



Integrated education  
Opening minds

# Learning Together

Issue 27 Spring/Summer

News from the Integrated  
Education Movement in  
Northern Ireland

# Together

## Celebrating integration



International Integrated Education Week has been marked around NI with projects celebrating this year's theme of harmony. Many integrated primary schools began the week with a performance in the Peace Proms on 28 February, a concert which unites children of all backgrounds and sectors singing and playing at the SSE Arena in Belfast.

On Thursday 03 March pupils from integrated schools joined together at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, for a drama and dance workshop exploring the theme of harmony. The gathering was opened by Robert Magee and Siun Carden of the Integrated Education Alumni Association

NICIE CEO, Roisin Marshall said

"Integrated Education Week provides an excellent opportunity for us to highlight the distinct ethos and contribution of Integrated Education to Northern Ireland and beyond. We have seen an excellent range of events which have offered plenty of opportunity for reflection, discussion and celebration throughout the week."

IIEW drew to a close with a celebration at Portadown Integrated Primary School on 04 March, where the Excellence in Integrated Education Award (EIEA) was presented to Glencraig Integrated Primary School. The EIEA recognises the hard work of schools which infuse management, governance, teaching and learning with an outstanding integrated ethos.



### A-Team for integration gathers in London

Baroness May Blood, IEF Campaign Chair met with long-standing supporters Liam Neeson and John Fitzpatrick at the House of Lords in London recently to discuss ideas to further our campaign.

Liam, who has attended many IEF events in New York and previously voiced a radio advert for the IEF, pledged his continuing support for our work.

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# Special day for youngest pupils at Glengormley IPS



Marie Cowan, John Fitzpatrick and Baroness May Blood cut the ribbon at Glengormley IPS pre-school facility

The Glengormley Integrated Primary School community was excited to welcome some very special visitors just before Christmas to officially open the school's new pre-school facility. John Fitzpatrick, Chair of the American Ireland Fund (AIF), Baroness May Blood, IEF Campaign Chair and Marie Cowan, IEF Chair were joined by other guests including Danny Kinahan MP, Trevor Ringland of the Ireland Funds and Councillor John Blair, the Deputy Mayor of Newtownabbey.

Guests enjoyed music from the school choir before cutting the ribbon on the new pre-school and taking the opportunity to chat with the young pupils and staff.

John Fitzpatrick travelled from New York to join the celebration and said

"I strongly believe that the opportunity to educate children together offers the best chance for them to make lasting friendships, experience different traditions and cultures and build a shared future together.

"Each year the Eithne and Paddy Fitzpatrick Memorial Fund holds a golf tournament in New York to raise money for many good causes in memory of my parents. I'm delighted that this year we have been able to support the development of Glengormley Integrated Primary School and the new Playgroup, to help it meet parental demand for more integrated education."

The project was funded through a donation of \$50,000 from the Eithne and Paddy Fitzpatrick Memorial Fund, a further donation of \$50,000 from the American Ireland Fund, £20,000 from the Turnaround Foundation and £46,000 from the Department of Education via the Northern Childcare Partnership.



Pupils welcome Trevor Ringland, John Fitzpatrick, May Blood and Danny Kinahan MP to the new pre-school at Glengormley IPS

The community at **Cranmore Integrated Primary School** was delighted to welcome some special visitors to celebrate the official opening of the new pre-school accommodation, which was funded through donations from long standing supporter Kevin Curley through the American Ireland Fund, from the IEF and from the school itself. Guests included Daniel Lawton, US Consul General and Trevor Ringland MBE of the Ireland Funds. They were joined by Junior Ministers representing the Office of First and Deputy First Ministers.



## Phoenix Nursery

Phoenix Integrated Primary School welcomed Education Minister John O'Dowd to the official opening of the school's new nursery unit on 02 December. The development, which provides 26 part-time nursery places, is the first ever pre-school unit at an integrated school to have been established as a nursery from day one, with full capital funding from the Department of Education. All previous integrated nurseries began life as pre-school playgroups with IEF funding. The IEF was proud to make a contribution to the play equipment for Phoenix Integrated Nursery.



# Celebrations as Killyleagh Primary School goes integrated



*Baroness May Blood led an IEF visit to Killyleagh Primary School and enjoyed meeting pupils, staff and governors*

## **Killyleagh Primary School in County Down will become a controlled integrated school from September 2016.**

A development proposal to transform to integrated status was submitted last year after a ballot of parents found that a majority supported the plan. The school was given the go-ahead in January.

Commenting on the decision, Minister O'Dowd said

"I am approving this development proposal in line with my statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education.

"I am satisfied that sufficient evidence has been provided to support the transformation. This includes the results of a vote where parents supported the transformation to integrated status. My approval of this proposal gives the school the opportunity to realise a fully integrated ethos and to attract sufficient numbers from both sides of the community."

Welcoming the announcement, Killyleagh PS Principal Jason Mulligan said

"We are delighted to get this good news. It has given the school community a boost after eighteen months' hard work to bring us to this stage. The school is growing and we will continue to flourish. There's more work to be done but plenty of enthusiasm to get everything in place for September and the next stage of our transformation."

With Loughries Primary School also due to transform in September this year, this brings the number of integrated schools in Northern Ireland to sixty-five.

IEF representatives Baroness May Blood, David Cooke and Paul Caskey visited Killyleagh Primary School in February to offer congratulations on the success of their development proposal. They were welcomed by Mr Milligan, governors and senior pupils.

