

# LEARNING TOGETHER

ISSUE 35 SPRING/SUMMER 2020

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**GIANT SUPPORT FOR  
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**H**ello. I am very pleased to bring you issue 35 of Learning Together. There have been many positive developments for the integrated education movement recently, and we know that it is important both to celebrate and build on progress.

The parental vote to take Glengormley High School (see opposite) along the path to becoming officially integrated is one cause for celebration, offering many more families the opportunity to access integrated post-primary education. It reflects a growing interest in the process called 'transformation' which we see on the Integrate My School website and through attendance at events where the team can share information with parents and schools.

The New Decade New Approach agreement, which paved the way for the return of the NI Assembly, included a welcome commitment to an independent, external review of education in NI. The IEF has been campaigning for this move and polling research has shown that there is a high level of public support. On page 10 you can read how this has now gained cross-party support at both Stormont and Westminster.

I know schools are always glad to welcome visitors and show them integration in action and you can read more about some of these visits on pages 3, 4 and 13.

Schools have been facing major challenges this year and we are all looking forward to getting back to normal. Meanwhile, the IEF has been working to continue to support integrated education and to plan for further progress in our campaign for reform of the education system in Northern Ireland.



Maddy Bridgman



Bangor Central Nursery School.

## PLAYING AND LEARNING TOGETHER FROM THE EARLY YEARS

Following the successful parental ballots of two stand-alone nurseries to become integrated in 2019, the IEF has launched a new initiative to encourage parents to support the integration of their nursery schools.

Both Bangor Central Nursery School and Brefne Nursery School in north Belfast held parental ballots last year, with the vast majority of parents backing their nursery school's proposal to become officially integrated.

The IEF's 'Integrating in the early years' lets more parents know they can help bring integration to their child's nursery school, and encourages more nursery schools to get on board.

"Integrating in the early years aims to help break down barriers, nurture good relations and support nursery schools to become actively welcoming to children of all backgrounds and traditions," says Jill Caskey, IEF's Parental Engagement Campaign Manager.

"There are 95 stand-alone nursery schools in Northern Ireland, all of which are either Controlled or Catholic maintained. But so many parents want their family to enjoy the opportunity to learn alongside others from diverse community backgrounds from the earliest stage of education."

The [www.integratemyschool.com](http://www.integratemyschool.com) website outlines the process of transformation to integrated status. The site also enables

parents to register, confidentially, their wish to see their own school begin this process.

A key step early in the process is a ballot of parents on their support for transformation. If a majority votes in favour, then the school will submit a proposal to become integrated which will be considered by the Education Authority and the Department of Education, followed by a final decision by the Minister of Education.

Bangor Central NS principal, Pamela Algie, commented: "This is a great opportunity for very young children from all communities to learn together daily. This nursery school has always welcomed families from all traditions and backgrounds. We have been providing pre-school education in Bangor since 1942 and now, with overwhelming parental approval, we are on the path to become the first stand-alone integrated nursery school in Northern Ireland."

Schools receive support throughout the transformation process from the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Education Authority (EA), and the IEF.

As part of the nursery school initiative, the IEF and NICIE hosted a one-day conference called "Integrating in the Early Years, STEM and Outdoor Play". Twenty-five nursery schools were represented at the event last October, which consisted of a series of workshops on the key themes.



NICIE patron Carl Frampton with staff and pupils at Glengormley HS.

## PARENTS SAY “YES” TO INTEGRATED EDUCATION AT GLENGORMLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Parents at Glengormley High School in Newtownabbey delivered a resounding vote for integration in March when they were balloted on the possibility of the school becoming officially integrated. Principal Ricky Massey declared himself thrilled with the result which showed more than 70% support for the school to move towards transformation to integrated status. Thanking the parents for their engagement he said: “The governors, leadership and staff are delighted with the overwhelmingly positive outcome from our parental ballot and a very strong message of ‘Yes’ for integration. The future is looking very promising for our school and the surrounding community as we prepare for educating all pupils together where they can learn, play and grow as one.

“We have a diverse school community and this is a natural step for us to take. Working closely with our staff and partners, we will now begin the process of preparing our development plan for transformation, for the Minister’s approval.”

IEF staff worked with colleagues in the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) to engage with and inform parents and support the school as it prepared for the ballot, which is the first stage in the transformation process.

Welcoming the news, IEF Chief Executive Tina Merron said: “This is a fantastic endorsement from the Glengormley High School community for the model of education which brings children of all

backgrounds, beliefs and traditions to learn alongside each other – and from each other. There is now the potential to offer hundreds more integrated school places to families in the Newtownabbey and north Belfast area to meet the evident demand.”

Boxer Carl Frampton, a patron of NICIE who is also a past pupil of Glengormley HS, visited the school earlier in March to show his support for the move. He was delighted with the ballot result: “Integrated education is something I have talked about for a long time. I believe it is the way forward for kids here. In some ways, Northern Ireland has moved ahead and in others it has stood still, that’s why I’m so passionate about supporting the development of integrated education in any way I can.”

