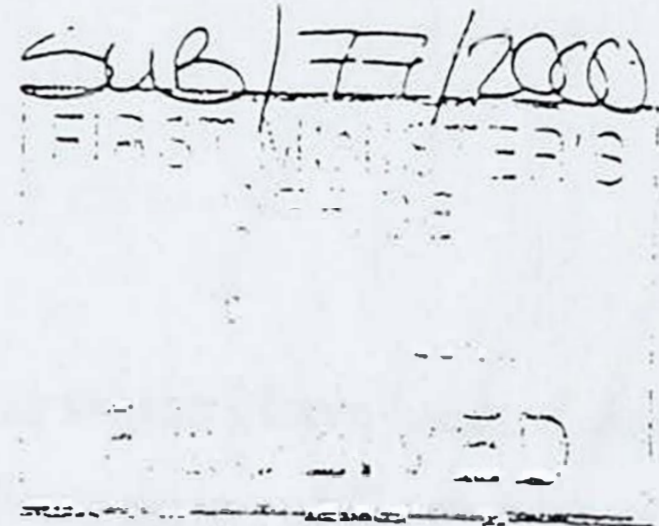


## Department of Education



FROM: MARTIN MCGUINNESS MP MLA  
Minister for Education

DATE: 19 January 2000

First Minister  
Deputy First Minister

cc: List attached

*Mr Lavery*  
*Mr Campbell*  
*Mr Girdgin*  
*Mr Hane*

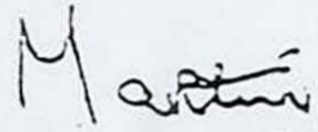
PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In your note to Ministers of 22 December you asked that we let you have, by 14 January, our proposals which should be considered for inclusion in the Programme of Government. I believe that this Programme will be one of the most significant documents which will issue on behalf of the Executive Committee in that it should indicate to the whole community the principles on which we are seeking to work and also the significant direction of our policies and strategies in each devolved area. I have sought to cover both those issues in the attached paper which my Permanent Secretary, Nigel Hamilton, circulated widely yesterday because I was out of the office.

In forwarding this to you, I would like to emphasise several points. Firstly, our Programme of Government should, I believe, take us through the life of the current Assembly and should include initiatives and areas for action which we would want to take during that 2½ year period. Secondly, of course, our ability to take these initiatives is directly linked to available resources during that period, and in particular to the outcome of the Spending Review which we will be undertaking during the coming months. Not only will the resulting Resource Allocation determine what new initiatives can be taken, but it will also determine the size of our Programmes in a number of important areas, for example, investment in capital programmes and maintenance. Thirdly, you will see that in the time available and against the background of uncertainty about future resources, it

has not been possible for me to set specific targets for each of the areas which I have listed. I do believe, however, that the setting of such targets in all aspects of our Programme of Government, with regular monitoring of progress towards achievement, is important.

I look forward to the opportunity of discussing my proposals with you in due course.



MARTIN MCGUINNESS MP MLA

CC LIST

Departmental Ministers

Mr Haughey

Mr Nesbitt

Mr Semple

Permanent Secretaries

## EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

### 1. PURPOSE

We will work with our partners in the education and youth services to ensure a world class education for all our children which will put pupils at the centre of education, motivate them, build their confidence and enrich their lives, and provide the foundation for a strong and vibrant economy.

Since Education is the key both to prosperity, and individual fulfilment, it must have the highest priority within any Programme for Government.

In our own situation, where we are moving away from a climate of conflict and division, Education has a central role to play in building an inclusive, tolerant and stable society.

The provision of Education at all levels is a central priority of this government.

### 2. PRINCIPLES

Our policies and strategies must be based on the principles of

- Promoting Excellence
- Providing Choice
- Enhancing Accessibility and
- Ensuring Equality

and the services to education and young people must be delivered, through partnership, as effectively and efficiently as possible.

### 3. ALL-ISLAND

- We will maximise the scope for co-operation and joint action within the education and youth services to co-ordinate and harmonise strategies and monitor their effectiveness.
- We will work closely with An Roinn Oideachais in the south.

