

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NORTHERN IRELAND
EVALUATION OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

A. Educational Policies and Policy Implementation

10-13(1) The Education (NI) Order 2006 took effect on 1 August 2006 and included provision for a revised curriculum which is now in place for all pupils of compulsory school age attending grant-aided schools.

The revised curriculum is aimed at providing all children, irrespective of background, with a broad and balanced education, which will better prepare them for life and work in a changing world. Unlike in the previous curriculum, the content of the revised curriculum is designed to give teachers more flexibility over how they deliver the curriculum to meet individual children's needs.

10-13(2) Citizenship education is taught to all pupils of compulsory school age (Years 1 – 12); and will include topics such as the “Human Rights of the Child”.

Citizenship education will equip all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society. They will have opportunities to use local and global examples to investigate topics such as diversity, inclusion, cultural heritage, equality, democracy, participation and human rights, ie the key principles outlined in instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as situations where human rights have been infringed.

A programme of support, including the provision of training and guidance materials, has been rolled out to all teachers to support teachers in their delivery of the revised curriculum in primary and post-primary schools, including Citizenship.

10-13(3) Through areas of learning in the revised curriculum there are opportunities for schools to include the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers into teaching programmes.

10-13(4) In 2008, the Human Rights Commission, in association with the Department of Education and a range of other partner organisations, produced *Bille na gCeart i Scoileanna: Acmhainn d'iarbhunscoileanna* - an Irish language version of the *Bill of Rights In Schools: A Resource for Post Primary Schools*.

An English language version of the resource was originally published in 2004. It incorporated a range of human rights educational materials, suitable for post primary schools and as an indication of mainstreaming Human Rights.

14. No guidelines exist in the jurisdiction for writing or revising textbooks that reflect human rights principles.

However, Amnesty International's *Lift Off* programme materials have been developed to support the revised curriculum and are included in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's list of suggested resources to support the teaching of Personal Development & Mutual Understanding in primary schools in this jurisdiction.

The material is based on the fundamental principles of human rights, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Lift Off programme began in 2001 and its resource books and its website have been developed in a partnership between Amnesty International's UK and Ireland sections, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Ulster Teachers' Union and part-funded by the Department of Education, the Department of Education and Science in Dublin and Irish Aid.

15 The attached Department of Education policies promote access and opportunity in education:-

Every School A Good School - A Policy for School Improvement

Every School A Good School - A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy

Every School a Good School - The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

Every School A Good School -Supporting Newcomer Pupils

- 16 All student teachers undertake training to deal with issues of diversity, cultural heritage and mutual understanding and respect in the classroom. Equipping student teachers with such skills is regarded as an integral element in teacher education and forms part of a teacher's professional development.

In addition, Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College have jointly developed the Diversity and Mutual Understanding (DMU) programme to become an integral aspect of study for all students studying on both the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) pathways. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion and establish ways of coping with issues such as identity, diversity and prejudice within the classroom environment.

The primary purpose of the DMU programme is to bring together people of diverse backgrounds to discuss issues and explore ways to enhance their personal and professional development. In years three and four of the BEd programme and in the 1-year PGCE programme, students are afforded the opportunity to engage in issues of their choice in some depth through a series of workshops presented by guest speakers.

B. The Learning Environment

- 17 The Department of Education has funded the production of a Guide for School Management to the Human Rights Act 1998. This practical document has been of

considerable assistance to school managers to raise awareness of human rights issues within the education sector in this jurisdiction.

The Department also funded the Children's Law Centre to produce a document 'Human Rights Awareness for School managers' which concentrates on policies and procedures to promote and protect the rights of all pupils. This comprehensive guide supports teachers in exploring human rights issues as part of the curriculum in post-primary schools.

18 Section 75 of the NI Act requires the Department of Education (and all other designated public authorities) in carrying out its functions relating to this jurisdiction to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:-

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with disability and persons without; and,
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, the Department of Education (and all other designated public authorities) should also, in carrying out its functions relating to this jurisdiction, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Department's Equality Scheme affirms our commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

19 The Department of Education is keen to support all schools to establish a School Council using the Democra-School programme designed by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

[Every School A Good School - A Policy for School Improvement](#) encourages schools to give pupils a meaningful voice in the life of the school and to listen to, and respond to, pupils' views. It is suggested that school councils are an important model to support engagement.

The Department of Education is committed to engaging with children and young people as part of its policy development and decision making processes.