## US CONSUL GENERAL MARKS ROSA PARKS DAY WITH PUPILS

Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau, US Consul General in Northern Ireland, met pupils at Harding Memorial Primary School in south-east Belfast on 04 February to help mark Rosa Parks Day. Rosa Parks was an activist in the American civil rights movement known for her pivotal role in the Montgomery bus boycott.

Ms Kennedy Trudeau was joined at Harding Memorial PS by Baroness May Blood, Campaign Chair of the IEF, and Fund staff Paul Caskey and Jill Caskey. The guests were welcomed to the school by principal Stephen Cumper, chair of the board of governors Gerry Fleming, and a delegation of pupils with strong family connections to the US.

Ms Kennedy Trudeau took the opportunity to chat informally with some of the youngest pupils at the school then visited the P7 classroom to watch a lesson on Rosa Parks. The visitors enjoyed

presentations on the topic, developed and delivered by every pupil in the class using i-pads and displayed on the whiteboard.

In 2019, an overwhelming majority of parents at Harding Memorial PS voted

to support the school transforming to integrated status and the Consul General was very interested to hear about the school’s commitment to becoming integrated and the Harding Memorial community’s progress along this path.



US Consul General Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau with Harding Memorial PS principal Stephen Cumper and pupils.



## CLIFTONVILLE IPS WELCOMES VIP FRIENDS

Pupils, staff and parents at Cliftonville Integrated Primary School welcomed Baroness May Blood, (IEF Campaign Chair), Alan Nappin of the ARN Foundation and Desmond Wilson of the Wilson Group in December, to see how their generous support is helping this thriving north Belfast school.

The visitors arrived in time to see a performance of the children's Christmas show before touring the building. The ARN foundation is supporting the development of a new outdoor classroom and polytunnel which will enable Cliftonville IPS pupils and the wider community to enjoy gardening.

Desmond Wilson is very kindly supporting Cliftonville IPS's Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for the next three years. The Imagination Library is a book scheme in which pupils of five and under



Pupils at Cliftonville IPS with (l-r) Alan Nappin, Rev Jim Wilkinson (school governor) Bill Fletcher (principal) Colin Nimmon and Desmond Wilson (Wilson Group) and Baroness May Blood.

receive a new book every month sent to their home, helping to improve literacy skills and develop a love of reading. The Cliftonville Dolly Parton Library is the first in Northern Ireland.

Since parents voted for transformation to integrated status, Cliftonville IPS has

gone from strength to strength, with pupil numbers increasing from 145 pupils in 2009 to almost 400 today.

Principal Bill Fletcher joined deputy chair of the Board of Governors, Rev Jim Wilkinson, in thanking the guests for their generous support.

## WELCOMING WENDY TO CRANMORE IPS

Cranmore Integrated Primary School in Finaghy, Belfast, welcomed actress and comedian Wendy Wason in January. Wendy is a keen supporter of integrated education and was one of the performers in the IEF's 'Stand Up for Integrated Education' comedy night in September. Wendy popped in to say thank you for a lovely Christmas card she received and to meet the designer!



## PUPILS SEND BARONESS BLOOD TO CITY HALL AND STORMONT

Nine post-16 Art students at Hazelwood Integrated College in north Belfast collaborated on a project which involved creating a large-scale portrait of Baroness May Blood, campaign chair of the Integrated Education Fund. She was chosen as the college's 'Peace Heroine' as part of herstory's 'Light Festival'. 'Herstory' is a cultural movement that tells the life stories of historical, mythical and contemporary women.

On 02 February the students' portrait of Baroness May Blood was projected onto the front of Belfast City Hall alongside artwork from other schools and colleges and work by professional artists. The picture has also been selected as part of a 'Peace Heroines' project and will be exhibited in Stormont.

Anna Hughes, a past pupil of Rowandale Integrated Primary School in Moira, also chose May as the subject of a 'herstory' art project.







## ACTION PLAN ON MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

Pupil representatives and staff from integrated schools joined politicians and the IEF at Stormont on 20 January to discuss the outcomes of a mental health conference for integrated schools. The conference last October brought together 154 people from integrated primary schools and colleges to consult on the well-being of young people and on how to develop mental health support for pupils.

Guests, including MLAs from across the political spectrum, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary Tony Lloyd and Karin Smyth MP, gathered at Stormont for the launch of the report on the consultation. They heard an urgent call from young people for ten priority actions to be implemented in schools.

'Listening...A Mental Health Conference', was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and took place on World Mental Health

Day in October 2019 at Drumlins Integrated Primary School in Ballynahinch. Questions put to the conference revealed that a majority of the pupils attending thought young people would be too embarrassed or afraid to get support for their emotional or mental well-being – and that only 1% would go to a teacher for help with a mental health problem. However, the vast majority (80%) thought schools should appoint key support staff so that pupils knew who they could approach for help.

