

## Updated Briefing note to schools on the Integrated Education Bill – 9 February 2022

The Integrated Education Bill continues to pass to the next stage in the Assembly. The resignation of the First Minister will not stop this. While there are a number of amendments being proposed, they do not do enough to reduce the negative impact of the Bill on controlled schools. The Bill proposes new provisions for Integrated Education.

**What is the Integrated Education Bill?** The draft Bill proposes to support integrated education by placing duties on the Education Authority (EA) and the Department of Education (DE) to ensure that they have accurately assessed the demand for integrated education and are able to meet it. It requires any new school to be integrated first unless there is a specific reason why it cannot be. There are other duties placed on DE in relation to a strategy for integrated education and how they are reporting on delivering on it.

**What does it mean for controlled schools?** The implications of prioritising the integrated sector in this way is that other sectors are secondary in legislation. There is no duty on DE or EA to support controlled education and neither is there a duty to ensure that demand is met. This will have implications for admissions processes, area planning development proposals specifically for expansion of numbers and when looking at any future demand for controlled education. Whilst the Bill supports our controlled integrated schools we are specifically concerned that it disregards the open to all nature of all controlled schools.

**What has happened to date and what will happen next?** Recent changes in the NI Assembly will not impact on the progress of draft bill. It will still move to the Further Consideration Stage. This is the final stage at which the Bill can be amended. This will only allow new amendments so if there are no amendments, there will be no debate. There has been a slight postponement to allow the Bill proposer to check a number of legal points. After this the Bill will still move to the Final Stage, which could be completed by the middle of February. The Bill then passes for Royal Assent. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3AGTmfy>

<b>First Stage</b>	<b>1 June '21</b>	<b>Further Consideration Stage</b>	<b>w/c 21 February '22</b>
<b>Second Stage</b>	<b>6 July '21</b>	<b>(suggested)</b>	
<b>Committee Stage</b>	<b>24 November '21</b>	<b>Final Stage</b>	<b>TBC</b>
<b>Consideration Stage</b>	<b>18 January '22</b>	<b>Royal Assent</b>	<b>TBC</b>

### What are the key points CSSC is making?

- We fully support our children and young people being educated together.
- This is a complex piece of legislation that should be considered as part of the Independent Review of Education. The current amendments do not reduce the impact.
- It is important that all sectors are treated equally.
- Controlled schools are open to all.
- Controlled schools are not single identity schools.

### What action has CSSC taken to date?

- We have provided written evidence and given an oral briefing to the NI Assembly Education Committee on our concerns regarding the implications of the Bill for controlled schools.
- We have advocated on behalf of controlled schools with political representatives highlighting the issues and the diverse and open to all ethos of controlled schools.
- We have encouraged all controlled schools to promote their open to all nature - #OpenToAll.
- Read the CSSC response here: <https://bit.ly/CSSCIEBResponse>
- Watch the CSSC evidence briefing here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyi\\_hpmSV\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyi_hpmSV_c)

### What should we do next?

- CSSC will continue to advocate on behalf of controlled schools to political representatives.
- CSSC will engage with media.
- Schools and parents can communicate their concerns to their local representatives and to the Chair of the NI Assembly Education Committee by writing to the Committee Clerk.
- Schools can continue to highlight that they are open to all children and young people wherever they can including using the #OpenToAll.