



2022 CHAPTER 15

Planning and strategy

General duty

7.—(1) Without prejudice to the generality of the duty under Article 64(1) of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, the Department of Education must take account of that duty when—

- (a) developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans; and
- (b) designing and delivering public services.

(2) The active fulfilment of duties in respect of support for integrated education conferred on education bodies by this Act (or regulations made under it) shall not prejudice or subordinate their duties in respect of promoting shared education or the due discharge of their continuing statutory duties under other enactments including the Shared Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2016.

New schools

8.—(1) Education bodies must consider integrated education when planning for the establishment of a new school.

(2) In exercising their functions under subsection (1), education bodies must consult with—

- (a) teachers,
- (b) governors,
- (c) pupils,
- (d) families, and

(e) sectoral and community bodies

who would, in the opinion of the relevant body, be affected by the proposal.

(3) Education bodies must prepare and publish a report on the consultation under subsection (2).

(4) The report must include, in particular, an assessment in relation to—

(a) the manner in which, and the extent to which, the relevant body has considered integrated education when planning for the establishment of a new school, and

(b) the levels of demand for integrated education.

(5) In this section a “new school” does not include—

(a) two or more existing schools that have amalgamated to create a new school,

(b) an existing school that has significantly changed in size,

(c) an existing school that has relocated, or

(d) an Irish-medium school which comes into existence after this Act receives Royal Assent.

(6) The interpretation of subsection (5) will not preclude education bodies receiving or responding supportively to applications or expressions of interest by such schools in respect of transforming into integrated schools.

Integrated education strategy

9.—(1) The Department of Education must prepare, publish and maintain a strategy for the encouragement, facilitation, support for and provision of integrated education (“the integrated education strategy”).

(2) The integrated education strategy must, in particular—

(a) include provision for resources (including personnel) to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education;

(b) include provision designed to facilitate the maintenance and protection of the ethos of existing and new integrated schools;

(c) include arrangements for full access for integrated schools to training and resources provided by the Education Authority and other services accessible by publicly funded schools;

(d) quantify funding commitments and identify respective resources made available for the support for and provision of integrated education (including resources for facilitating the establishment of new integrated schools, the expansion of existing integrated schools and the transformation of existing schools into integrated schools);

(e) include an action plan, which must—

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally enacted).

- (i) be prepared in consultation with persons with knowledge and experience of integrated schools including teachers, governors, pupils, families, and sectoral and community bodies;
 - (ii) include targets (including timetables);
 - (iii) include measurable benchmarks against which the success of the strategy (including progress towards meeting targets) can be assessed;
 - (f) include provision for reviews to provide a clear indication of how education bodies are delivering integrated education; and
 - (g) have due regard to the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in regard to subsection (1) of this section.
- (3) Targets and benchmarks may, in particular, refer to—
- (a) percentages of pupils granted or denied their choice of education in an integrated school;
 - (b) numbers of development proposals created and delivered for expansion of existing integrated schools;
 - (c) numbers of schools transforming into integrated schools;
 - (d) numbers of new integrated schools established;
 - (e) numbers of consultations issued in respect of transformed or new integrated schools; and
 - (f) support provided for ensuring the success of integrated education (including training and other resources designed to facilitate teaching within the integrated education system).
- (4) The integrated education strategy must be published during the period of 6 months beginning with the date on which this Act comes into force.
- (5) The Department of Education must—
- (a) lay the strategy, and each revision, before the Assembly; and
 - (b) cooperate with any post-legislative scrutiny exercise carried out by the Assembly or any Committee of the Assembly in relation to the strategy or a revision.

Reporting

- 10.—(1)** The Department of Education must prepare or commission and publish a report on integrated education—
- (a) during the period of 2 years beginning with the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent; and
 - (b) at subsequent intervals in line with the budget framing timetable but not more frequently than every three years.

(2) A report must include, in particular, an assessment of performance of functions relating to integrated education under—

- (a) this Act;
- (b) the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989;
- (c) section 2(3A) of the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (inserted by section 4 of this Act); and
- (d) any other provision of Northern Ireland legislation.

(3) A report must include, in particular, an assessment in relation to the reporting period of—

- (a) the manner in which, and the extent to which, the Department of Education has performed its functions in respect of integrated education;
- (b) the manner in which, and the extent to which, other education bodies have performed their functions in respect of integrated education;
- (c) the levels of demand for and supply of integrated education;
- (d) increase or decrease in levels of demand for and supply of integrated education since the previous reporting period;
- (e) successes and failures in respect of the provision of integrated education; and
- (f) the extent to which the purpose of integrated education has been achieved.

(4) Wherever possible, the assessments in the report must operate by reference to benchmarks identified in the action plan in the integrated education strategy.

(5) The Department of Education must—

- (a) lay each report before the Assembly; and
- (b) cooperate with any post-legislative scrutiny exercise carried out by the Assembly or any Committee of the Assembly in relation to the report.

(6) As soon as is reasonably practicable after the publication of a report the Department of Education must review and where necessary revise the integrated education strategy.