Some of the biggest issues impacting on young people's mental health were said to be school-related, such as exams and homework. Alarming, one leader said that evidence of self-harm was starting to become apparent amongst primary-aged children. Social media, self-image and bullying emerged strongly as contributory factors among post-primary students, as well as complex factors related to home life.

## TEN PRIORITY ACTIONS

All schools should have:

1. Training for all teachers in mental health and emotional well-being
2. Student access to mental health experts
3. Mental health and emotional well-being delivered through the curriculum
4. A whole school approach
5. Student mental health ambassadors
6. Gender Sexuality Alliance groups at post-primary
7. Programmes which connect with parents
8. Resources to set up relaxation rooms for students
9. A mental health first aid kit
10. A steering group to oversee the promotion and lobbying of mental health issues

Details about each of these priorities is contained in the 'recommendations' section at the end of the summary report on the IEF website: [www.ief.org.uk](http://www.ief.org.uk)

## ULIDIA IC WORKS FOR WELLBEING

Ulidia Integrated College in Carrickfergus has moved quickly after the 'Listening...' conference: the Pupil Wellbeing Ambassadors ran an event in March, with the support of school staff, called 'Breaking the Silence'. Five integrated colleges joined together to discuss mental health issues and hear presentations from the charity *Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm*, (PIPS) and from pupils and the IEF. It is hoped that this will be the start of a new network of mental health ambassadors across integrated schools.



Photo credit:  
Mark McCourt

## INTEGRATED COLLEGES EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

Two integrated colleges – Malone IC in south-west Belfast and Hazelwood IC in north Belfast – are highlighted in a Department of Education study of best practice in supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A report of the study, entitled 'Ten Features of Effective Schools', was published in January by the DE Tackling Educational Disadvantage team. It uses case studies from eight post-primary schools around NI.

The team's purpose is to

*...improve outcomes through prioritising interventions to support children facing the greatest challenges...*

and the report's writers say

*The schools selected were chosen based on the criteria that they were producing good or improving results (at level 2) whilst operating in very challenging circumstances.*

Successful strategies to improve teaching and learning at Malone IC, and Hazelwood's work with feeder primary schools to support pupils entering the college at Year 8, are given as examples of best practice.

The authors of the report go on to say

*We hope that communicating these examples of effective practice will be helpful to other schools facing similar challenges and circumstances.*



Malone Integrated College.

## ISOLATED TOGETHER: THE FUTURE OF RURAL SCHOOLS DISCUSSED

Ulster University's series of research briefings, Transforming Education, has continued to attract media attention and stimulate debate.

In December the third paper in the series was published: *Isolated Together; pairs of primary schools duplicating provision*.

The paper's authors, Dr Stephen Roulston and Dr Sally Cook, have used government data and GIS mapping to identify areas of NI where two small primary schools, in some cases below the official sustainable enrolment level, are located close together but several miles from other, similar provision. The research analyses the additional costs in maintaining these schools, and the savings in rationalising provision.

The IEF who, with the Community Foundation NI, are supporting the publication and distribution of the

Transforming Education papers, invited key stakeholders to discuss the research at an event on 28 February at Ranfurly House, Dungannon. Representatives of schools, statutory organisations and community organisations as well as parents and local residents heard an overview of the research from Dr Stephen Roulston then took part in round-table conversations.

Participants called for further engagement regarding sustainable education provision at both a local level and at a more strategic level involving the Education Minister, the Education Committee and the managing authorities. It was, however, emphasised that the conversations about local schools need to be 'owned' by the local community. The point was also made that duplication throughout the system needs to be addressed to ensure that the focus isn't just on rural communities.

## PROFESSOR ALAN SMITH OBE



The IEF was delighted to be able to congratulate Professor Alan Smith on being awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours.

Alan, who holds the UNESCO Chair in Education at Ulster University, was founding chair of the NI Council for Integrated Education and a founding Director (or Governor, as the role was then known) of the IEF, serving on the board from 1992-1999.

An east Belfast Protestant, his first involvement in integrated education came when he and his wife (a Catholic) were considering the type of education they wanted for their daughters; this led to engagement with local parents and eventually to the foundation of Mill Strand Integrated Primary School. With typical generosity, Alan said of those days:

"I became completely absorbed...I think for me, I learned more, I got more out of the involvement in integrated education than all that amount of time and commitment I put in it. It helped me develop as a person."

In recent years, he has examined the many aspects of division in the NI education system and explored policy changes which could lead to a more unified, integrated model. Research from the UNESCO Centre, under Alan's leadership, continues to inform and engage politicians and influencers on issues relating to the structure of school provision in Northern Ireland.



The fourth paper in the Transforming Education series, *The Certificate*, was published in March and looks at the Catholic RE Certificate and its impact on employment patterns in NI primary schools.

