

## **NICVA Briefing Event: The Education Order**

**Presentation by Leslie Ashe and Shirley McKee from the department of Education**

### **Proposal for a draft Education (NI) Order**

#### **Case for change**

- Current statutory curriculum is a straightjacket
- Tests at age 11 decide future pathway – too young
- Too many young people with few or no qualifications
- Insufficient emphasis on the vocational knowledge and skills the economy needs
- Inequalities:
  - course choices available
  - Well off pupils achieve significantly better results at age 11 and at GCSE than less well off pupils.
  - 7% from disadvantaged backgrounds in grammar schools – 28% in secondary schools
- Pupil numbers declining – intake profile to grammar schools changed and will change further
- Already 50,000 spare places - increase to 80,000 by 2015
- Have to plan the schools estate and make best use of resources in the interests of pupils.
- Investment in schools estate – over £480m in last 2 years – more to come

#### **Draft Education Order**

Range of provisions – some related to the new PP arrangements.

- Revised curriculum
- EF
- Admissions
- Suspension and expulsion of pupils
- Miscellaneous

Not all the elements of new Post Primary arrangements require primary legislation, some – subordinate legislation made by DE, some in or administrative circulars.

Consultation: 6 Dec – 7 March

Next steps: consider changes; laid before Parliament mid-May, debates June.

## **Curriculum**

### **Where revised curriculum & assessment arrangements came from:**

- As you know there was no statutory curriculum here until 1989, and when this was introduced both the Department and CCEA agreed that the curriculum should be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it was and remained fit for purpose.
- Feedback through the review process highlighted that the curriculum was considered to be too rigidly divided up into individual subjects – there was excessive content,- and in fact teachers felt this was actually hampering effective teaching. Neither young people nor teachers found it as stimulating as it should be.
- In the late 1990s CCEA began its current review process to address these problems, while at the same time taking into account the fact the Transfer Test was increasingly distorting the curriculum in KS2 in too many schools.
- The revised curriculum reflects the outworkings of what young people told CCEA about their current learning experiences and the areas that they would like to know more about. It also reflects the requirements of wider society, including employers, to a much greater degree than before, and has been heavily influenced by the teaching profession.

### **Revised curriculum**

#### **Five Key Stages instead of Four/ Foundation Stage and origins of Enriched Curriculum**

- The draft Order makes provision for a new Foundation Stage covering Years 1 and 2. The Enriched Curriculum is about how the Foundation Stage is taught.

The EC pilot is a programme designed to be sensitive to the way young children learn naturally. It is based on best practice in other European countries and the first primary schools to participate in the pilot were those in the lower Shankill area of Belfast where teachers had expressed concerns about the lack of readiness of many of the children to benefit from traditional teaching approaches.

- Evidence from the pilot to date suggests that this approach can benefit children's literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social skills and interest in learning.

**Structure of the curriculum/ Skills focus – cross curricular and other skills; employers needs; careers**

- One of the key strengths of the revised curriculum is that it is less prescriptive. By this I mean that the content of the curriculum will allow scope for schools to teach beyond the statutory minimum in line with the ability and interests of their pupils. This differs from the current curriculum which prescribes in much more detail exactly what must be taught, regardless of the ability of the pupils in the class. This will allow every pupil to achieve their potential across all ability ranges.
- The main structure of the revised curriculum will be as follows:
- Compulsory Areas of Learning and Contributory Elements;
- The areas of learning will ensure that young people continue to receive a broad and balanced general education. At both primary and post-primary they will study English, Maths, The Arts, PE and RE. At primary they will study The World Around Us (includes Geog; History and Science), and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.
- At post-primary Environment and Society covers Geography and History and pupils will also study Languages, and Science and Technology. There will also be a new area, Learning for Life and Work, which includes Employability (which addresses issues such as the attributes and qualities needed in the world of work,

career planning and enterprise and entrepreneurship), Citizenship, Personal Development and at KS3, HE.

- Specified 'Minimum Content' for each Area of Learning; [Regulations]
- Three Cross-Curricular Skills (Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT); assigned Levels of Progression [Regulations]
- (Currently) five other skill areas, 'Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities'. (Managing Information; Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making; Being Creative; Working with others; Self-Management)
- The revised curriculum is about developing more rounded young adults and pupils should be able to see the range of different paths leading to different careers to meet their own aspirations.

CCEA website – [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)

**Assessment – why moving from end KS to annual assessment; levels of progression; assessment of knowledge understanding and skills**

- The outcomes of young people's learning will be assessed on an annual basis instead of at the end of each Key Stage. This will inform teachers and parents of areas of strength as well as areas to focus on for development. There will therefore be more meaningful assessment on a regular basis.
- CCEA's research indicated that the current assessment arrangements were considered too focused on the end of Key Stage and on a narrow range of subjects resulting in teaching to the tests and a distortion of the curriculum across all key stages.
- The new arrangements, referred to as "Assessment for Learning", will involve ongoing, or formative, assessment based on feedback on what has been achieved and the setting of realistic targets for future learning. The accumulated assessment information built up over the school year will enable teachers to make a summative judgement at a point of time about the progress and achievement of each pupil.