# More places to meet demand at Portadown Integrated Primary School

**Families in the Portadown area received good news in December when it was announced there would be more integrated primary school places from September 2016.**

Education Minister, John O'Dowd, approved a development proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers at Portadown Integrated Primary School, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

From the next school year, the admission number at Portadown IPS will increase to 58, building the school's enrolment year by year to a maximum of 406. This is a greater number than that initially proposed by the school in April 2015.

Announcing the decision, the Minister said "The evidence shows that there is a consistent and increasing demand for integrated places in the area. An increase in the approved enrolment at Portadown Integrated Primary School will help cater for this demand. The proposal is also consistent with the area planning proposals contained in the Primary Area Plan and in line with my statutory duty with regards integrated education."

The Department is currently in the process of securing a nearby site for a new school building for the growing Portadown IPS.

Over the years the IEF has been pleased to support Portadown IPS, helping to accommodate a growing enrolment and develop nursery facilities to work towards meeting the demand for integrated primary school places in the area. Thanks are due to the many generous donors who have contributed to this work.



*Portadown Integrated Primary School*

## **Cliftonville IPS is growing...**

Cliftonville Integrated Primary School will be able to offer more places from September this year, to help meet the demand for integrated education in North Belfast. From 01 September 2016 the admission number at Cliftonville IPS will increase from 48 to 58 and the overall enrolment will gradually grow from 338 pupils to 406.

Cliftonville Primary School transformed to become a controlled integrated school in 2009 and has grown steadily ever since. The process was supported by the IEF with generous help from the Eithne and Paddy Fitzpatrick Memorial Fund through John Fitzpatrick, who chairs the American Ireland Fund.



*Cliftonville IPS*

# House of Lords dinner to thank IEF donors

Hilary Copeland, a past pupil of New-Bridge Integrated College, was the special guest at the annual House of Lords Supporters' dinner in November hosted by Baroness May Blood.

Despite heavy fog leading to severe travel disruption for many guests, the evening was a great success for those who could make it.

During the evening Hilary spoke of her pride and gratitude that she was able to attend an integrated school and also of her new role as an active member of the Integrated Education Alumni Association.



Tony Carson with his daughters and Baroness May Blood

During her speech she said

"I feel very proud that we all had faith in this experiment, all the staff and the parents and the pupils, and that we worked hard to make it work. I got straight A grades in GCSEs and A-Levels... and graduated from the University of St Andrews with a first class honours degree... Those are the achievements that might come up on a CV, but there are so many more things that an integrated education has given me, that have shaped me more than I could ever have imagined."

Addressing her guests, Baroness Blood said

"The core aim of the IEF is to be a foundation to support parents and schools on the ground – those people who want to educate their children together for a better future in Northern Ireland. They face many obstacles and hurdles along the way as we have heard tonight but these people deserve support not barriers."

The House of Lords dinner is one way the IEF tries to show its appreciation to its many friends and supporters. It couldn't happen without the generous sponsorship of the Carson family, some of whom flew in from Spain especially to join in the occasion.



(l-r) Hilary Copeland, Wally and Beverly Watson and Jan Carson

## Parkhall IC sees building work begin at last

The school community at Parkhall Integrated College is delighted that the end of a ten-year wait is in sight as work finally begins on a new build project. Education Minister John O'Dowd visited the Antrim school in December to cut the first sod for a new school.

The £20.7m project, funded through the Department of Education's capital build programme, will bring an end to the split-site arrangement at the college and is designed to accommodate 735 pupils. The new facilities will include football and rugby pitches, a synthetic pitch and five new tennis courts.



Education Minister John O'Dowd joins staff and students at Parkhall IC to turn the first sod for the new building

It is anticipated that Parkhall IC will move into its new accommodation in September 2017.

## Past pupils go back to school

How do you engage and inspire young people about to embark on adult life? Past pupils of integrated colleges have been going back to school and taking on an important role speaking to current pupils about the world which awaits them and the support available as they move on from school.

In a unique initiative, students at seven integrated colleges took part in workshops and discussions led by members of the Integrated Education Alumni Association (IEAA) last December, looking at options for the future and the network of contacts ready to help them.

The IEAA unites former pupils who are keen to raise their voices in support of Northern Ireland's integrated schools. As well as our local NI group, there are now IEAA groups in London, Liverpool and Edinburgh, creating a support network for anyone from integrated schools moving to those cities after leaving school.



Ali McMordie with Marta Piatkowska, Karolina Kolec, Ethan Lea and Jack Wilson of Hazelwood IC



## Ali shares his alternative vision with young fans

Ali McMordie, bass player with Northern Ireland punk legends, Stiff Little Fingers, met some of the band's younger generation of fans in Belfast last November. Ali found time before a sell-out concert at the Ulster Hall for an interview filmed by students from Hazelwood Integrated College.

The Hazelwood sixth formers - Marta Piatkowska, Karolina Kolec, Ethan Lea and Jack Wilson - jumped at the chance to quiz the musician and hone their media skills.

Both the school and the band are marking special anniversaries - Hazelwood IC is celebrating thirty years since its opening, whilst Stiff Little Fingers are celebrating 25 years of St Patrick's Day gigs in Glasgow this March with a live video and CD. And the punk rockers are sharing their celebration by raising funds for the IEF.

Fans have been pledging support for the forthcoming project, and a percentage of money

raised above the target is going to the IEF for our work supporting and promoting integrated schools in Northern Ireland.

Bass player Ali McMordie, himself a former pupil of Cliftonville Primary School, which has transformed to integrated status, says the charity is a good fit for Stiff Little Fingers:

"We've always been about challenge and change - and the band is proud to be part of a music scene which brought people together, no matter what your background was. To me, integrated education does that too - it's about offering an alternative vision of the future and an alternative to sending young people to separate schools according to what label they're stuck with. I'm delighted to be working with these pupils from Hazelwood who show us what the future of Northern Ireland could be."

