

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

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Section 1:

Defines “integrated education” and “integrated school”. 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. It ties the definition of an integrated school to the existing legislation, clarifying what a grant-maintained or controlled integrated school is under the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

Section 2:

Sets out the purposes of integrated education.

Section 3:

Requires the Department of Education to consult with a recognised body which includes in its objectives the provision of support and advice to the Department in relation to integrated education only and any other body the Department considers appropriate. The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, a registered charity incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, would appear to qualify for recognition under this provision.

Section 4:

Amends the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to include a duty to support integrated education as well as encouraging and facilitating it, and amends the Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 so as to require the Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education.

Section 5:

Defines support for integrated education.

Section 6:

Defines the duties of Department and Authority relation to the development of integrated education. Which includes seeking information on parental preference and ascertaining demand for integrated education. It inserts a new paragraph (1A) into Article 64 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 requiring the Department of Education, in considering what steps it should take for the purposes of its duty under Article 64(1), to take account of the outcome of any relevant consultation undertaken under section 3 of the Act.

Section 7:

Provides clarification of the duties that relate to the Department in relation to the provision for integrated education in their strategies, plans and policies.

Section 8:

Requires education bodies to consider that new schools which are proposed to be established should be integrated schools. A consultation must be carried out and a report published. Subsection 4 sets out what should be included in the report. Subsection 5 defines what a new school is.

Section 9:

Requires the Department of Education to publish a strategy for encouraging, facilitating, supporting and providing integrated education. The strategy should have due regard to the provision of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Section 10:

Requires the Department of Education to prepare or commission and publish a report in line with the budget but not more frequently than every three years on integrated education.

Section 11:

Requires the Department of Education to make regulations supplementing the provisions of the Act in relation to integrated education. Subsection (2) sets out a list of particular matters that may be covered by the regulations.

Section 12:

Allows the Department of Education to give guidance about the implementation or application of provisions of the Act.

Section 13:

Makes consequential amendments.

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Section 14:

Provides clarity that definitions which are set out in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 mean the same in the Integrated Education Act.

Section 15:

Provides for the Act to come into force six months after Royal Assent.

Section 16:

Gives the Act its short title which is the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.