get the added bonus of improved wellbeing that comes with fixed teeth.

This treatment is suitable for people who have upper or lower teeth that are beyond repair or no teeth. So there's no need to put up with dentures that move around, with the All-on-4 treatment you can enjoy the benefits of being able to eat everything and smile with confidence again. It's also excellent for people who have very little gum and bone.

Sedation is available for extra comfort during treatment. For people who are embarrassed at the condition of their mouth, please be reassured that the Gentle Dental Care team is here to put you back on track and help you enjoy the everyday pleasures in life once again.



Before

After

## How to Get Started

Contact us to book a consultation to discuss your needs and expectations. We will then create a personal treatment plan and a no-obligation quotation with finance options.

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