The video can be seen at [www.pledgemusic.com](http://www.pledgemusic.com)

## Politicians travel from Dublin to see integration in action

Frank Feighan, Chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, travelled to Northern Ireland recently to see integrated schools in action.

The Good Friday Agreement includes a commitment to 'encourage and facilitate integrated education' and the visit follows a presentation to the Committee by representatives of NICIE and the IEF in Dublin last July.

The delegation first met staff, students and governors at Strangford Integrated College, Carrowdore and heard about the challenges and achievements of the visionary parents and teachers who first established the school.

Mark Weir, Principal of Strangford IC, commented after the visit

"We were delighted to welcome Mr Feighan and his team to Strangford College. We are proud of our school and the achievements of our students,



Sarah McAlees Head Girl and Alex Gaw Head Boy at Strangford IC College welcome Frank Feighan TD, Chair of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

and the visit gave us the opportunity to tell Mr Feighan the story of Strangford, and share our plans for the future."

The delegation then moved on to Hazelwood Integrated Primary School in North Belfast. Before touring the classrooms, Frank Feighan and his team met four P7 pupils of different traditions and heard their views on school life.

## Chris Moffat

It was with great sadness that the Integrated Education Movement learnt of the death of Chris Moffat, one of the early pioneers of integrated education. She was a driving force behind the transformation of Brownlow Integrated College, Craigavon. That first transformation was a historic breakthrough and an important landmark in the history of integrated education in Northern Ireland. Chris's contribution was invaluable.

Since then Chris maintained an active support for integrated education. In particular her research into the human rights perspective of IE was important and her papers on this contributed greatly to the development of IE.

She was one of the founders of NICIE and was passionately committed to the ethos behind integration, as a letter published in 'The Guardian' last November underlined:

"Integrated schools must have planned, shared structures, where different communities' teachers, pupils and parents are balanced. It needs real conviction - and the support of the wider community."

Chris, her strong voice, and her determination in supporting an important cause, will be greatly missed.



## Roisin Marshall takes the helm at NICIE

Roisin Marshall has taken up the post of Chief Executive Officer at NICIE. Roisin has spent more than 24 years working in education, including teaching in primary, post-primary and special education settings. She previously worked at NICIE in the Senior Management Team, and spent five years as a Project Manager in the NEELB, developing integrated education. Roisin has recently been a professional associate for NICIE and CCEA.

# Call for a system of common schools

A recent poll of the public in Northern Ireland shows strong support for education reform, including the establishment of a single, common schools system.

The survey, carried out by independent polling company LucidTalk and commissioned by the IEF, also found a majority in favour of change to the RE syllabus and also for involving business leaders in preparing students for the jobs market.

More than three quarters of those expressing an opinion agreed that "having a single common school system would be the best way to provide education in Northern Ireland." Further, when people were asked to prioritise issues relating to the development of a school system fit for the 21st century, "educating children of all communities within one common school system" was again the most popular answer.

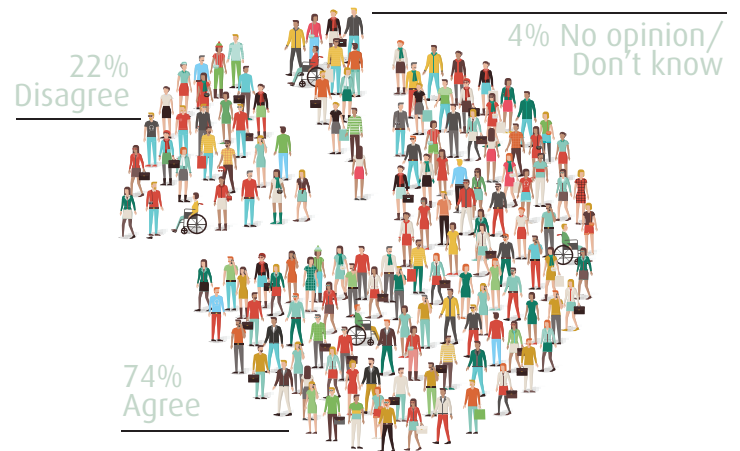
In terms of RE in schools, nearly 70% of respondents said the subject should be broadened to focus on Religion, Philosophy and Ethics. This reflects the findings of the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life (CORAB) which issued a report in December 2015 urging greater awareness of faiths and belief systems in all areas of public life, and also called for mandatory religious assemblies in schools to be abolished.

Importantly the poll showed clear evidence of frustration with the schools system in Northern Ireland, in the face of sluggish progress at Stormont in improving the system and its structures. When asked to describe the NI education system participants came up with expressions such as: "entrenching sectarianism"; "divisive"; wasteful; and "a rudderless, vision-less political football."

**"What three expressions, sentences, or words, would you use to describe Northern Ireland's current education system?"**

apartheid biased broken bureaucratic children  
 class confused discriminatory divided  
 divisive dysfunctional failing  
 fragmented integrated political religious  
 schools sectarian sector segregated  
 segregation selection selective shambles teachers  
 transfer underachievement underfunded unequal  
 unfair wasteful working

**Cuts to the education budget and the duplication of resources are adding strain to the delivery of education. Do you think having a single common school system would be the best way to provide education in Northern Ireland?"**



There was also a clear message that the public would like to see politics and vested interests taken out of the education system. More than two thirds of respondents think that there should be an independent planning authority for education similar to the Housing Executive, and nearly two thirds of those questioned said they would like to see an independent review of the current education system in Northern Ireland.

