

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

## **EDUCATION MEETING**

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, DUBLIN**

**22 MAY 2024**

## **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty-sixth North South Ministerial Council Education meeting was held in the Department of Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin, on 22 May 2024. The meeting was attended by Norma Foley TD, Hildegard Naughton TD, Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion, Paul Givan MLA, Minister of Education and Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Minister of Finance. Minister Foley chaired the meeting.

### **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

2. The Council noted that officials from both Administrations have conducted a review of the work programme for the NSMC Education sector. Ministers noted the outcome of the review and agreed the revised work programme for the Education Sector.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (Middletown Centre for Autism)**

3. Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) CEO, Stephen Douthart and Vice Chairperson, Rosemary Steen provided Ministers with an overview of the work of the Centre. Ministers welcomed the overall achievements of MCA since 2021 and commended the valuable contribution its range of services has made to the education of children with autism and young people in both jurisdictions.

4. Ministers welcomed the new MCA CEO, Stephen Douthart, and the new MCA Chairperson Sheila Darling. They thanked Jim Lennon, the previous interim CEO and Rosemary Steen, previous Chairperson, for their work to support MCA.
5. The Council noted the work being carried out by both Departments and MCA to develop, extend and enhance the services of the Centre across the island.
6. Ministers welcomed that both Departments and MCA are scoping the potential for expansion of the services at Middletown to meet the emergent needs across both jurisdictions.

## **SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES**

7. The Council noted the activity on pupil, youth, student and teacher exchanges on a North South basis and the valuable experience this has provided to those involved.
8. Ministers welcomed the approval of funding under the PEACE PLUS Programme under the Shared Learning Together heading, including for North South School Civic Exchanges, and under the Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing area.
9. Ministers welcomed the proposal made by the two Education Departments and the Mary Immaculate College Limerick to extend development and delivery of the Teacher Research Exchange (T-REX) across both jurisdictions.
10. The Council noted the work undertaken by the North South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) on endorsing undergraduate and postgraduate youth work programmes.
11. The Council noted the work of the North South Youth Work Sector Practice Development Hub in strengthening and developing sustainable North South youth work sector relationships and enhancing the quality of the learning experience of young people participating in youth services across the island.

## **COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION INSPECTORATES**

12. Ministers welcomed the continuing collaborative work of the two Education Inspectorates and noted the update on inspection cooperation and engagement since 2021.
13. Ministers agreed that respective Inspectorates, along with their commissioning Departments, explore the potential for funding to enable either or both Inspectorates to be commissioned as the evaluators of choice/preferred evaluators and to provide a complete monitoring/quality assurance evaluation service to relevant projects and programmes.

## **EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT**

14. Ministers welcomed the agreement in principle to commence a pilot cooperation programme in 2024 and 2025 to address educational disadvantage supported by an allocation of €24m from the Government of Ireland's Shared Island Fund.
15. Ministers agreed that updates on this programme will be provided at future meetings.
16. Ministers welcomed the focus on addressing educational disadvantage included in the design of the new PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme, related calls for which were published in 2023; and welcomed the recent positive funding announcements worth €13.3m which have been made to date in respect of the PEACE PLUS Shared Learning Together programme.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY**

17. The Council noted the climate action obligations in place in each jurisdiction. Ministers confirmed the Council's commitment to ongoing collaboration between jurisdictions involving curriculum development, shared teacher professional learning opportunities and shared resources, that emphasise sustainability and environmental stewardship.
18. Ministers agreed this collaboration should extend to sharing knowledge and experience on improvements in the school estate and transportation fleet.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

19. The Council agreed to hold its next Education meeting in autumn 2024.

**Joint Secretariat**  
**22 May 2024**

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