

SUB/10/2004(JAN)

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From: David Woods
Head of Curriculum and Post-Primary Review

Date: 14 January 2004

To: Jane Kennedy

cc see distribution below

BRIEFING FOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON COSTELLO

Objective: To provide further material in preparation for the announcement.

Timescale: Urgent.

Recommendation:

1. That you indicate any changes to the briefing material and the speaking notes for Gerry and Steve Costello.
2. That you note the list of attendees.
3. That you note the additional material in course of preparation and which will be submitted for clearance shortly.

Presentational This material is being copied to EIS colleagues.

issues: a written statement for the Houses of Commons and Lords on

26 January, and

an article for News Letter and Irish News on 27 January.

Background

As promised in my note of 6 January I am now providing additional material.

2. A briefing pack (Tab A), for consideration and comments, comprising

- Key points to make
- Key features of the Report
- General lines to take; and
- Q&A material – general and organised by theme.

This material is work in progress and will be reviewed by senior colleagues in the next day or so.

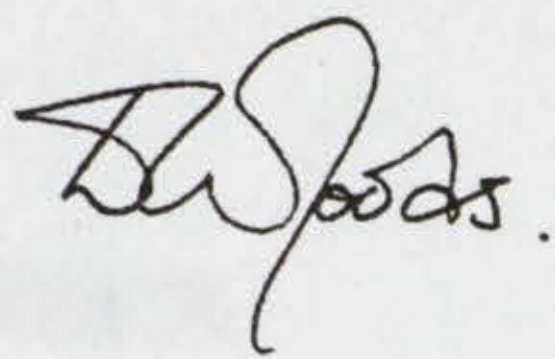
3. Also attached, for clearance, are drafts of the speaking notes for Gerry and Steve Costello (Tab B).

4. I would ask you to note the list of attendees for the announcement (Tab C).

5. Also in preparation are drafts of

- a press release;
- a written statement for the Houses of Commons and Lords on 26 January; and
- an article for News Letter and Irish News on 27 January.

This material needs to be synchronised with your main announcement, a revised draft of which was sent to you for clearance on 9 January.



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**cc Gerry McGinn
Eddie Rooney
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GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT ON COSTELLO REPORT

BRIEFING FOR LAUNCH

INDEX

Key Points to Make

Key Features of Report

General Lines to Take

Q&A Points – General

Q&A Points – by theme:

- Transfer Tests, Academic selection
 - Admissions Criteria
 - Grammar schools
 - Working Group v Burns
 - Entitlement Framework
 - Collaboration, including with FE
 - Etc
 - Etc
- Responses to the previous consultation also supported retention of academic selection, but I think in reality what people were saying was that they wanted to have an academic option, rather than academic selection as such.
- Those who advocate some other form of academic selection have yet to provide an alternative that would be any less stressful than the current version. The Working Group looked at this and likewise could find no viable alternative. So I believe we need to remove the test as soon as possible.
- Some important issues have still to be dealt with – in particular the admissions arrangements that will apply after the test is removed. We will be starting work on these issues immediately, and we will be consulting as we go.

KEY POINTS TO MAKE

- Working Group's report is pupil-centred – which I endorse strongly.
- In the time allotted to them, the Group was not in a position to resolve every issue, but I believe they have pointed a way forward which is genuinely in the best interests of our young people.
- There has been such a long debate on this, it has caused enormous uncertainty for pupils, parents, and schools.
- There has already been extensive consultation: we now need to reach a decision on the way forward. That is what I am doing today.
- The Group has recognised the complexity of the issues and has concluded that a 'quick fix' is not possible. We need to prepare the ground before we finally remove the transfer test.
- We're taking a pragmatic approach so as to create as smooth a transition as possible.
- I know, and the Working Group knew, that there are strongly held and diverse views about academic selection; but I agree with the Group that the priority belongs to the pupils, and not to institutional interests.
- Responses to the Burns consultation showed overwhelming support for removing the transfer test: that's what we will be doing – as soon as the conditions are right.
- Responses to the previous consultation also supported retention of academic selection, but I think in reality what people were saying was that they wanted to have **an academic option, rather than academic selection** as such.
- Those who advocate some other form of academic selection have yet to provide an alternative that would be any less stressful than the current version. The Working Group looked at this and likewise could find no viable alternative. So I believe we need to remove the test as soon as possible.
- Some important issues have still to be dealt with – in particular the admissions arrangements that will apply after the test is removed. We will be starting work on these issues immediately, and **we will be consulting as we go.**