**Pupil Profile – replace annual report – through Regulations – broader picture of individual child’s achievements and areas for development**

- These will be reported back to parents via the statutory annual report known as Pupil Profile. The Pupil Profile will replace the existing annual report completed by teachers. From Year 1 of a child’s schooling it will build up to provide a more holistic portrait of each individual child’s achievements and development than the annual report.
- Teacher judgement can be supported by computer adaptive assessment tasks, which can form part of normal classroom activities.
- As the Pupil Profile will be the new annual report and the reporting provision will be one of the provisions re-enacted it will be legislated for through Regulations. Not on face of Order.

## **Entitlement Framework**

- Inequalities of provision - GCSE subject choice ranges from less than 10 to over 30; A-level similar
- Provide a greater range of courses – academic + vocational
- Curriculum provides greater flexibility for pupils from age 14
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> forms - Guarantee access to 24 courses of which at least one third must be academic and at least one third vocational
- 6<sup>th</sup> forms – similar based on 27 courses
- Numbers not in draft Order - flexibility in implementation

Collaboration to provide that access – arrangements determined locally

Entitlement Framework/Collaboration conference demonstrated existing local examples

- Pupils will choose the subjects they wish to follow and academic/vocational mix
- All KS4 pupils will be taught and be assessed in the skills of communication, using mathematics and using ICT.
- Schools will determine the courses they offer access to from a list provided by DE. DE will specify which courses are academic and which are vocational.

Draft Order sets out key requirements on schools

- Must have written agreements which will cover

- Quality of education
- Transfer on information – reports etc
- Safety and welfare of pupils
- Charges between schools etc

Some exceptions to the 24/27 requirement – eg for newly opened schools to build up

Key responsibility rests with parent school - must be satisfied about quality of education, safety and welfare etc

## **Admissions**

### Main provisions

- Same admissions arrangements will apply to all post-primary schools
- Schools no longer able to include academic ability in their admissions criteria (however measured)
- Boards of Governors of schools will continue to decide the admissions criteria - from a menu

Minister announced the elements of the menu on 6 Dec

- Siblings at school /eldest child
- Range of community / geographical criteria – feeder primary schools, parish based, child centred, school centred
- Tie-breakers – random selection or measured distance from home to school.

None of these criteria are new. All widely used by schools at present

- 40% of schools already use random selection in their criteria
- two thirds already use some form of distance criteria

Details of criteria being considered – will be published for consultation in 2007

Minister has made clear that in relation to community/geographical criteria:

- There should be as much flexibility as possible to enable schools to reflect their local circumstances
- The combined effect does not result in so called postcode selection, social exclusion or disadvantage pupils in particular areas eg rural areas or pupils attending feeder primary schools that are not given appropriate degree of priority.

Role for new education authority as adjudicator

### **How will admissions operate**

Based on informed parental choice –

Informed by

- information in Pupil Profile – not a single document for transfer purposes but a working document to help inform parents about child's progress throughout their education. Covers a wide range of information about progress, achievements, aptitudes and interests.
- Advice from primary school
- Information from open nights, prospectuses etc
- Discussion with prospective post-primary schools – if the parents so wish - Pupil Profile is not a selection tool.

**Exceptional circumstances**

New provisions for an independent body to consider cases of compelling individual circumstances that require a child to be admitted to a particular school.

**Suspension and expulsion**

- Current expulsion arrangements have differential impacts – much fewer expulsions in the controlled sector than in others
- All schools required to follow the same arrangements.
- Aim is consistency. E&LBs will decide if a pupil should be expelled rather than individual Boards of Governors.
- Rights of appeal against suspensions and expulsions.

### **Reforms are much more than ending academic selection:**

- Greater flexibility to tailor education to individual pupil needs
- KS4 and post 16 – guaranteed access to minimum number of courses, including vocational courses
- Collaboration, rather than competition, among schools and with FE to provide access and choice; schools etc working together for the benefit of all pupils
- Schools decide their curricular emphasis – ranging from mainly academic to mainly vocational and specialist schools

### **Parents have a greater choice but it must be informed choice**

- Responsibilities on parents to make choices appropriate to individual child's needs.
- Choice informed by
  - information in Pupil Profile, (Pupil Profile is to inform parents decisions – not to inform post-primary schools' decisions) advice from the primary school
  - Open days/nights, school prospectuses and, if parents so wish, one to one discussions with prospective post-primary schools.
- Parents must decide what post-primary schools will be most appropriate to the needs of their child

### **Future action**

- Specialist schools announced
- Draft Order Parliamentary stages
- Pupil Profile large scale trial
- Phased introduction of new curriculum
- Consultation on admissions criteria regulations
- Development of collaboration with guidance and support
- Further specialist schools
- Information strategy

### **Objectives**

- Remove the high stakes, high stress of transfer tests. Keep pupils' options open
- Widening range of school choices
- Greater emphasis on decisions made at 14 and thereafter – 14 is the first major decision point on choosing courses.
- Flexible system to respond to pupils' needs, aspirations and interests
- Pupils better motivated – build on existing performance – raise standards for all