Tina Merron, CEO of the IEF, commented

"These results show that reform of the education system is a live issue for everyone, across all backgrounds. There is a wide awareness that the system is divisive and wasteful, unfair and segregated and the public seems to grasp better than our political leaders do, that we are not delivering the education service in the most economically efficient way. This means there is less money on the front-line where it is needed to drive up academic standards and equip young people for life after school. It must be asked whether it is time to take education out of the hands of politicians; it is an idea certainly supported by the majority of those questioned by LucidTalk who would like to see an independent review of NI education."

## London reception for supporters

David Montgomery, IEF Campaign President, invited supporters and friends of the Fund to a special reception at his London home in December. Guests included donors from London and Belfast as well as members of the Integrated Education Alumni Association.



Pictured (l-r): Geraldine McGrory, Lord Alf Dubs, Susan Dickie and David Montgomery.



Catherine Scullion, Patrick Handley, Caireen McCluskey and Anne Morrison enjoy the reception at David Montgomery's home.



# Education reform must be at the heart of the campaign



Marie Cowan,  
Chair, IEF

**After years of complacency it's time to challenge the notion that the Northern Ireland education system is world-class. As the Assembly election approaches, it's a challenge politicians must not ignore.**

The schools system is already in a fragile state with financial pressures, continuing changes to the curriculum and increased workloads.

We have not seen effective action to address the gulf between our 'winners' in the exam stakes and those left behind. Yes, we have a percentage of high-achieving students but we also have a serious 'tail' of underachievement.

And even after years of uncertainty and stress for teachers, pupils and parents, Stormont has failed to properly address the selection issue.

Moreover, the segregated nature of education provision means that the majority of our children and young people of school age continue to be educated within a single-identity setting.

Operating thousands of empty desks and duplicating provision represents a glaring failure to address reality and adjust the service to get best value for our young people. Remember that this divided structure brings additional costs in areas such as school transport and teacher training. It's time to question the returns on that expenditure.

The latest independent opinion poll confirms a common view that the NI education system is wasteful and dysfunctional.

Politicians who do not adequately address this issue are failing the taxpayers who fund this system, the schools struggling to function within it and, most crucially, the young people whose future will be shaped by it. If political leaders cannot address the problems then it will be time to take politics out of education and turn to an independent commission. The LucidTalk poll results (as reported on P6) suggest that a majority of people would support the move.

The health service in Northern Ireland has been studied by an objective expert: Liam Donaldson, former Chief Medical Officer in England. Now a cross-party body is working to put political difference aside and agree proposals to improve the service and benefit all users – a development which is to be commended and welcomed.

So if we have looked to outside advisors to assess our health service (and in the past to reform policing here) – surely the education of our children deserves the same level of scrutiny and the same vision of a service which offers the best deal for everyone?



# Our past should not stop us planning for a united future

**Spring is a time of growth and should be a season of hope, of looking forward. There should be a sense in NI of possibility and of a new approach to our future as a collective community.**

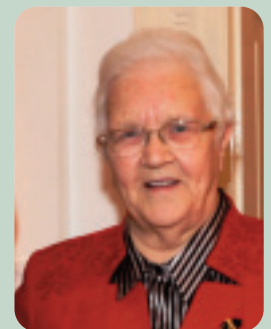
Political parties should be grasping this opportunity to begin delivering real change for the better. Change is certainly afoot in one sense, with a number of veteran politicians stepping aside for a new generation - including two new party leaders. So might we hope for a fresh approach to politics? An approach which might lead us into the society our citizens deserve?

We took the early steps towards a new society in 1998. But since then it has been hard to identify any great strides forwards. We have been told that we are moving towards a "shared future", or a "united community". We are told the Stormont House Agreement has created a "fresh start". But we need political leaders to make a resolution to increase the pace of change and deliver on their fine words.

Recent research by the ARK project (run by Queen's and Ulster Universities) found that when 16 year-olds were asked what words came to mind to describe Northern Ireland politics, the most common answer was "divided". Young people have inherited a culture of separation in housing and schools. The past's legacy is also evident in a residual mistrust of "the other" - displayed as often at the seat of government as on the streets of Northern Ireland.

This year's Assembly election offers a chance to move on from tribal politics to a campaign based on real issues. As budget pressures continue, parties need to present policies related to real issues concerning voters – and education concerns us all.

Turnout for Assembly elections has declined since the heady days of 1998 – down from almost 70% to 56% in 2011. If that figure slides lower this May then it will seriously undermine the credibility of the Assembly and Executive. Failing to engage with the public is not something any candidate can afford. It is imperative for politicians to show voters that they are moving forward with us.



Baroness May Blood,  
Campaign Chair IEF

# Calling all campaigners

With the Northern Ireland Assembly elections just around the corner, we have a great opportunity to put integrated education firmly in the minds of politicians and canvassers during the campaign this spring.

With the Independent Review of Integrated Education taking place at the same time as the political campaign, there are great opportunities for practitioners and supporters of integrated education to have a say, both on behalf of their school and of the wider movement. The IEF is keen to help schools and supporters with campaigning – for example, in planning a hustings event, engaging with candidates or making a submission to the Independent Review.



Hustings at Lagan College 2015

We have created a section on our website: [www.ief.org.uk/resources/advocacy-resources](http://www.ief.org.uk/resources/advocacy-resources) to offer information to help supporters advocate for schools and for integrated education. This includes details of candidates in each constituency, as well as advice on lobbying and on hosting and running events.

We will also provide links to reports and research that offer evidence to support the campaign for education reform in Northern Ireland.

## Quiz the candidates

We've drawn up some questions which the IEF has been putting to political parties; you may like to put the same questions to party representatives on the doorstep, at meetings or through social media in order to highlight education as a key issue for voters in Northern Ireland.