The Department has been working closely with the Participation Network on recent policy reviews and departmental staff attends training sessions provided by them.

The Participation Network works in tandem with existing or planned participation structures, including a Participation Hub, which aims to: deliver a coherent approach to the participation of children and young people, integrate existing and emerging participation structures and ensure that children and young people have the capacity to engage.

- 20 The Department of Education has provided funding to Amnesty International for the period 1 December 2009 to 31 March 2011 to complete the mainstreaming of the Lift Off project

The project will mainstream Human Rights Education by way of 4 strands:

- a) Curriculum – to develop a body of teachers with the knowledge and skills to integrate human rights education into their own practice;
- b) Teacher training – to develop a body of teachers with the knowledge and skills to integrate human rights education into their own practice;
- c) Monitoring and evaluation – to establish a mechanism for promoting and monitoring a whole school approach to human rights education; and

d) Guidance and direction – to allow primary schools in the north of Ireland to develop a consistent, coherent and sustainable strategy for human rights education.

21 Representatives of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) have met with representatives of the Equality Commission to discuss equality indicators for school inspections. These discussions have informed the review of the quality indicators in the inspection documentation, “Together Towards Improvement” which is shared with schools and other organisations that we inspect.

Children and young people are given an opportunity to contribute to the inspection process through customised questionnaires and in discussion groups.

The ‘Lift Off’ programme in schools will be evaluated as part of the Education and Training Inspectorate’s work for the Department of Education.

22 Schools deliver education on human rights issues as part of their delivery of the revised curriculum. There is no separate funding.

C. Teaching and learning processes

23 Within the revised curriculum, the Human Rights and Social Responsibility component of Local and Global Citizenship provides pupils with opportunities to understand that a globally accepted values base exists that reflects the rights as outlined within various international human rights instruments and responsibilities of individuals and groups in democratic society.

The Exploring Equality and Social Justice component provides opportunities for pupils to understand that society needs to safeguard individual and collective rights to try and ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

24 The Exploring Democracy and Active Participation component provides opportunities for young people to understand how to participate in, and influence, democratic

processes and to be aware of some key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy.

The Exploring Diversity and Inclusion component provides opportunities to consider the range and extent of diversity in societies locally and globally and to identify the challenges and opportunities which diversity and inclusion present in local, national, European and global contexts.

25 The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) advises the Department of Education on all matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and examinations for:-

- children in nursery schools and nursery classes in Primary schools;
- those of school age in grant-aided schools; and
- young people aged 16.19 in full-time education;

As a designated public authority the CCEA is subject to Section 75 of the NI Act and has produced an Equality Scheme to affirm its commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

Boards of School Governors must have in place a written statement of its curriculum policy as well as regularly reviewing and (if necessary) updating the policy.

Boards of School Governors must also ensure that they send a copy of its curriculum policy (and copies of any subsequent updates to that policy) to its local Education & Library Board and also, in the case of catholic maintained schools, to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

26 Please see Section A.14.

27 There are five initial teacher training providers in this jurisdiction

All student teachers undertake training to deal with issues of diversity, cultural heritage and mutual understanding and respect in the classroom. Equipping student teachers with such skills is regarded as an integral element in teacher education and forms part of a teacher's professional development.

In addition, Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College have jointly developed the Diversity and Mutual Understanding (DMU) programme to become an integral aspect of study for all students studying on both the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) pathways. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion and establish ways of coping with issues such as identity, diversity and prejudice within the classroom environment.

The primary purpose of the DMU programme is to bring together people of diverse backgrounds to discuss issues and explore ways to enhance their personal and professional development. In years three and four of the BEd programme and in the 1-year PGCE programme, students are afforded the opportunity to engage in issues of their choice in some depth through a series of workshops presented by guest speakers.

28-30 Schools are required to deliver the statutory curriculum and associated assessment and reporting arrangements.

The Education and Training Inspectorate conducts inspections in schools and, if it encounters evidence that the revised curriculum has been set aside for any reason, it will be reported as part of the inspection procedures.

Part 3 – Challenges and General Comments

31-35 While human rights education within this jurisdiction has not specifically referenced the WPHRE, the revised curriculum has integrated consideration of human rights issues under many themes including Local and Global Citizenship, history, language and music.

All new education policies, or changes to existing education policies are subject to Equality and Human Rights screenings to assess the positive, and address the negative, impacts of the policies.

Policy makers also have access to a resource which highlights the requirements of both the Human Rights Act 1998 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.