

These notes refer to the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (c.15) which received Royal Assent on 26 April 2022

Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The Act makes provision about the support and provision of integrated education. It will also provide for reform and the expansion of integrated education. The sole topic of the Act is education.
4. In essence, integrated education is educating children and young persons in schools which promote an ethos of diversity, respect and understanding between those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none in the same school on a daily basis.
5. The vast majority of children and young adults in Northern Ireland are educated in the Catholic Maintained or the Controlled sectors. This means that the system separately educates the majority of children and young persons. While the number of pupils in the integrated education sector has been increasing in recent years, total enrolments remain below 10 percent of the overall school system. The proposed Act would help integrated education grow its enrolments.
6. The Integrated Education Act has eight policy objectives
 - a) To place a duty on the Department of Education and other education bodies to support, not merely encourage and facilitate, the development of integrated education. This will require the Department to ensure that resources are dedicated to the sector for this purpose.
 - b) To require that the Department ensures proper auditing of demand not more frequently than every three years for integrated education in Northern Ireland by area.
 - c) To require the Education Authority to report and publish on the auditing of demand to the Department and take account of it in budget and planning decisions.
 - d) To require Education bodies to consider integrated education when planning for a new school, to consult and publish a report on the consultation.

- e) To require the development of an Integrated Education Strategy to be published six months after commencement of the Act, to report on the implementation of the Act, along with regular reporting in line with budget timetable on the implementation of the provisions of the Act - a post-legislative scrutiny section.
- f) To require funding to be dedicated by the Department of Education according to the remit of the strategy, to be available for the facilitation of integrated education and resourcing within the Department itself of a dedicated team for this purpose.
- g) To require the Department to ensure that there is a dedicated departmental resource to help schools strengthen their ethos and to make sure all integrated schools are putting the integrated ethos at the heart of everything they do now and in the future.
- h) To require integrated schools to be inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate team as part of their usual programme of inspections to ensure they are upholding their integrated ethos.