KEY FEATURES OF REPORT

- Key concept is '**Entitlement Framework**' which aims to guarantee equality of access for all pupils to a wide range of course options, including vocational courses.
- This will help overcome the present great disparity of provision (eg ranging from 6 to 33 subjects at GCSE) and **for the first time secure a proportion of provision as being 'vocational' in nature.**
- This is **an important new concept** and will complement the revised statutory curriculum being proposed by CCEA. It is also an important boost to vocational education in all schools, including grammar. [Note: the Entitlement Framework does not impose mandatory requirements on pupils, but guarantees a greater **access**; the formal (CCEA) curriculum **does** impose mandatory requirements on pupils as to certain subjects that must be followed up to age 16.]
- The Entitlement Framework will require **extensive collaboration between schools and with FE colleges** in order to secure the full range of provision in each locality.
- **Transfer test is flawed in practice and academic selection is unsound in principle.** Last test should operate in Autumn 2008.
- Thereafter there will be **no academic selection.** Schools will **not** be permitted to use any alternative means of assessing ability (eg results of key stage assessments or information in the Pupil Profile).
- Transfer will henceforth be based primarily on pupil and parental choice.
- Popular schools may still be oversubscribed – though to a lesser degree as the range of provision is extended in all schools – and will therefore need to set **admissions criteria.**
- These new, post-test, admissions criteria will need to be carefully considered, taking account of research into the likely impact on application patterns etc. This research should be commissioned immediately.
- Arrangements for collaboration and the precise configuration of schools (including any new 'specialist' schools) in each area should be determined locally. There are no Burns-style collegiates.

General Lines to take

- The needs of pupils must be above all other considerations. I want to build on the strengths of the current system and provide all pupils with an education they see as relevant to their needs, that offers them choice and flexibility and allows them to keep their options open for as long as possible.
- Education needs to prepare all pupils for life and work in a rapidly changing technological world. Pupils who are engaged and motivated will produce higher standards and contribute to a society and economy better geared to meet the challenges of tomorrow.
- Change is unavoidable. There are weaknesses in our current arrangements which must be addressed and the decline in pupil numbers cannot be ignored.

Modernisation and Improvement Programme

- New post-primary arrangements cannot be seen in isolation. They are part of a much wider picture of modernisation and improvement which includes the implementation of a revised curriculum; an increasing role for ICT as new infrastructure is put in place; and the Strategic Investment Programme which provides a unique opportunity to modernise and update the schools estate.

Decisions should be taken locally

- The members of the Working Group were local people with immense experience of our education system. The Group's advice provides a clear way forward which builds on the areas of consensus in the Burns consultation.
- The review has already taken over 5 years. It is time to end the uncertainty about future arrangements. My decisions set out a way forward which will be in the best interests of all children, raise standards, and provide an education system fit for the future.
- It would be preferable for these decisions to be taken by a locally elected Assembly, but we cannot afford continuing uncertainty caused by any further delay in taking decisions.

Need for further consultation

- The advice of the Working Group took account of the responses to the most extensive consultation ever on an education issue. Further general consultation would simply go over the same arguments, take us no further, and delay decisions. It is time to move forward.
- There are still issues to be resolved and there will be a need for legislation. These will provide the opportunity for consultation on the detail of the proposals and of course there will be consultation at local level about proposals involving local schools.

The views expressed in the Household Response Forms were ignored.

- The Working Group was required to take account of the responses to the Burns consultation including the diversity of views on academic selection.
- The Group considered that it was educationally unsound to select pupils and commit them to particular pathways at age 11 and unsound to believe that the more able should follow only academic courses.
- The proposals maintain an academic pathway for pupils who decide they wish to follow such a route.