1. What is your party's vision for education?
2. How does your policy reflect the majority wishes of parents in this community rather than the vested interests of the educational establishment?
3. How will you make sure that the current Independent Review of Integrated Education leads to real change which will enable all parents who want it to access an integrated school place?
4. How will you allocate the education budget so that more funds go to schools themselves?
5. What are your party's plans for engaging the public effectively in plans and decisions for their area, particularly regarding housing and education?
6. Will your party engage with the business sector when planning education?

Please share with us any responses you get from candidates and canvassers: [facebook.com/IntegratedEducationFund](https://www.facebook.com/IntegratedEducationFund)

## 'A Fresh Start' offers fresh hope for integrated schools

After months of intensive talks, the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK and Irish governments agreed a set of actions last November to implement the Stormont House Agreement (SHA) which was drawn up in December 2015. We should now see the release of a pot of money aimed at helping social cohesion through education and housing initiatives.

Introducing the latest agreement, 'A Fresh Start', The First Minister and Deputy First Minister stated

"It is our belief and conviction that this framework... has the potential to nudge history forward by transforming how we support each other in overcoming our deepest divisions."

The role of integrated education in contributing to social cohesion is acknowledged through a pledge of funding from Westminster, as initially introduced in the SHA.

Funds of £500m for capital spending "to support shared and integrated education,

subject to individual projects being agreed between the Executive and the UK Government" will be released over 10 years. However in a new development some of this funding could also go to shared housing projects. Money not allocated at the end of each year will return to the Treasury. It is therefore vitally important for schools to act promptly and submit proposals for school developments which could attract this additional capital funding.

For further information, Grant Maintained Integrated schools should approach NICIE and Controlled Integrated schools should approach their regional office of the Education Authority.



# Independent review of integrated education opens



The Education Minister, John O'Dowd, has launched a review of integrated education, saying Northern Ireland needs to develop a more integrated system "in its widest sense". The announcement presents a major opportunity for the Integrated Education Movement to help plan the future of education in Northern Ireland.

Colm Cavanagh, the President of the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Professor Margaret Topping of Queen's University Belfast will form the review panel.

The aim of the Review is

"to make recommendations for structures and processes that support the effective planning, growth and development of a more integrated education system within a framework of viable and sustainable schools."

The panel is also asked to identify barriers to the growth of integrated education and consider existing policy and processes such as the area planning process and the Shared Education Policy.

John O'Dowd said

"The growth of the sector has slowed in the last decade and this review is an opportunity to examine how to support the effective planning, growth and development of integrated education in the twenty-first century. It will also look at how we develop a more integrated education system in its widest sense, which will bring together increasing numbers of Protestant and Catholic pupils within all of our schools"

The panel will engage with the Department of Education, the planning authorities, education organisations, politicians, schools and other key stakeholders and will report to the Minister by the end of June.

<https://www.deni.gov.uk/articles/independent-review-integrated-education>

## Editorial comment: an important opportunity

The IEF welcomes the launch of the Independent Review of Integrated Education (IRIE) as an important opportunity for the Integrated Education Movement to advocate for the sector. The IEF will make a detailed submission to the panel. It will be vital to highlight that the growth of the sector is significant: integrated schools are the only sector which has grown in the face of an overall reduction in the number of pupils in Northern Ireland. The slow pace of change can be attributed to DE policy and practice in developing an education strategy for Northern Ireland, in spite of a clear legal duty to grow integrated education. One of the main barriers to further expansion has been the absence of any planning authority for integrated education and the lack of any government initiative to establish integrated schools, leaving that task to parents and campaigners.

The terms of reference cite the integrated sector, mixed schools, and a more integrated education system, inviting contributors to share a vision of structural reform which will create a system of common schools welcoming to pupils of all traditions and of all faiths and none.

Supporters are encouraged to contribute directly to the review, and you are welcome to discuss your submission with the IEF.



Tina Merron CEO IEF

## Integration honoured

The work of integrated education in Northern Ireland has been honoured through a special reception hosted by US Ambassador Matthew Barzun at his residence in London in February. Around 80 guests comprising supporters of the Integrated Education Fund, alumni from integrated schools and members of the Ambassador's Young Leaders programme, heard more about the important role of integrated schooling in bringing young people and communities together in Northern Ireland. Guests were addressed by Baroness May Blood MBE, who thanked the Ambassador and the US Consul General for Northern Ireland, Daniel Lawton, for their continued and unstinting support for peace and reconciliation.



I-r Dan Lawton, US Consul General to NI, Christopher Madden of the IE Alumni Association, Baroness May Blood, US Ambassador Matthew Barzun.

# The model for the future is here, now



**Leading academics at Ulster University have set out a pathway for structural reform of the education system.**

A report produced by Professor Smith and Dr Ulf Hansson of the UU UNESCO Centre, analyses current policy, legislation and practice relating to ownership of the schools estate, area-based planning, training, recruitment and employment of teachers and school governance. The authors say change in these areas could lead to better integration of the education system as a whole, offering a more economically efficient model.

"A Review of Policy Areas Affecting Integration of the Education System in Northern Ireland" was commissioned by the IEF.

Summarising the work, Professor Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy, says

"Despite a statutory duty on the Department of Education for more than 25 years to encourage and facilitate integrated education, integrated schooling still only caters for 7% of the total school population. We know from public surveys that parents are highly supportive of children being educated together. Therefore it appears that the obstacles to integration may be deeply imbedded within the education system itself."