Tina Merron (Chief Executive of the IEF) commented:

"This research adds to the growing body of evidence to support arguments for a fundamental reform of the NI education system. The requirement for the Catholic RE Certificate for teachers in Maintained primaries and nurseries, alongside the Fair Employment exception for teaching posts, reflects and underlines the divided nature of schools provision here. We look forward to the independent review of education, pledged in the New Decade, New Approach agreement, which we hope will identify all the elements which should be addressed on the way to building a new, unified education system."



# MID-DOWN PARENTS CAMPAIGNING FOR NEW COLLEGE

Campaigning parents in mid-Down are hoping to see a new integrated 11-18 college in their area in the near future.

NICIE, with the support of the IEF, has been working with local parents and the board of governors of Blackwater Integrated College in Downpatrick for more than 18 months to develop a new option for integrated post-primary provision in the mid-Down area. Members of the group have collected Expression of Interest (EoI) forms from parents at the local integrated primary schools and at public venues, such as leisure and shopping centres and country fairs. These, together with EoIs from Blackwater IC families who would transfer to the brand new school, make up a convincing body of evidence of parental demand for a new integrated college in the area.

The partners are working hard to deliver a robust Case for Change to be published later this year. If the Development Proposals receive Ministerial approval, then the phased project could begin to roll out as early as 2021. If you are interested in completing an Expression of Interest form for your child, then please visit the Mid-Down page on the NICIE website <https://www.nicie.org/mid-down-project/>

RIGHT: Campaigners gather support in mid-Down.



## SURVEY SHOWS SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATION

The IEF was delighted to present the results of a micro-poll on local education in Coleraine to an audience of parents, local representatives and teachers at the Lodge Hotel in the town on 06 November. Independent polling company LucidTalk had carried out a survey among parents in the area on behalf of the Fund during the previous month.

The results confirm that a majority of parents questioned (73.9%) would like a school for their children which is openly

welcoming to pupils from all sections of the community and that most would also be supportive of their local school becoming integrated (81.25%).

Parents felt that "Good sports, arts and extra-curricular facilities and activities" are the most important factors when choosing a school (90.7%) while a school "reflecting a particular faith background" is viewed as the least important factor (17.3%). In addition, the two top factors identified in terms of 'saving money' in the

education system were "Merging small/undersubscribed schools" and "Reducing administration costs at management level".

The poll also found that 55% of parents of pre-primary school aged children in the Coleraine area are concerned that they may not be able to access a place in a school of their choice.

The IEF has shared the micro-poll results with all nursery and primary schools in the Coleraine area.



First Minister Arlene Foster with staff and pupils at Shimna IC.

## NEW GERMAN CONNECTION AT SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

Shimna Integrated College in Newcastle welcomed First Minister Arlene Foster, the Deputy German Ambassador, Julia Gross and representatives from the Goethe-Institut on 23 January to celebrate the school's induction into the PASCH initiative. PASCH stands for 'Schools: Partners for the Future' in German, and it is a global network of some 1,800 schools that place a high value on German, promoting language studies and providing special opportunities in Germany for their students. Shimna IC is the first school in NI to join PASCH.

The First Minister said: "It has never been more important for our pupils to have an international perspective and to embrace the opportunities presented through initiatives such as these. Through this programme, pupils are building connections that will help create jobs. They are sharing knowledge and best practice in tackling some of the many global

challenges we face today."

Julia Gross, the Deputy German Ambassador, said: "As language students and language teachers at Shimna Integrated College you all hold the key to a peaceful and rich future and have a crucial part to play, especially in the coming months and years as Brexit unfolds. Your language skills will help ensure that our countries remain close neighbours, good friends and vital partners."

Principal Kevin Lambe added: "The PASCH Initiative has already provided opportunities for our students and staff to experience German language and culture in a variety of ways: a football scholarship in Hamburg, an engineering internship with Mercedes-Benz in Koblenz, robotics training for staff and robots for the school. We do all of this under the celebration of cultural diversity which is a central part of our integrated ethos."

## WINDMILL IPS AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

International links forged by Windmill Integrated Primary School, Dungannon, have been recognized by the British Council, which has presented the school with an International School Award.

Fostering an international dimension to the curriculum is at the heart of the British Council's work with schools, so that young people gain the cultural understanding and the skills they need for life and work in today's world.



Windmill IPS has been involved in British Council projects through Comenius to Erasmus since 2004. The school's activities include eTwinning projects with the nursery and Foundation Stage classes, and links with preschools in Greece, Turkey, Denmark, Finland and Croatia. All pupils learn French, and Mandarin Chinese is offered at Key Stage 2.

## EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR GLENGORMLEY STAFF AND PUPILS

Staff and pupils at Glengormley Integrated Primary School are getting out and about more thanks to activities supported by the European Commission and the British Council through the Erasmus+ programme. The school was awarded funding last September for two Erasmus+ projects.

These projects see pupils and teachers from schools in different countries collaborating to achieve shared goals, with opportunities for overseas travel to meet international partners.

