

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ED 1 (12) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

1 FEBRUARY 2012

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The thirteenth NSMC Education meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 1 February 2012. The meeting was attended by Ruairí Quinn, TD, Minister for Education and Skills, John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development. Minister Quinn chaired the meeting.

EDUCATION SURVEY IN BORDER REGIONS

2. Ministers recognised the importance of facilitating parental preference in participation in schools. They noted change in population on both sides of the border and how this might impact on schools. Taking account of these issues, Minister discussed how those parents, who so wished, might be enabled to send their children to schools on the other side of the border
3. To take forward greater parental preference in schools in the border region, the Council discussed developing plans and next steps for the conduct of a joint survey to inform cross-border pupil movement and school planning. An interim report of work on the survey will be presented to the next NSMC Education

meeting with the results from the survey and proposals on the way forward to be considered no later than the first NSMC Education meeting of 2013.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

4. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the future development of the Middletown Centre for Autism. Ministers welcomed progress made by the two Education Departments in conjunction with the Centre, on the development of a multi annual plan for Middletown. The plan will take full account of developments in recent years as well as international best practice and will be deliverable within the financial restraints faced by both administrations. Ministers noted that taking account of these factors, a paper on the way forward for Middletown will be developed with a view to proposals being brought for decision at the next NSMC Education meeting in May 2012.
5. Ministers welcomed the continuing progress made by Middletown in the delivery of training to professionals and parents, in outreach support for children and in its continuing programme of research.

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

6. The Council noted that future meetings of the Educational Underachievement Working Group will include a focus on sharing best practice in raising literacy and numeracy standards. Ministers welcomed the publication of a joint report by the two inspectorates on promoting and improving literacy and numeracy in schools and their commitment to future collaboration.
7. Ministers noted that both Departments are supporting a peer learning event bringing together educationalists from across Europe and that discussions between officials are to take place on the sharing of best practice on attendance and retention.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

8. The Council welcomed ongoing liaison between the two Teaching Councils on issues relating to teacher mobility and the relative treatment of teachers from other European economic area jurisdictions.
9. On Irish medium education, it was noted that consideration is currently being given by Marino College of Education, Dublin, to the University of Ulster's proposal to deliver a preparatory course to enable students to undertake assessments leading to the Scrúdú Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (the Irish language qualification). Ministers also noted the interest shown by St Mary's University College, Belfast, in delivering the course. They noted that a collaborative programme for the 2011/12 academic year to support Gaeltacht schools and Irish medium schools has been approved and is currently being implemented.
10. Ministers welcomed the publication of the 'School Leadership Matters' report on the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) websites and ongoing exchanges and sharing of good practice in school evaluation by the two inspectorates.

SCHOOL, YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

11. The Council welcomed North South Student Exchanges due to take place in March 2012 and noted that the evaluation of the Dissolving Boundaries Programme has been completed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12. The Council agreed to hold another Education meeting on 30 May 2012.

**Joint Secretariat
1 February 2012**