Speaking on BBC Radio Ulster's 'Talkback' programme in January, Education Minister John O'Dowd challenged integrated education campaigners to outline a vision of future policy and legislation, and show him a model of how a single education system would work.

Responding to the Minister's challenge, IEF CEO Tina Merron said

"Integrated schools have, for more than thirty years, provided a model of education in which all backgrounds and traditions are respected and accommodated, with the utmost respect for diversity. Enrolment figures and successive public surveys have shown that this model is a popular choice. Now the paper we commissioned from the Ulster University UNESCO Centre begins to explore the challenges and opportunities we face in developing an education system which builds on the success of the integrated model and answers the expressed wishes of the public. It offers the Minister and all policy-makers a foundation for embarking on much-needed reform of the Northern Ireland Education system."



Professor Alan Smith with Tina Merron, CEO of the IEF

# Our politicians need to get down to business

by Tony Carson

**As a businessman born in Belfast and with a great sense of pride in my roots, I want to see Northern Ireland flourish; for this to happen we need a new, business-like approach to politics and government.**



I have frequently set out the economic arguments for a system of integrated schools in NI – rationalisation in the face of cuts and over-supply, for example, and the improvement to our 'brand' if we present a cohesive, progressive aspect to the international business community.

But beyond this, applying business sense to the way the Executive and Assembly work would bring dividends for everyone. We need to be disruptive, change the model. Growing means taking risks; taking risks demands optimism. When you start out on a business venture you are constructing a story. Some may not believe in fairy-tale endings, but without essential optimism that the final chapter will be happy, business would not grow.

Instead of giving out a negative message about 'the other side', political leaders should be giving positive messages to children and young people. I've inherited that from my father, Frank: a tendency to find the positive, and to bring others together on that basis.

This change of approach means taking brave steps but that is what investment is. Why take a timid step and stop at a half-way point? Let's go for integrated schools and see them multiply rather than tinker with the problem by throwing money at shared education.

Here I go looking for disruption again, but as an entrepreneur I have succeeded by challenging the status quo. That is how integrated education began, more than three decades ago, thanks to the vision and courage of founding parents. They saw what was lacking in the Northern Ireland education system and developed their own product, building a team along the way. What we need to see now is proper investment in the model from government. I can see a brave new future for Northern Ireland. The sooner it becomes the present, the better. But it needs our political leaders to get down to business.



## Integrated college students have their day in court!

Students from Slemish and Shimna Integrated Colleges joined others from across Northern Ireland in early December to take part in the 24th Bar Mock Trial competition which took place in Belfast.

The pupils took on the roles of barristers and witnesses, with one team prosecuting and the other defending, judged by senior members of the Bar and serving judges. It was a new experience for the young people from Slemish IC and Shimna IC although the competition has been running in the UK since 1991.

The annual contest is run by The Citizenship Foundation, in partnership with the Bar Council of Northern Ireland.

Law teacher Mrs Marguerite O'Donovan said "The opportunity gave fabulous insight into the workings of a real trial and I am delighted to say that all our students were exceptional, showing natural flair. In particular, they showed real potential for the courtroom, conceding nothing and offering logical and precise arguments. The experience has been invaluable in helping our students explore and develop practical skills that would be essential to careers in the field of law such as that of a Barrister, Court Clerk, Court Usher or Court Reporter."

More than 2,000 students across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been involved in The Bar Mock Trial Competition since it began. Twenty-one schools from Northern Ireland took part in last December's event.



Brian and Sue Dickie meet pre-school children and staff at Mill Strand IPS

## Brian and Sue visit Mill Strand IPS to see their donation at work

Brian and Sue Dickie, longstanding supporters of the IEF, returned to their Northern Ireland roots in December to visit Mill Strand Integrated Primary School.

Brian and Sue are helping the Fund this year by supporting the growth and expansion of pre-school provision at the school.

There is tremendous demand for pre-school education in a formally integrated environment within the local community.

Brian, who was born and brought up in Northern Ireland, still has family connections in the area.

Commenting on his visit, he said

"Sue and I are delighted to be at Mill Strand today. Over the years I've enjoyed many visits to integrated schools and it is wonderful to see integrated education thriving. I feel it is very important that parents should be able to access integrated education in accordance with their wishes and that is why I am very happy to get behind this initiative with the IEF."

Paul Caskey, Campaign Director of the IEF, who accompanied Brian and Sue on their trip to Portrush, added

"It's always good to be able to bring a major donor to one of our schools and let them see the practical good which their gifts bring to children. We've had a long relationship with Brian and Sue and we owe them thanks for generously supporting our appeal."

The IEF's Christmas Appeal was also launched to help the school fund the additional staff and the play and learning equipment needed to sustain additional nursery places. Thank you to everyone who donated.

## Environment Minister at Roe Valley IPS

Roe Valley Integrated Primary School enjoyed showing their site and their ecology projects to the Minister of the Environment Mark H Durkan when he visited in February.

Mr Durkan was greeted by new principal Julie Cummings and members of the Board of Governors. He was excited to hear from members of the Roe Valley IPS Eco Team who gave him a tour of the buildings and told him all about their eco-friendly school and current environmental projects, including a brand new outdoor adventure playground made of recycled materials. The Minister visited every classroom and chatted to pupils of all ages. The day finished with a performance from the fabulous Roe Valley IPS Choir.



Environment Minister Mark H Durkan (l) and Councillor Gerry Mullan visit Roe Valley IPS

# Excellence in Int

## Award-winning teachers

Integrated schools have been celebrating success in the Blackboard Teaching Awards. Run by Aisling Events and sponsored by Belfast Media Group, the scheme recognises the achievements of principals, teachers and classroom assistants from primary and second-level schools across Belfast and beyond. Winners included Hilary Donnan and Edel Jackson from Hazelwood Integrated College, Jennifer Holden from Millennium Integrated Primary School and Marie Louise Henderson from Malone College, pictured here receiving the "Shared Future Award" from Education Minister John O'Dowd.