The first project entitled 'Nature as Teacher' is a staff collaboration between Glengormley IPS and schools in Estonia, Norway, Turkey and Spain. In early November last year, three teachers went to Antalya, Turkey to see some best practice in action and explore outdoor learning with infants and pre-school children. The teachers who attended came back full of new ideas and were quick to put them into practice in Glengormley's outdoor spaces.

The second project, 'Bike2School', focusses on physical health and fitness and involves teachers and pupils from P5-7. This links Glengormley IPS with a school in Denmark and of course this will also be an amazing opportunity to learn about the geography, history, language and traditions of the places they get to visit!

Both these projects will culminate in the summer term of 2021 with staff from the partner schools all coming to visit Glengormley IPS and the school is working hard to plan an amazing experience for their international guests.



Glengormley IPS staff explore outdoor learning in Turkey.





## PAST PUPILS MAKE CONNECTIONS

The Integrated AlumNI – the network of past pupils of integrated schools – were delighted to be invited to a unique event hosted by Connected Citizens (which works to promote dialogue and create social change). Thirty organisations from around NI were represented at Stormont on 01 February and the event was a great opportunity for AlumNI to meet like-minded individuals from a range of organisations. Delegates also got to hear from speakers including Julian Smith MP (Secretary of State NI at that time), Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau (US Consul General) and Sara Canning (partner of murdered journalist Lyra McKee). The event also launched Belfast's bid to host the One Young World conference – the global summit for young leaders – in 2023.

## PAST PUPILS, FUTURE LEADERS

The young leaders at Lagan College.



The Integrated AlumNI are immensely proud that two of their number are part of the Emerging Leaders Exchange, which aims to build leadership skills and capacity to influence positive social change. The programme is for young professionals in the USA, NI and RoI who are working with marginalised youth. The two AlumNI, Megan Stevenson and Adam Maguire-Wilson, travelled with 14 others to Washington, Minneapolis, Tulsa and New York in September 2019 to meet with and learn from organisations, statutory bodies and government departments working with young people.

When it was the turn of the US delegates to visit Northern Ireland, the AlumNI were pleased to be able to arrange a visit to Lagan College as part of the itinerary. The visitors met staff and students to find out why integration works and why it is such an important part of moving Northern Ireland forward. The young people shared their visions for the future and the Emerging Leaders were fascinated to hear their contributions.

## NI EDUCATION REFORM ON THE TABLE AT WESTMINSTER

Advocates for integration took the campaign to London on 04 March when the IEF hosted a roundtable discussion focussing on the commitment in the New Decade, New Approach agreement to establish an external, independent review of education provision in Northern Ireland.

The event was supported and sponsored by Shadow Northern Ireland Minister, Karin Smyth MP, who was joined by MPs from across the political spectrum, including former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Julian Smith MP.

Baroness Blood, Campaign Chair of the IEF, said: "The commitment in the New



(Left-right): Lord Dubs, Claire Hanna (SDLP), Mickey Brady, (Sinn Féin), Richard Lemon (IEF), Baroness Blood, Karin Smyth (Lab), Chris Hazzard (SF), Michelle Gildernew (SF), Shawn Wilkinson-Clarke (Integrated AlumNI), Gavin Robinson (DUP), Niamh McCourt (Alliance), Treasa Harkin (Integrated AlumNI), Colum Eastwood (SDLP).

Decade, New Approach agreement to an independent review of education is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create an education system which supports young people from different backgrounds being taught together in the classroom every day. The segregated structure of our existing education system, with its multiple school types, is simply no longer sustainable.

"If we are to address the budget crisis in our schools we need to put our children first rather than the institutions that maintain the current wasteful, inefficient and segregated system. There is an obligation on both governments to ensure

the commitment in the agreement to an independent review of education in Northern Ireland is delivered."

Karin Smyth MP said: "The commitment in New Decade, New Approach to educating children and young people of different backgrounds together in the classroom is an important step in securing a better future for all children in Northern Ireland."

MPs at the event, representing Sinn Féin, the SDLP, DUP, Alliance, Conservative and Labour parties, were urged to support the speedy implementation of the independent review of education in Northern Ireland.

## ASSEMBLY AGREES THAT EDUCATION REVIEW IS URGENT

MLAs debated a motion on 10 March calling for the implementation of the independent review of education in NI as a matter of urgency.

The New Decade, New Approach agreement stresses that the current system of school provision is not sustainable and calls for *Enhanced strategic focus and supporting actions on educating our children and young people together in the classroom, in order to build a shared and integrated society.*

Chris Lyttle MLA (APNI Chair of the education committee) moved that the commitment be implemented urgently. He told the Assembly that his party wants to see

"A Bengoa-style, independent, root-and-branch review of our education system to bring forward recommendations for action that will deliver a more integrated education system ...we have given a commitment to take the politics and vested interests out of health: it is time to do the same for education."