Ending academic selection will:

- **Sound the death knell for grammar schools?**
My decisions do not signify the end of any types of schools. All can exist under these arrangements. Schools which have a traditional academic ethos can continue but they must be able to offer pupils access to vocational courses alongside academic courses.
- **Create "bog standard" comprehensives?**
My decisions are not imposing "one size fits all" schools. We need an education system which builds on our strengths and provides the flexibility and choice needed to ensure that the educational needs of all pupils are met. Proposals about school provision in an area will be determined locally to take account of local needs, wishes and circumstances.
- **Lower standards?**
Providing education which is more relevant to individual pupils' needs, and which is flexible and offers choice, will engage and motivate pupils and raise standards for all pupils.

Little difference from Burns

- These decisions build on the aspects of the Burns recommendations that were well received and includes the new concept of an Entitlement Framework. Unlike Burns, new post-primary arrangements will be determined locally to meet local needs, wishes and circumstances rather than centrally prescribed.

No need for such major upheaval

- NI has many good schools but we can't afford to be complacent. Change is unavoidable. The decline in pupil numbers is already having an impact and this will continue. We cannot allow this to blight the education of pupils by failing to tackle the issue.
- We live in a rapidly changing and increasingly technological world. We need an education system capable of responding to these changes to allow us to compete with our economic competitors and provide the economic and social base for future society. What has served us in the past will not necessarily serve us well in the future.

This announcement is a fudge, the real issues are not being addressed. Too many important issues remain to be decided [admissions criteria, open enrolment, transport, funding]

- My decisions are based on the Working Group's advice. Its members are committed to doing what is best for education in Northern Ireland. It is not in their interests to fudge any of the issues.
- My decisions have set out the broad parameters and timetable for the way forward. They provide the context for my Department, working with the education partners, to consider the detailed issues. The impetus now exists to take the process forward.
- Proposals for schools will be developed at local level and there will be consultation to take account of local needs, wishes and circumstances.

No alternative test/means of academic selection

- I have yet to hear anyone suggesting a viable alternative that would involve less stress for children.
- Academic selection has been a feature of the Northern Ireland education system for over 50 years. In that time many different types of selection have been used and each one in turn has been replaced in an effort to find a better way. The Group looked at alternative arrangements and concluded that none would be any less problematic than the current arrangements.

It will all take too long

- The tests cannot be ended until other parts of the jigsaw are in place. The new transfer arrangements, based on parental and pupil choice, require the new curriculum and the entitlement framework to be in place, the Pupil Profile to be fully developed and a new culture of cooperation and collaboration.
- Change must be properly managed. Schools and parents have to be fully prepared and we must avoid chaos in the system.

Entitlement framework/cooperation and collaboration are unworkable

- The Entitlement Framework is an exciting new approach to guarantee all pupils access to a wide range of learning opportunities suited to their needs, aptitudes and interests, irrespective of their background and circumstances, where they live or the school they attend.
- The responses to Burns showed support for increased cooperation and collaboration. Our schools, FE colleges and training providers all have something to offer and we should make optimum use of the expertise and facilities available. This will require a new culture of cooperation and collaboration and new approaches, including the use of information technology.
- The development package announced last year is allowing models of collaboration to be explored in order to inform best practice.

Abolishing academic selection runs counter to what is happening in England

- The position in Northern Ireland is very different from that in England. Academic selection is a significant feature of post-primary arrangements in Northern Ireland and is very 'high stakes'. In England it represents only a small part of the system.
- The same principle of choice and diversity applies in both jurisdictions. Parents and pupils in NI will have a range of school types from which to choose.

Teachers

We have a highly committed and professional teaching force and I am confident they will see the benefits of the proposed changes for all pupils. Teachers will be supported in implementing change.

Q&A BRIEF

GENERAL ISSUES

How can you set a date for ending the tests when new admissions arrangements have not been decided?

- Admissions will be on the basis of informed pupil and parental choice. More work needs to be done to determine admissions criteria to be used where schools are oversubscribed. The timetable for ending the tests provides for this and for the implementation of other aspects of my decisions.

This will never work/ proposals are “pie in the sky”

- I believe that the Group’s advice represents a sound basis on which to move forward.
- Putting the needs of pupils above other considerations, guaranteeing pupils access to a very wide range of courses under the Entitlement Framework, mean that pupils’ options will be kept open as long as possible.
- This will remove the “high stakes” nature of the current arrangements and help to create the climate in which the new arrangements will operate.