## Brownlow IC boffins win NI STEM quiz

Brownlow Integrated College has carried off the trophy in the first ever STEMQUEST Quiz organised by Titanic Belfast as part of NI Science Festival. The school came first out of 84 teams from all over Northern Ireland.



The final took place in the Titanic Suite, Titanic Belfast on 22 February and was hosted by quizmaster Barra Best.

Brownlow IC performed amazingly well and took the lead early on in the final heat to become outright winners. The victorious pupils - Beth Martin, Matthew Wheatley, Aaron Hylands and Amy McClelland - were presented with a beautiful Waterford Crystal trophy.

## Estere reaches for the stars and finds gold

Congratulations to Integrated College Dungannon Year 14 student, Estere Gulbe, who secured a prestigious Nuffield Sentinus Bursary which enabled her to carry out a research project with top astronomers.

With the help and guidance of science teacher Deirdre McShane, Estere won funding to study at Armagh Planetarium for four weeks during the summer. She developed her project, 'Characterising stars using their photometric properties' under the direction of Dr Gavin Ramsey. The work was completed in conjunction with Queen's University Belfast, Sentinus and The Nuffield Foundation.

Estere's work earned her a CREST Gold Award (conferred by the British Science Association) presented at a special ceremony at Queen's University Belfast.



Andrew Sleeth, Principal of Integrated College Dungannon, congratulates Estere Gulbe on receiving a CREST Gold Award



Deloitte Technology Partner Dr Danny McConnell meets Hazelwood Integrated College students Gerard Collins, Nicole McNeilly, Bethany McGovern and Caitlin Johnston.

## Technology aces through to final

Students from Hazelwood Integrated College have secured a place in the final of the Deloitte Technology, Media and Telecommunications (TMT) Schools Challenge for the second year running.

The post-16 students were challenged to create an educational gaming app with the support of mentors from Deloitte's Belfast Technology Studio and local cloud computing firm Novosco. The Hazelwood IC team saw off competition from Newcastle-upon-Tyne's Cardinal Hume Catholic School in the semi-final as they pitched head to head via web link to judges in London.

Three teams will take their innovative ideas to London on 17 March. All the schools involved are part of the Deloitte Access programme, run in collaboration with Teach First. The initiative, now in its third year, was created in response to the lack of young people in the UK with the appropriate skills and interest to 'plug the skills gap' in the TMT sector.

Patrick McAliskey, Managing Director of Novosco, commented

"As one of Northern Ireland's fastest growing IT businesses, we are always on the lookout for the talent of the future, and I am delighted to be involved in helping coach such enthusiastic young people."



# egrated Schools



INPHO/Ryan Byrne

## All-Ireland champions at Ulidia IC

Ulidia Integrated College claimed the U19C Girls Basketball Cup on their return to All-Ireland basketball. The team travelled to the National Basketball Arena in Dublin to meet St Aloysius College Cork in the finals.

The Ulidia IC students displayed precision and pace from the outset and were in control leading 16-9 after 10 minutes. Their opponents fought back with determination but couldn't catch the Carrickfergus team and at full time the score was 68-49. Congratulations, Ulidia!

## Sporting success at Integrated College Dungannon

**Well done to the Integrated College Dungannon U16 Gaelic Team who have retained their County Tyrone 'B' Vocational Championship trophy after defeating St John's Dromore in the final. Playing at Fintona in bad weather, the ICD boys showed great enthusiasm, determination and skill to come out winners on a score line of 3-7 to 1-6.**

Team Coach, Mr Stephen Rice, said "I am very proud of the whole squad, they put on a battling performance throughout the 60 minutes. We looked to be struggling at half time but all the boys worked really hard in the second half. This was a real team effort and it is a credit to both teams for putting on such an exciting final".

ICD will now go on to represent Tyrone in the Ulster Vocational Schools U16 'B' Championship.



## Scary figures bring prizes to school gardens

Pupils from Six Mile, Lough View, Rowandale, Millennium and Forge Integrated Primary schools travelled to CAFRE Greenmount Campus in Antrim last November to collect saplings they won for their work in the IEF's annual scarecrow competition, generously sponsored by Allianz. Colourful creations from integrated primary schools around Northern Ireland formed 'Scarecrow Avenue' at Antrim Castle Gardens in May, greeting visitors arriving at Garden Show Ireland. The children not only won saplings for their winning work but also had great fun potting up cyclamen plants to take back to school with them.

The Fund is grateful to Allianz for their continuing support and to CAFRE Greenmount for kindly supplying the prizes.



Children from Lough View IPS at CAFRE



# School communities challenge racism



The panel of young speakers at Forge IPS

**An IEF project encouraging school communities to combat racism and explore diversity has concluded with two very successful events held in integrated primary schools.**

Forge IPS and Portadown IPS both hosted Citizens' Panels as part of the Communities in Dialogue project, sponsored by Open Society Foundations.

The schools reached out to their local community and invited guests to participate and discuss ways of supporting newcomer and ethnic minority pupils and families in an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland.

The Citizens' Panel at Forge IPS was the latest of these events, which have now been held in seven different integrated schools. In each case young people were joined by parents, teachers, community and charity representatives, political representatives and local neighbourhood police officers. Young newcomer students

gave thought-provoking and moving presentations on their experiences – both positive and negative – of settling into life in Northern Ireland.