Sinn Féin education spokeswoman Karen Mullan commented that education was prominent in the NDNA agreement as all parties felt it was so important, and she supported calls for fundamental reform:



"There must be greater progress and political leadership in area planning and the realisation of a truly sustainable network of schools with a high-quality education provision and greater educational outcomes."

There was emphasis from many MLAs that the system also needs more investment and members stressed that young people's voices must be included in the review.

Education Minister Peter Weir stated his commitment to carrying out the pledges in the New Decade, New Approach document. He said he would bring proposals for establishing a review panel within weeks but warned:

"...if this job is to be done thoroughly, we are probably talking about a review that will take a year from its establishment to when it reports. It will be completed within this term, but it cannot simply be bounced through."

At the end of the debate it was resolved almost unanimously:

*That this Assembly calls on the Executive to implement urgently the New Decade, New Approach commitment to establish an external, independent review of education provision, with a focus on securing greater efficiency in delivery costs, raising standards, access to the curriculum for all pupils, and the prospects of moving towards a single education system.*



# A NEW DECADE A NEW APPROACH NEEDED!

I was glad to see, in January, an agreement which brought an end to three years of Stormont stagnation. It offers an opportunity to move forward together and address so many issues which have been awaiting resolution and decisive action. As the Ministers get to grips with their portfolios and the committees settle down to work, there are particular elements in the New Decade, New Approach document which I want to highlight and which I, as a campaigner for integrated education, want to see prioritised.

I warmly welcome the acknowledgment of the need for reform of the NI education system, and the commitment to the institution of an external, independent review to lay the groundwork for this.

It is gratifying that the parties acknowledge that the current configuration of school provision is not sustainable. That was widely accepted in the NIAC report and as the select committee observed:

*many contributions acknowledged that the structure of the education system*

*contributes significantly to the strain on education, and some stakeholders told us that if the system was organised differently it ought to be possible to properly resource education at current funding levels.*

The aspiration of moving towards a single education system is held widely throughout Northern Ireland. What, though, should that system be? We have an opportunity to shape a new approach and this opportunity must be fully exploited for the good of young people for generations to come.

Schools which demonstrate best practice in integration have provided a model developed over decades, successfully bringing pupils of all backgrounds and traditions together in the classroom, nurturing identity and promoting respect for other identities (another stated aim in the NDNA document).

Parents and schools are evidently attracted to this approach. In the past year, eight schools have held ballots which have shown parental support for their school to become officially integrated –



Baroness May Blood

and be assured there are more ballots in the pipeline. Successive opinion polls have shown that a majority of parents in NI would welcome such a move for their school.

Like the parties behind the New Decade New Approach document, I want to celebrate moves in communities and schools of all types to develop sharing and co-operation. We have a sound framework for moving forward together to unite communities in the classroom every day.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### TRACKING DOWN SOME PAST PUPILS...

**My name is Hugh Odling-Smee; I was at Lagan College from 1985-80** and I'm now the manager of Film Hub NI, an audience development project for independent cinema, based at the Queen's Film Theatre in Belfast.

I didn't have a career plan while I was at Lagan. At that time, I could barely see to the end of the next week, so the idea of thinking about what I'd be doing at 46 was like imagining life on Mars.

**I really enjoyed music** and played in the orchestra, but I loved history when I came to Lagan – particularly being taught by Gerry Jones at GCSE level. I ended up doing Modern History at university and a Masters in Irish History, so he must have done something right.

**I particularly remember one lesson:** the Enniskillen bombing took place on Sunday 8th November 1987, and on Monday 9th, Lagan had a special assembly and people had an opportunity to talk about how events like this made them feel. There were people from across both communities from Twinbrook to Rathcoole, but we were in that hall together, trying to make sense of the society we lived in together. I hold it a privilege to have been at Lagan for the lessons I learned about division, identity and people.

**On the bad side, we had to endure classes in old portable buildings** on freezing cold days – often with broken heaters! I'm delighted to see the 'new' school has a decent heating system.

**If there's one thing I wish I'd learned earlier, it's that** life is serious, but not to be taken seriously. That should be mandatory on any curriculum.



Hugh Odling-Smee

## CRANMORE IPS PUPILS ARE CLEANING UP

The Eco Committee at Cranmore Integrated Primary School in south-west Belfast is working to clean up their environment, and is very active in a pilot project, 'Breath of Fresh Air', run by Translink and Eco Schools. Poor air quality is one of the biggest environmental threats to public health in the UK. The Cranmore IPS Eco Committee has received a special air quality monitor which they will use around the school premises and

the committee is excited about sharing this new project with the whole school community to raise awareness and help make changes for a cleaner future.

The whole school is working together to improve the environment, planting an orchard of 15 trees with the support of NIE and the help of Conservation Volunteers, which will not only bear fruit but also offer outdoor learning opportunities.



