

020



CONFIDENTIAL

CEPU

Prime Minister

PRIME MINISTER

I have discussed this with Brian Griffiths, who thinks this is a sensible package in the Northern Ireland context.

Context for Mr. King to make an announcement at the end of his month and to bring forward legislation in the next session?

EDUCATION REFORMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

7 to 10

1. In March this year you approved the general shape of my proposals for education reform in Northern Ireland, for publication in a consultative document. The consultation period ended in June and, having considered the responses received, I now wish to proceed with legislation.

Rec 6
9/9

2. For the most part the legislation will follow closely the equivalent provisions of the Education Reform Act, with four main components:

- a prescribed common curriculum for all grant-aided schools, with associated formal testing of pupils at four specified stages against specified attainment targets;
- the extension of parental choice in the selection of schools, subject only to their physical capacity;
- the delegation of responsibility for financial management to individual schools and colleges; and
- a means by which parents may opt to take schools out of maintenance by the education and library boards, specifically geared in Northern Ireland to the promotion of integrated education.

3. I thus intend to move forward on the principles underlying the Government's national education policy and in line with England and

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

Wales. Following consultation, there are two areas where I have refined my proposals to meet the particular needs and circumstances of Northern Ireland. These relate to the common curriculum and grant-maintained schools.

4. Respondents to the consultative document generally favoured the concept of a prescribed common curriculum but stressed the need to build on the sound curricular development work already done in Northern Ireland, which has laid emphasis on the delivery of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum. I accept this and propose, therefore, that the legislation should establish a general framework for the whole curriculum from ages 5 to 16. This would be done by defining the curriculum in terms of broad areas of study but within each area of study, certain subjects would be defined as compulsory for all pupils - these will match closely the foundation subjects set out in the Education Reform Act.

5. We agreed in March that because of the very different educational structures which exist in Northern Ireland, we should tailor the 'opting out' arrangements then in the Reform Bill to the Northern Ireland context to facilitate the expression of parental wishes for integrated education. Accordingly, the consultative document sought views on two forms of grant-maintained status - 'ordinary' grant-maintained schools (GMS) and grant-maintained integrated schools (GMIS). In light of responses to the document I am persuaded that providing for GMS would not in fact contribute to the breaking down of the traditional denominational boundaries in Northern Ireland's schools. In any case the changes made during the passage of the England and Wales legislation, which have strengthened the position of school trustees, would in practice preclude a Northern Ireland version of GMS as a stepping stone en route to integration. Instead I propose to move ahead with GMIS,

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

including (as in England and Wales) the associated direct funding by Government, which as a concept received much encouraging support in responses to the consultative document.

6. Indeed, given this clear expression of support for integrated education, I believe that the time is now right to seek other and more direct ways of encouraging the setting up of integrated schools. I therefore propose in the legislation to take powers to offer earlier financial support to new integrated schools, and to offer grants to an umbrella body (which the existing trusts active in this field would be encouraged to set up) to co-ordinate the promotion of integrated education in the Province. Taken alongside the GMIS proposals, these measures will signal a much more active role by Government in helping to heal the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland society.

7. My proposals on the full range of education reforms are set out in greater detail in the attached paper. If you and colleagues are content with these, it would be my intention to make a formal Government announcement around the end of this month and I would therefore welcome any comments which colleagues may have by 21 September. Prior to the public announcement we would, as with the consultation paper, provide a pre-brief to the Irish via the AI Secretariat. I also intend to press ahead immediately with the preparation of draft legislation to bring before Parliament during the next session.

8. I am copying this minute to Geoffrey Howe, Peter Walker, Kenneth Baker, Malcolm Rifkind, John Major and Sir Robin Butler.

TK

6 September 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

EDUCATION REFORMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. This paper outlines the legislative provisions proposed to implement proposals for education reform in Northern Ireland by means of an Order in Council to amend the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

THE CURRICULUM

2. In Northern Ireland, existing good practice in schools, for which present Government-led curriculum development has largely been responsible, places emphasis on the delivery of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum, and it is important that our proposed legislation should make clear the Government's commitment to build on this. It is therefore proposed that the legislation should establish a general framework for the whole curriculum from ages 5 to 16 as well as specify, within that framework, the elements which are mandatory for all pupils. Accordingly, the law would provide that the curriculum of every grant-aided school should include Religious Education together with the following areas of study:-

- English
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- The Environment and Society
- Creative and Expressive Studies
- Language Studies (Secondary Schools only)

3. In practice, the areas of study will in the main be approached on a subject basis. A Schedule to the Order will list the subjects contributing to each area of study and will also specify those compulsory subjects for which programmes of study, attainment targets and assessment criteria will be drawn up. The subjects to be listed as contributing to each area of study are shown in the Annex to this paper. The compulsory subjects in which there will be formal programmes of study and assessment, will match very closely those in the Education Reform Act for England and Wales.