Why should schools change?

- Pupils needs should be above all other considerations. All pupils should have access to the wide range of subjects within the Entitlement Framework, including academic and vocational courses. For most schools, this will require significant changes to how they operate at present. I believe this will enrich and enhance the educational experiences of all pupils.

What happens if some schools refuse to cooperate?

- I don’t think this is likely. All schools will want to be involved at local level in the discussions about what each school should offer in order to provide the full ‘Entitlement’ in that area.
- I intend that the Entitlement Framework should be given a statutory footing.

What will these changes mean for standards?

- Pupils will be better engaged and motivated if what they are taught is relevant to their needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. I believe the changes will raise standards for all children and give them the best possible education to prepare them for life and work.

Decisions are not likely to be universally accepted

- The advice from the Working Group builds on the agreement on a number of key issues from the Burns consultation and takes account of the diverse views on academic selection.
- I believe the Group has taken a sensible and pragmatic approach and proposed arrangements that will be in the best interests of all children.

Surely implementing these changes will require massive rationalisation?

- The amount and type of school provision required will be determined at local level in conjunction with managing authorities.
- Rationalisation is certainly a possibility in some instances: the substantial decline in the school age population alone means that change is unavoidable.
- Managing authorities have had to hold back on development plans because of uncertainty about future post-primary arrangements. They can now look afresh at the circumstances of each area and determine what provision is needed.

Will future arrangements be piloted?

- Some of the work necessary to create the conditions for change are already being piloted, for example, initial pilots of the pupil profile and collaboration as part of the Development Package announced in April.
- Funding provided through the Development Package could also be used to facilitate a small number of early pilots involving larger-scale collaboration, which could serve as pathfinders for similar developments elsewhere.

TRANSFER TESTS AND ACADEMIC SELECTION

No alternative system of academic selection?

- The Group looked at alternative arrangements and concluded that none would be any less problematic than the current arrangements.
- Those who advocate some other form of selection have not offered a viable alternative that would remove the 'high stakes' and high stress elements of the present arrangements.
- The transfer test, in various forms, has been a feature of the Northern Ireland education system for over 50 years. It is widely disliked. Many different types of selection have been used and each one in turn has been replaced in an effort to find a better way.

Why 2008?

- An immediate end to the Tests without new arrangements in place would cause huge disruption and could result in significant over-subscription of popular schools.
- Time is needed to create the conditions for the new arrangements to work, for example the changes to the curriculum, the introduction of the Pupil Profile, the development of local collaborative arrangements, and the introduction of new admissions criteria.

This announcement is a fudge, the real issues are not being addressed.

- My decisions are based on the advice from the Working Group, based on their professional expertise and their knowledge of our system. It was not in their interests to fudge any of the issues.
- The advice provides a clear way forward. Proposals will be developed at local level and there will be consultation to take account of local needs, wishes and circumstances.

Have the views of the Household Response Forms regarding academic selection been ignored?

- The Group considered the views on academic selection from all of the strands of the Burns consultation, including the responses to the Household Response Form. They concluded that it was educationally unsound to

commit pupils to particular pathways at age 11, and unsound to believe that more-able pupils should follow only academic courses. However, an academic route will still be available for those who wish to choose it.

Why not move academic selection to 14 instead of abolishing it?

- The Group considers that it is unsound to believe that the more able should follow only academic courses and I accept this view. Informed pupil and parental choice will ensure that pupils get the education which best meets their needs, interests and aptitudes.

Parents will not want their children to be “guinea pigs”.

- That’s precisely why we’re not rushing headlong into immediate change by ending the Transfer Tests straight away.
- Change has to be properly managed. We need to ensure that schools and parents are fully prepared for the changes and that we avoid chaos in our schools.

Grammar schools will be even more oversubscribed.

- Under the new arrangements all schools will offer access to the Entitlement Framework – including both academic and vocational courses - and schools should become more equally valued. This should reduce the heavy oversubscription on schools.
- Some schools will always be popular and it will be important to have clear admissions criteria to ensure that admissions are fair and transparent.

If grammar schools choose to select fewer pupils on the basis of the Transfer Test, some parents may feel their children are being unfairly treated.