## VINCENT FULLAM

The IEF was saddened to hear of the death in February of Vincent Fullam MBE, who played a key role in the establishment of Drumlins Integrated Primary School at Ballynahinch and who was a staunch supporter of integrated education. Vincent was a leading light of the town's regeneration committee, which secured the redevelopment of the market house and it was here that a group of campaigning parents held meetings to plan to bring an integrated primary school to Ballynahinch. Having met them, Vincent became actively involved in their work and on his retirement he joined the board of governors, becoming chair in 2009.

He said of Drumlins IPS:

"I have such pride in our school and the young people in it. Drumlins has gone from strength to strength. You have a vision and you work towards it. Our integrated ethos is too important to lose."

The Fund sends condolences to Vincent's family and many friends.



## JACK MCDONNELL



The IEF sends sympathy and our condolences to the family of Jack McDonnell, who died in March. Jack, an American with Irish roots, was a true friend of peace and reconciliation in NI. With his wife, Jackie, he made a huge contribution to integrated education through support for Blackwater IC, Ballycastle IPS and for pre-school provision at Maine IPS. He gave students from NI opportunities in the USA which were truly life-changing and his work with the IEF earned him the Irish Peace and Culture Award from the American Ireland Fund in 2006.



## GIANT WELCOME FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOL CAMPAIGNERS

Integration was celebrated at the Stena Line Belfast Giants' game on Saturday 29 February at a special event hosted by the IEF parental engagement team. Before the Giants' match, families who would like their schools to consider taking the journey to integration gathered at the SSE Arena's VIP West Lounge to hear from schools currently in the process of transforming to the integrated model.

The relaxed event, also attended by parents and pupils from integrated schools, offered the opportunity for discussion of the benefits of integration and an exploration of the process for schools. Almost any school in NI can become officially integrated with the support of parents. Guests were treated to a short presentation about the Integrate My School (IMS) website, which allows parents to confidentially register their support for their school transforming to integrated status. This was followed by a



Andrew Norrie of the IEF opens the Giants' game against Guildford Flames.

chance to ask questions and hear from parents and staff who have been through or are going through the process.

The families then enjoyed refreshments and a fantastic view of the match between Belfast Giants and Guildford Flames, sponsored by Integrate My School. The IEF team had the honour of officially opening the game by dropping the puck.

There was also a surprise visit from Finn McCool, the Giants' mascot, who was pleased to help promote the IMS campaign alongside parents and pupils.



"Finn McCool" with guests from Spires Integrated Primary School.

## OLYMPIANS INSPIRE FUTURE SPORTS STARS AT OAKGROVE



Joe Roebuck and Amy Smith at Oakgrove IPNS.

Pupils at Oakgrove Integrated Primary School and Nursery were put through their paces by some special visitors in January. Olympic and Commonwealth Games swimmers Joe Roebuck and Amy Smith challenged every pupil in the school - from Primary 1 right up to Primary 7 - to take part in a fast-paced, intensive workout as part of the 'Sports for Schools' programme.

Kevin Holly, the school's PE co-ordinator, said: "Joe and Amy were brilliant motivators, cheering the children on and encouraging everyone to take part and to do their best in a circuit training session set to music.

"At Oakgrove, we provide fitness activities to suit the interests

and abilities of all the pupils. This includes the Healthy Kidz programme and the Daily Mile, alongside a wide range of other activities, both during and after school."

After the workout, Joe Roebuck spoke at assembly, telling the 400 pupils of the importance of "hard work and self-belief, combined with perseverance".

When he asked Oakgrove pupils for their tips on how they stay motivated, the children responded with their own words of wisdom: "Keep trying"; "Never give up"; "Do your best"; and "Be confident in yourself".

Joe also took questions about his lifestyle and training and the athletes let pupils try on their Commonwealth Games medals.



## BUSINESS SUPPORTS COLLEGES BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Global banking and finance firm, Citi, are working with integrated schools on projects to develop learning and citizenship skills.

At the end of last year, the company facilitated a team from Malone Integrated College in Belfast to enter the *FIRST* LEGO League at W5 in the Odyssey Complex. *FIRST* LEGO League is an international, guided robotics competition, with the stated aim of "helping students and teachers to build a better future together". The competition encourages pupils' interest in STEM subjects and in learning in general, through hands-on, collaborative projects. The Malone IC team had a fantastic time designing and problem-solving with the help of their robot, which was funded by IEF supporter Chris Donnelly.

Members of Citi Belfast Pride Network have also recently delivered a workshop focusing on tackling homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language to staff and pupils in Hazelwood Integrated College, north Belfast. The school hosts a weekly



Malone IC students at the SSE Arena.

after-school group to provide a safe space for LGBTQ pupils to connect and promote the school's inclusive ethos. Members of Citi Belfast Pride Network will continue to deliver tailored workshops and mentoring with the school, facilitated through a partnership between Citi Belfast and the IEF.

Helen McKee of Citi Belfast commented: "Citi is proud to be an employer-of-choice in Belfast and be regarded as a company where all can thrive. During the past six years, our employees have collectively raised over £421,000 for our chosen local charities, deepening our connections in the communities in which we operate."