### 4. PROMOTING EXCELLENCE

- We will set challenging and relevant standards and targets, including improvements in literacy and numeracy,

- we will raise achievements for all, particularly addressing low and under-achievement, by targeting educational need;
- we will complete the review of the curriculum and introduce greater flexibility to cater for the needs and aptitudes of all pupils;
- we will review the system of qualifications to ensure parity of esteem, especially for academic and vocational qualifications;
- we will improve careers provision and strengthen school-industry links;
- we will promote education for diversity, citizenship and human rights as key elements in the curriculum in schools and the youth service;
- we will implement the education technology strategy to optimise the use of technology for teaching and learning through the Classroom 2000 project and the Internet, and will provide an E-mail address for every pupil;
- we will invest in the quality and mobility of teachers and Principals through training, reviewing terms and conditions of service and use of technology;
- we will invest in the capital estate in schools and the youth service, both through direct capital funding and through innovative use of public private partnerships and also by funding of maintenance work.

## 5. PROVIDING CHOICE

- We will strengthen the opportunities for parental input to education;
- we will support the expansion of Irish-medium and integrated education in response to parental demand, and will establish a Council to promote Irish-medium education;
- we will review the viability criteria for new schools;
- we will review the policy for small and rural schools;
- we will develop the qualifications framework to ensure comparability and flexibility, especially at secondary and tertiary level;
- we will ensure adequate Youth Service provision in both statutory and voluntary sectors.

## 6. ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

- We will ensure universal free provision for the pre-school cohort (including naiscoilanna) and consider full-time provision and future quality and context;
- we will explore out of school provision, both during term-time and in holiday periods;
- we will provide suitable teaching and learning materials in all schools, relevant to the needs of teachers and pupils;
- we will reduce class sizes progressively, thereby increasing teacher/pupil contact time.

7. ENSURING EQUITY

- We will carry out a major review, and consultation on the second-level structures and selection, to meet the needs of all our young people;
- we will introduce common and equitable funding arrangements for all schools to accommodate the needs of schools in designated areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and also review the policy of local management of schools;
- we will finalise the New Targeting Social Need Action Plan for education and pursue vigorously the objective of greater social inclusion by everyone, including ethnic groups;
- we will re-focus the School Support Programme on those schools facing the severest disadvantage and set challenging targets for improvement;
- we will review the provision for children with special educational needs in all sectors, streamline the Code of Practice and provide further qualified professional support;
- we will review the examinations and assessment arrangements to ensure that they are suitable for education objectives.

8. DOING THINGS BETTER

- We will promote the concept of Best Value in the education and youth services and set specific targets for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness;
- we will shift resources from support services to mainstream education and youth provision;
- we will support the more effective use of technology to streamline the administration of the service;

- we will reduce the bureaucratic burden to free Boards, schools and the youth service to concentrate on their primary functions, and also ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities;
- we will create a forum to bring together all the key partners in education;
- we will ensure that the Department is suitably resourced and skilled to be as effective as possible in exercising its responsibilities.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

3.1 ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS

- (a) As Paper EC (00) 7 indicates, there should be a fundamental review of all aspects of public administration in Northern Ireland. This would then include all Education and Youth bodies and also the Department.
- (b) It will also be important for all Departments to complete Equality Schemes by June 2000.

3.2 BILATERALLY WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS

(a) With Department of Health and Public Safety

- (i) we will implement Child Protection policies and monitor their effectiveness;
- (ii) we will ensure appropriate inspection of dual education/residential facilities;
- (iii) we will enhance and implement strategies to address Drugs problems.

(b) With Department of Higher and Further Education and Training

- (i) we will develop future strategies for 16-19 cohort;
- (ii) we will assess the respective roles of schools and colleges to ensure maximum returns and minimum duplication.

(c) With DHFETE and DETI

- (i) we will develop the skills base, extend industry-education links and implement the recommendations in Strategy 2010;
- (ii) we will review Teacher Training needs.

(d) With DHFETE, DHPS and DARD

- (1) we will develop Inspection arrangements to analyse and monitor the impact of policies in these Departments.