- It is up to individual grammar schools to decide if they should start to admit pupils on a non-selective basis in advance of the tests ending and how they might do this. It will be important not to increase pressure on pupils in this interim period.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

What criteria will schools use?

- Each school will be able to choose, from a limited menu, the admissions criteria that best suits its ethos. At local level, schools will work together to ensure that the criteria used by schools in the area meet the interests of all pupils.
- My Department will commission research into current patterns of admissions and demographic trends and produce a list of criteria from which schools can choose.

Why did the Working Group not determine admissions criteria?

- The Group considered that research would be required into existing admissions patterns and demographic trends to enable the impact of new criteria to be fully assessed.
- My Department will be taking this work forward, in conjunction with the key interests, with the aim of having potential criteria available for consideration by the end of this year.

Will the 'geographic' element of the admissions criteria not just end up as 'selection by postcode' the same as in Burns?

- There are many different ways to define such things as catchment areas or feeder primary schools.
- The purpose of the research and subsequent consultation will be to find the arrangements which are fairest to pupils in each area.

If grammar schools choose to select fewer pupils on the basis of the Transfer Test, some parents may feel their children are being unfairly treated.

- It is up to individual grammar schools to decide if they should start to admit pupils on a non-selective basis in advance of the tests ending and how they might do this. It will be important not to increase pressure on pupils in this interim period.

- All schools in an area should work together through their Local Planning and Development Partnership to ensure the best possible provision for all the pupils in an area.

Parents may feel aggrieved that different arrangements apply in different areas.

- The arrangements in an area are for consideration at local level. The wishes of parents in the area will be an important factor in shaping local decisions.
- We have to remember that there already differences in the arrangements at local level.

What happens if parents ignore or are unable to make the best use of advice from schools? How will differences between parents and teachers/schools be reconciled?

- The wishes of pupils and parents will be paramount.
- Obviously we want parents to choose wisely, opting for the kind of education best suited to their child's needs and interests.
- Parents will have the benefit of better information on their child's progress and aptitudes, from the new Pupil Profile.

There will be greater access in some areas than in others.

- One of the main problems at present is that there is not equality of access – even in schools within the same locality.
- The purpose of the Entitlement Framework is to ensure greater consistency in educational provision, so that all young people have greater opportunity to access a range of courses that best meets their needs, regardless of where they live or which school they attend.

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS/SCHOOL TYPES **RESTRICTED-POLICY**

Why damage Grammar schools, which are the strength of our system?

- The new arrangements build on the strengths of our system. Every school can have a place under the new arrangements, provided they meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.
- Schools offering a traditional academic emphasis can continue as part of the new arrangements, but they must also offer pupils access to a guaranteed minimum number of vocational courses.
- It will be a matter for parents, using all the information that will be available to them, to decide which school provides the type of education best suited to their child's needs.

Will grammar schools survive?

- Grammar schools have a full part to play under the new arrangements. They can maintain an academic ethos if they wish by providing an academic curricular emphasis for their pupils as part of the Entitlement Framework provision.

How can you say there will still be grammar schools when they will not be allowed to select on the basis of academic ability?

- Schools offering an academic ethos may be chosen by those parents who feel that their child will benefit from that form of education, taking advice from teachers and based on the information in the Pupil Profile.

Why introduce a vocational requirement into schools which provide an academic education?

- The new arrangements will offer pupils a greater range of educational opportunities as pupils mature. The aim is to provide breadth, choice and flexibility in a more relevant curriculum which should better engage and motivate all pupils, including those in grammar schools.

What are specialist schools?

- Specialist schools will have an emphasis or expertise in a particular curricular area as well as providing access to the full range of courses within the Entitlement Framework. Through collaboration and sharing best practice with neighbouring schools, this new type of school will benefit all schools in the local area.
- As in the case of all other schools, specialist schools will not be able to select pupils on the basis of ability or aptitude.

Will specialist schools be the same as in England?

- Unlike England, specialist schools will emerge from local consideration of the needs of pupils in an area.
- The detailed arrangements are under consideration. We do not at this stage anticipate that they will be required to generate revenue from local businesses, though there may of course be opportunities for them to do so subsequently. Nor will they select pupils on the basis of aptitude.

The new arrangements will result in comprehensives or all-ability schools.