4. In addition, the curriculum of a school would not be deemed to be fulfilling the statutory requirements that it be broad and balanced and

CONFIDENTIAL

contributing to the development and preparation of the individual pupil unless it were also seen to be meeting the learning objectives of certain specified educational themes. These themes (see the Annex) would normally be taught on a cross-curricular basis, supplemented as necessary by units of work designed by the school.

5. For Religious Education, the approach parallels that in the England and Wales legislation where RE must form part of the basic curriculum but is placed outside the National Curriculum.

6. In the case of Irish, the proposed arrangements are broadly analogous to the position in Wales, where Welsh can be taken (at secondary level) only in addition to and not in lieu of a modern European language. In Northern Ireland, for schools which teach through the medium of Irish, a programme of study, attainment targets and assessment criteria will be drawn up for the Irish language and formal assessment will be required. Other schools may if they wish offer an Irish language programme of study to those pupils who are taking Irish in addition to another language or languages and where they do so the pupils may be formally assessed. However, all pupils at secondary level would be required take a major European language, whether or not they take Irish as well.

ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

7. The consultative paper proposed formal assessment at ages 7 (or 8), 11, 14 and 16. The general view of recipients, which it is proposed to accept, was that assessment at age 8 would provide a more accurate reflection of what the school (as distinct from the home) had contributed to a child's development. It is also the case that Northern Ireland does not have a pattern of transfer from "infant" schools at age 7. Formal assessment in Northern Ireland should therefore relate to ages 8, 11, 14 and 16. As in England and Wales, however, schools would not be required by law to publish the assessment results for pupils at age 8, though they would be encouraged to make such information available.

8. Northern Ireland would also follow the arrangements for assessment and

CONFIDENTIAL

testing which Government has accepted for England and Wales, based substantially on the TGAT recommendations. General responsibility for the assessment arrangements will be placed in the hands of the existing (statutory) Northern Ireland Schools Examinations Council (NISEC) which will have its remit broadened to accommodate this additional role. NISEC will be instructed to take close account of the attainment levels established for the various subjects in England and Wales (and for Scotland) so as to ensure comparability of standards with other regions of the UK.

OPEN ENROLMENT AND PARENTAL CHOICE

9. The consensus view of respondents to the consultative paper was that the new form of assessment at age 11 should be used in place of the existing verbal reasoning tests in order to avoid a double set of tests being imposed on pupils. It is proposed to accept this approach. The operation of the new "open enrolment" policy and the discontinuation of the present quota system limiting secondary school admissions will greatly increase the scope for parents to exercise their choice of school. It will also allow those schools with a deserved educational record to attract more pupils and at the same time speed the process of rationalisation in others. However, to take account of views expressed about this aspect of the consultative paper, the legislation would contain a reserve power to permit waiver of the normal open enrolment requirements where this may be necessary to protect the academic ethos of grammar schools. In addition, the commitment already given to afford a measure of curriculum protection for schools serving isolated (especially Border) communities, will be reaffirmed.

FINANCIAL DELEGATION TO SCHOOLS AND FE COLLEGES

10. Apart from some procedural differences to reflect different funding arrangements in Northern Ireland, legislation in this area will be consistent with the arrangements in hand for England and Wales.

"OPTING OUT" AND INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

11. Responses to the consultative proposals were in the main supportive of

CONFIDENTIAL

the rights of parents in relation to integrated education, and as such accepted the principle of greater parental expression inherent in the proposals for grant maintained integrated schools (GMIS). However, there was complete unanimity among respondents that in the Northern Ireland situation, the "ordinary" form of grant maintained school (GMS) offered in the consultative paper could be divisive, and could contribute more to fragmentation and diseconomy in the schools system than to any breaking down of the traditional denominational boundaries. Furthermore, the changes made in the England and Wales legislation, which have strengthened the position of school trustees, would in practice preclude the NI version of the proposals for GMS schools, which were aimed primarily at loosening the grip of denominational interests. It has been concluded that this element of "opting-out" should not proceed.

12. However, encouraging support was given to the proposals for facilitating the expression of parental wishes for integrated education through GMIS. The necessary legal provision will be made for this, with the amendments mentioned below. At the same time the opportunity will be taken to broaden the basis of Government support for integrated education generally, and for the creation of new integrated schools in particular, by introducing additional measures, both legislative and administrative, in this area.