## MICRO:BIT LESSONS IN CRUMLIN IPS



Crumlin Integrated Primary School is the first primary school in Northern Ireland to be working with Ulster University on a programme called BBC micro:bit.

This programme currently works with pupils in P6 and P7 to encourage children to get actively involved in writing software for computers and building new things. The micro:bit is a small computer board that is made up of 25 LED lights and two push buttons. Pupils are learning to programme the micro:bit to create text, images, and animations as well as getting a grasp of some of its more advanced features. The children are so enthusiastic that they have extended their learning to use JavaScript to write a programme!





Fort Hill Integrated College in Lisburn hosted Parkhall IC from Antrim in February for a year 9/10 boys' Gaelic match. Gaelic games have been introduced to these schools only recently, and the coaches have been encouraged by the students' commitment to trying a new sport and learning new skills. The match was played at St. Patrick's GAC, Lisburn and it was evenly contested with only a point between the sides at the end. The main result, however, was to break down barriers through sport and to maintain and build on the relationships and contacts made. It is hoped that Fort Hill IC can travel to Antrim for the return fixture in the near future and continue the learning experience for both teams.

New-Bridge Integrated College in Loughbrickland is very proud to include two champion badminton players amongst its students. Sister and brother Laura and Rory Comer have been collecting accolades at the Irish Championships which were played in Dublin in February.

Laura and her partner won the Irish U17 Girls' Doubles Badminton championship.

Rory not only won the Irish U15 doubles championship with his partner but was also runner-up in the singles event and finished the season ranked number 1 in Ireland.



Rory Comer accepts the all-Ireland doubles trophy from Badminton Ireland president Betty Thompson.



Laura Comer of New-Bridge Integrated College (right) with her badminton partner Sophia Noble and Badminton Ireland president Betty Thompson.



The Royal Meteorological Society has recognised the outstanding work of the geography department at Ulidia Integrated College in Carrickfergus, giving the school a 'Met Mark' award.

The Society has worked with Ulster University to train teaching staff and Brian Dunlop, of the Ulidia IC geography department, made the most of the opportunity, developing the weather and climate elements of the geography syllabus across Years 9, 10 and 11.

Alongside this, Head of Department Sandra Patterson has attended training provided by the UN to become a UN Accredited Climate Change Teacher. The geography department has invested in updated weather recording equipment to support these units of work and has now established its own weather station delivering weather data for the whole school to access.



## HOME AT LAST FOR CORRAN IPS

Corran Integrated Primary School and Nursery in Larne welcomed celebrity couple Holly Hamilton and Connor Phillips last November, to officially open their magnificent new building. Pupils, staff and governors were delighted that Holly and Connor, who are great ambassadors for integrated education, were able to share this special event in the school's history. They were joined by Roisin Marshall, CEO of NICIE, and Ken Cathcart, Chair of the IEF.

Corran IPS first opened in 1991 in a local industrial estate before moving to temporary accommodation on Blackcave North in Larne. After a very long and patient wait, the school finally moved into their new premises in September 2019 for the start of the school year. 'Corran' means crescent shaped and the curved design of the fabulous new building reflects this perfectly.

Holly and Connor enjoyed a tour of the school and then chatted with the hockey team (Holly is a keen hockey player!), took part in some thinking maths with P1 and activity-based learning with P2, before being guests of honour at 'The Corran Show': a presentation led by two P7 pupils with music and drama provided by children from throughout the school.



Above (l-r): Roisin Marshall, Ken Cathcart, Holly Hamilton, Connor Phillips, Corran IPS principal Denise Macfarlane and chair of the board of governors Neil Clarke.



## CARNLOUGH READERS HELP CELEBRATE THE WORK OF OLIVER JEFFERS

Pupils and staff at Carnlough Integrated Primary School have been enjoying exploring the work of Oliver Jeffers in



a celebration of his role as the newest patron of NICIE.

Carnlough IPS was one of four schools hosting events in libraries with the support of Libraries NI and of Oliver's publishers, Harper Collins, who distributed book packs.

Oliver Jeffers, a past pupil of Hazelwood Integrated College, is a writer, illustrator and artist based in New York. His acclaimed picture books have been translated into more than 40 languages, and sold more than 10 million copies worldwide. Oliver has won numerous awards, including a New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books Award, the Bologna Ragazzi Award, an Irish Book Award and a United Kingdom Literary Association Award.

Commenting on his support for NICIE and integrated education, Oliver said: "Participating in integrated education back in the 1990s was pivotal to my preparation for life in and outside of Northern Ireland. Respect, consideration, and tolerance are key, to show our children how to make sense of the world and learn alongside one another."

The Carnlough IPS team led a reading session at their local library and then invited everyone to the school for refreshments and art activities, so that children could explore their own creative talents.

Omagh, Annsborough and Hazelwood Integrated Primary Schools also partnered with local libraries to highlight and enjoy Oliver Jeffers' work.