- A universal comprehensive model is not being prescribed. All existing school types have a place in the new arrangements.
- Schools in local areas will work together to decide how best to provide for the needs of the children in their areas and the contribution that each school will make.

Not every locality will have an Integrated or Irish-medium option.

- These are small but growing sectors and the availability of these options will depend on local needs, wishes and circumstances.

WORKING GROUP v BURNS

Working Group remit too restrictive?

- The remit of the Group asked them to take account of the responses from the Burns consultation. It is evident from their report that they did this throughout their work.
- In all other respects, the Group members were in a position to exercise their own professional judgement in determining the advice they wished to offer.

The majority of Group members had no intention of letting academic selection continue.

- The members were chosen because of the range and depth of their knowledge and experience of the education system.
- The Group was required to take account of the responses to the Burns consultation, including the diversity of views on academic selection. They are also very well aware of the complexity and sensitivity of these issues.
- I am satisfied that their advice is in the best interests of all children.

How is Costello different from Burns?

- These decisions build on the aspects of the Burns recommendations that were well received.
- However, at the centre of the new arrangements is the new concept of an Entitlement Framework guaranteeing all pupils access to a wide range of courses irrespective of their background or circumstances, where they live, or the school they attend.
- Unlike Burns, collaborative arrangements will not be centrally prescribed, but will be determined locally to meet local needs, wishes and circumstances.

Is this not Burns by the back door?

- A number of the Burns recommendations were well received including the ending of the Transfer Tests, the guiding principles, the Pupil Profile, and the need for better cooperation and collaboration among schools (but not for Collegiates). The Costello Group built upon these and proposed arrangements that will be in the best interests of all children.

The local arrangements/collaboration are just 'collegiates' by another name.

- Absolutely not. Collegiates were pre-determined groupings. The present report leaves arrangements for collaboration to local decision.
- Schools will retain their autonomy. The nature and extent of the collaboration will be determined by what is required to secure the full Entitlement Framework for the pupils in the area.

Why should all pupils be required to have access to vocational courses?

- Young people leaving school need knowledge and skills relevant to life and work in the 21st century to enable them to contribute fully to society and the economy. Providing access to a wide and varied range of courses, will enable young people to gain the necessary knowledge and skills.

Is it realistic to specify that pupils should have access to 24 courses at KS4 and 27 at post-16? How will this be enforced?

- These minimum figures are what some pupils currently have available to them. The Group sought to ensure that all pupils have the same right of access to courses and that there should be minimum numbers of academic and vocational courses on offer.
- These arrangements may be more demanding for some schools than others but I am satisfied they can be delivered through effective cooperation and collaboration.

ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK AND CURRICULUM

How can curriculum based arrangements be announced when decisions on the curriculum have not been taken?

- CCEA has been consulting about its Key Stage 3 and 4 curriculum proposals and has amended these in response to the consultation. I believe the revised proposals will fit well with the concept of the Entitlement Framework.

When will the new curriculum be introduced?

- CCEA has now completed its consultation on Key Stage 3 and 4, and I am considering its finalised proposals for a revised curriculum. Legislation to underpin the new curriculum is due to come into effect from September 2005, however, aspects of the revised curriculum will be phased in over a number of years.

What if schools decide not to offer the Entitlement Framework?

- The Entitlement Framework is a key element of the Groups proposals and I believe it should become a statutory requirement for all post-primary schools. My Department will bring forward the necessary legislative changes in due course.

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- These arrangements may be more demanding for some schools than others but I am satisfied they can be delivered through effective cooperation and collaboration.

How will the Department ensure that each pupil studies a mixture of academic and vocational courses?

- The objective is to ensure that pupils have **access** to a wide range of courses including academic and vocational options. The choice of courses will be a matter for each pupil to decide.

If vocational education is so important, why not make it compulsory for pupils to take at least some vocational courses?

- We believe in choice and flexibility. The curriculum arrangements proposed by CCEA will ensure that every pupil gets the educational essentials. Beyond that, pupils and their parents should be able to choose.
- I do however believe that it would be beneficial to everyone – and to the NI economy – if a greater number of pupils followed at least some vocational courses as part of their schooling. I think that, over time, these attractive courses will become much better established in our schools.