There was a widespread recognition that the wider community, including schools, must play an important role in making children and their families feel included and welcome.

Each event concluded with participants making personal pledges to take action to help tackle racism and promote inclusion.



Portadown IPS

## Time to explore respect

Children and staff at Cedar Integrated Primary School are leading the way and piloting a personal and social education programme called R Time. The scheme, which is new to Northern Ireland, promotes positive relationships and mutual respect, improving behaviour and reducing bullying. Cedar IPS was generously helped by Ballynahinch Lions Club to bring an R Time trainer to the school.



Bob Hamilton, Secretary of Ballynahinch Lions Club presented a cheque for £200 to Cedar IPS acting principal Hilary Crichton. They were joined by Pete Harvey (R Time), Shemaine Kerr (Chair of BOG) and P5 pupils.



Author Juno Dawson with pupils at Malone IC

## Students discuss mental health with top author

**Teenagers at four integrated colleges heard that reading for fun can help young adults deal with serious issues when they met popular author Juno Dawson. Juno, the transgender writer formerly known as James, toured Oakgrove, Hazelwood, Lagan and Malone Integrated Colleges in February to talk about her new teen advice guide, *Mind Your Head*.**

The reading charity BookTrust, with support from the Arts Council, worked with the IEF to arrange the award-winning writer's visit to Northern Ireland.

During her visit Juno shared her personal story and encouraged the students to look after themselves and their friends. She said "We all recognise the importance and power of real-life readers meeting real-life authors. I'm here to talk about *Mind Your Head* and hopefully empower young people to openly talk about mental illness and the pressures of being a modern teenager."

*Mind Your Head*, written with support from clinical psychologist Dr Olivia Hewitt, covers topics from anxiety and depression to addiction, self-harm and personality disorders, with stories from young people around the world and advice on how to manage mental health issues.

Welcoming the visit, IEF CEO Tina Merron said

"We are delighted to work with BookTrust to facilitate Juno Dawson's tour. Her openness and honesty reflect all that integrated schools do to celebrate diversity and develop understanding and acceptance. The integrated ethos means everyone is enabled to be true to their identity and encouraged to feel included in the school community."

In 2015, Juno announced her transition to become a woman, having lived thus far as the renowned male author James Dawson. Her popular books include *This Book Is Gay* and *Under My Skin*.



## Vikings, gymnastics and a bake-off...

For the past two academic years, groups of P7 pupils from local primary schools have been welcomed to Blackwater Integrated College to join projects in the Home Economics, Art, PE, Science and Technology departments. Almost 200 pupils from nine schools have taken part in the college's Primary Integration Programme.

Supported by an IEF grant and coordinated by Lisa McVeigh, programmes run for four to six weeks and have enabled pupils to enjoy a range of activities they may not get to try at primary school, including creating beautiful pieces of pottery, engaging in a weekly 'bake off' challenge, developing skills in gymnastics and designing and making Viking longboat letter holders.

One visitor from Dromara Primary School commented

"I am writing to you because of the Technology work. I rate it 10 out of 10... I love the school and as soon as I went in I did not feel a bit nervous. The staff are very kind and they help you with things such as the hammers and they hold the nails for you and are overall very nice. Brilliant school, definitely on my list for the schools I want to go to."

Links forged with partner primary schools have not only given the P7 pupils a taste of post primary school life but eased transition for those who have chosen to transfer to Blackwater IC in Year 8.



Children from Millennium IPS enjoy the Primary Links Programme at Blackwater IC

## Holocaust project at Drumlins IPS

The P7 pupils of Drumlins Integrated Primary School welcomed Billy Kohner to the school as part of a project on the Holocaust. Bill's parents set up a refugee camp in Millisle for orphans who fled Nazi-occupied Europe. Mr Kohner's stories inspired the Drumlins IPS children to organise a fundraising event in aid of Save the Children's work with refugees, and to present a school assembly focussing on the message that we should stand up for what is right.



Billy Kohner with Drumlins IPS P7 class

## Oakgrove IPSN moves FAST!

As a family-friendly and child-centred school, Oakgrove Integrated Primary School and Nursery jumped at the chance to join the Families and Schools Together Programme (FAST). The FAST Programme supports children and their parents through a series of planned activities that encourage children to achieve whilst developing confidence and skills. Children young and old brought their parents to school every Monday evening to share some quality time. Participants also enjoyed meeting other parents, school staff and community workers. Each week, Oakgrove IPSN's amazing team of volunteers organised an evening filled with singing, buddy time, arts and crafts, stories, playground games and adventure play. Comments from the children involved include "I just LOVE it!", "FAST club is the best club" and "I'm really going to miss seeing all of my friends every Monday when it's over." Every week two families would prepare and cook a delicious meal for everyone to share.

Research has shown that FAST helps improve pupils' learning, fosters good behaviour and positive attitudes and enhances parenting skills and community links.

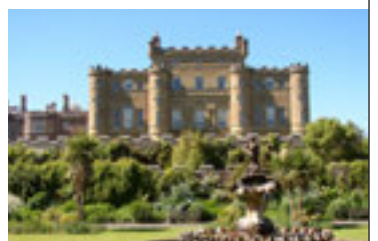


## Stena Line support for integrated education

Stena Line has generously agreed to share the success of its school trips programme with the Integrated Education Fund, pledging to give the IEF 10% of the cost of every trip booked by an integrated school.

Several integrated schools took the opportunity to enjoy free sample day cruises on Stena Line sailings in June 2015. The company is offering packages which include coach and ferry travel and admission to a choice of attractions. You can find out more at [www.stenaline.co.uk/schools](http://www.stenaline.co.uk/schools)

# School trips with Stena Line...



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