13. Specifically,

- the 20% "denominational mix" criterion for GMIS eligibility will be removed and thus no legislative restriction will be placed on the type of school which can apply for GMIS;
- the GMIS parental voting procedures will be modified to bring them into line with those now in the Education Reform Act;
- the existing legal provisions for controlled integrated schools under education and library board management will be retained and strengthened. This provision was to be repealed with the advent of GMIS but the retention of controlled integrated status would enable Boards to play their part in the promotion of integrated education,

CONFIDENTIAL

and should indeed encourage them to do so because they can thereby avoid schools having to "opt out" of Board control in order to gain "integrated" recognition under GMIS;

- integrated schools will be exempted in general from the normal constraints of physical capacity on enrolment, and will be given a high measure of priority for necessary building projects within the annual capital programme;
- new legal powers will be sought to offer earlier financial support to new integrated schools, possibly by means of "provisional" maintained status, while the school proves its viability; and
- the integrated schools movement and the existing trusts active in this field will be encouraged to collaborate in establishing a (non-statutory) umbrella body to co-ordinate the promotion of integrated education in the Province, and to which, subject to legal powers, Government might offer support.

14. Taken together, these various elements - which will have as their core the parent-led "opting-out" provisions - represent a significant new Government initiative in promoting integrated education which will be welcomed by a broad cross section of the Northern Ireland community. Church interests, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, will of course continue to see the parent-led GMIS provision as a challenge to the traditional role of the church trustees. But they will find it more difficult to oppose, publicly, procedures aimed at allowing the expression of parental desire for integrated schooling; and their reaction should also be tempered by the decision not to proceed with "ordinary" GMS, which they found considerably more objectionable than GMIS.

TIMESCALE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

15. Work will be put in hand immediately on preparation of the draft legislation, which (in the absence of a devolved administration) will require to be published for a period of formal public consultation before being laid

CONFIDENTIAL

before Parliament in 1989. Work will begin simultaneously on preparation of programmes of study in the prescribed subjects and implementation of the curriculum and related aspects of reforms is anticipated to begin in the 1990/91 school year. The Draft Order will cover a number of other legislative issues which do not have any application elsewhere in the UK. These are mainly tidying-up provisions, but they also include provision establishing a new centralised management body for the Roman Catholic schools sector - the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

RESOURCES

16. The cost of implementing the reforms as a whole is estimated at about £4m, £13m and £18m in the financial years 1989/90-1991/92 respectively. This represents a further substantial pressure on the Northern Ireland block but one that must be borne if the national reform of education to which Government is publicly committed is to be implemented. When the outcome of this year's Public Expenditure Survey is known, further consideration will be given to the pace at which it is possible to move forward with the reform proposals.

CONCLUSION

17. The consultation process identified a number of detailed issues on which it is possible and desirable to reflect Northern Ireland circumstances, while adhering fully to the principles underlying Government's national education policy. Account has also been taken of the final position reached in the Education Reform Act for England and Wales.

September 1988

The subjects which it is proposed could contribute to the various areas of study are as follows:-

<u>Area of Study</u>	<u>Contributory Subjects</u>
English	English (Language and Literature) English Literature
Mathematics	Mathematics
Science and Technology	Science (combined) Physics Chemistry Biology Technology Design Craft Design and Technology (CDT) Home Economics
The Environment and Society	History Geography Local/Community Studies Business Studies Political Studies
Creative and Expressive Studies	Art/Design Music Drama Physical Education Media studies
Language Studies	Major European Language (ie. French or German or Spanish) Irish Additional modern language Classics

The cross-curricular themes which must be included in the curriculum of every pupil are:

Information Technology
Education for Mutual Understanding
Health Education
Careers Education
Economic Awareness
Cultural Heritage

EDUCATION Policy pt 19

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

12 September 1988

Dear Martin,

EDUCATION REFORMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 6 September and the enclosed papers. Subject to comments from colleagues, she is content for your Secretary of State to make an announcement around the end of this month along the lines proposed.

I am copying this letter to Lyn Parker (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jon Shortridge (Welsh Office), Peter Swift (Department of Education and Science), David Crawley (Scottish Office), Carys Evans (Chief Secretary's Office, HM Treasury) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office). In view of your Secretary of State's reference to plans for legislation in the next Session of Parliament, I am also copying this letter, and your Secretary of State's minute, to Alison Smith (Lord President's Office).

*Yan,
P*

Paul Gray

Martin Donnelly, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

089



10 DOWNING STREET

Faint

OK. M. Leave him

note & do.

BRCC 15/9.

at flap

DES pleased about your minute dated 12 September 1988 about Education in Northern Ireland.

They are content with the proposals, and any differences between the national curriculum and grant maintained schools are justified in the case of Northern Ireland.

Patricia

15 September 1988