How much time will be given to extension and enrichment courses? How can access be ensured?

- It will be for each school to decide on the arrangements for including extension and enrichment opportunities within the provision made by the school. The Department will consider if guidance is necessary.

Cooperation/Collaboration is untried

- There are already some good examples of collaboration, which are benefiting pupils considerably.
- The Development package announced last year is to allow models of collaboration to be explored and this work will continue. It will identify issues to be addressed during the implementation period and will also provide examples of good practice for other schools and colleges.

Additional resources will be necessary

- Developing and managing these arrangements will place additional demands on schools. This is a key element of the Entitlement Framework and is one of the areas where I will be seeking additional resources to implement the new arrangements.

COLLABORATION / ROLE OF FE

A culture of collaboration does not and will not properly exist.

- The new arrangements focus on the needs of young people rather than the needs or interests of schools. There are already some examples of useful collaboration between schools and with the FE sector.
- Part of the Development Package which I announced last year is to allow models of collaboration to be explored. The lessons from these models will help schools in developing the types of arrangements which best suit the needs of their pupils.

Pupils moving between institutions will waste time

- The proposals do not envisage pupils constantly on the move between different settings. No one wants to waste pupils' or teachers' valuable time.
- Collaboration should be organised so as to minimise disruption to the school day and there are a number of measures which can help achieve this - such as synchronised timetabling, distance learning and e-learning.
- Some schools are already using electronic links to provide distance learning arrangements with their local FE college.

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What can FE colleges provide? How will FE be involved?

- FE colleges have specialist expertise and facilities and can provide a greater range of vocational and other courses for pupils. FE colleges will be part of the local planning arrangements and their input to the overall provision required will be agreed in that context.

Will parents want their children taught in an FE college?

- The aim is to increase learning opportunities for pupils and ensure they have access to high-quality teaching and resources. Young people will also have a greater understanding of the range of opportunities the FE colleges have on offer for post-16 or post-18 courses.
- FE provision can be made by pupils attending an FE college for a small proportion of their school week or by FE teachers teaching in schools for part of the week.

Implications of the FE Review?

- I hope to be in a position shortly to publish the FE review. DEL and DE will work together to ensure that, in the subsequent planning and implementation phase, the provision for young people in the 14-19 age group is coherent, meets their needs and those of the NI economy.

Is cooperation and collaboration another name for collegiates?

- There was little support for the concept of Collegiates in the Burns consultation, but widespread support for cooperation and collaboration.
- The cooperation and collaboration outlined in these new arrangements is a more flexible concept. Arrangements will be developed at a local level to meet local needs and to ensure that all young people have access to the Entitlement Framework. Arrangements will be flexible and may change over time according to local needs.

Small sixth forms. Why not allow schools to have their own provision?

- The Entitlement Framework guarantees all post-16 pupils access to a minimum of 27 courses. It will be for schools in an area, working through the Local Planning and Development Partnership and to decide how best to use the available resources in the interest of the young people of the area.
- It will be more difficult for small 6th forms to provide that access and my Department will be giving consideration to viability criteria for sixth forms.

Disaffected pupils

- Across all the sectors schools are already dealing with difficult pupils. It is important to look at why pupils are difficult and disengaged. Many pupils disengage from education mainly because they do not consider it relevant.
- The new arrangements offer pupils the opportunity to access a range of learning pathways that best suits their individual needs, which should result in more engaged and motivated pupils who wish to learn.

Where circumstances require it, schools will have access to a range of options including temporary placements to address behavioural problems with a view to reintegrating pupils back into mainstream schools.

• SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Is the Entitlement Framework appropriate/realistic for SEN pupils?

The Entitlement Framework fully applies to SEN pupils whether in mainstream or special schools. SEN pupils, like all others, should have access to learning pathways that best suit their needs, aptitudes, interests and aspirations.

Will Special Schools be included in the LPDPs?

Special schools have an important role to play in the overall provision in local areas. They will be fully involved in developing local arrangements through the Local Planning and Development Partnerships.

PUPIL PROFILE

What will the Pupil Profile contain?

- The Pupil Profile will be piloted extensively by CCEA, to ensure that teachers are satisfied that the arrangements are robust.
- It is anticipated that the Profile will contain detailed information on the pupil's achievements (not just exam results), progress, interests, aptitudes, and participation in enrichment activities. It will provide pupils and parents with a range of information to help them make informed choices.

Why not use the Pupil Profile as a selection tool?

- The Pupil Profile will not provide a single objective score that would allow pupils to be ranked and therefore cannot be used as a tool for selection.

How will the Department ensure that schools do not use the Pupil Profile to select?

- New legislation will prohibit schools from using the Pupil Profile to select pupils for admission.

SCHOOLS ESTATE

Will the viability of some post-primary schools be put at risk?

- Some small schools with a limited curricular offering may find it difficult, even with partnership working, to offer the Entitlement Framework. However, new arrangements will be determined at a local level and this may include the retention of a number of smaller schools.

It will take time to work out what the investment needs are. Will education not miss out on the resources under the Strategic Investment Programme?

- We will be working urgently with our education partners to review capital projects currently in the pipeline to ensure that they are still appropriate under the new arrangements.
- We will keep any delay to a minimum so that we continue to address speedily the major backlog in priority schemes.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Decision should be made by a local minister.

- The review has been running for almost 6 years now and I am anxious to avoid further delay and uncertainty. In the absence of political agreement amongst the NI parties, I have made these decisions based on the Working Group's advice on what is in the best interests of all young people.

Will a devolved administration overturn the Minister's decisions?

- I cannot speculate about what might emerge on the wider political issues. Throughout the review, a co-operative approach has been adopted involving all the key education interests in Northern Ireland and I believe these decisions represents the best way forward.

What impact will the current political situation have on the implementation of the new arrangements?

Now that a decision has been taken, schools, managing authorities and DE can begin the process to implement the new arrangements. There are key elements on which there will be consultation as we move forward.

Indecent haste: decisions taken without consultation?

- The Group took into account the views expressed during the extensive consultation on the Burns Report in formulating its proposals. Further general consultation would merely revisit old arguments and cause further delays in addressing the weaknesses of the current arrangements.
- We cannot put off decisions any longer. We must end the uncertainty.
- There will be opportunities for consultation at local level when proposals are being developed, and on any specific legislative changes that are required.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMESCALE AND INTERIM PERIOD

The new arrangements will take too long to put in place.

- Sufficient time must be allowed for the smooth introduction of the changes required and to create the conditions for the new arrangements to work. An immediate end to the test would create a huge demand for places in popular schools.

What will happen in the interim period?

- In the interim, schools will be auditing their provision and working together in Local Planning and Development Partnerships to develop proposals for new local arrangements. They will also begin implementing the changes to the curriculum and introducing the Pupil Profile.
- It will be for each school, in conjunction with other schools in the locality, to determine the pace at which they start to implement the necessary changes to deliver the Entitlement Framework.

Can the new arrangements be introduced sooner?

- Steps can be taken immediately to move away from the Transfer Test to the new system. Grammar schools can decide to end selection on the basis of ability and adapt their admissions criteria accordingly.

Who will determine the membership of the partnerships?

- Members of the Area Planning and Development Partnerships will be drawn from those bodies that will promote and manage change within the education sector. The organisations from which members of the Costello group were drawn provide an indication of the range of interests to be involved.
- Members of the Local Planning and Development Partnerships will be drawn from all schools and FE Colleges in the relevant locality.

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES

What is meant by a local area?

- The “local areas” will be determined by the Area Planning and Development Partnerships. Account will be taken of information on local schools, geographical factors, demographic information. There will also be consultation with school principals.

Additional bureaucracy on the education system?

- The aim is to help schools through the change process by supporting and facilitating local discussions and decision-making. These support arrangements will build on existing structures in the Education and Library Boards at area level.

What are the different roles and responsibilities of the different partnerships?

- The Department of Education will provide leadership and direction to both partnerships and assume overall responsibility for the implementation of the new arrangements.
- Area Planning and Development Partnerships will facilitate, guide and support the Local Planning and Development Partnerships, evaluate their proposals against the Entitlement Framework, and co-ordinate arrangements across the ELB area.
- Local Planning and Development Partnerships are groups of local schools which, in consultation with parents and the wider public, will develop, implement, and evaluate new arrangements in their area.

What happens if relations within Local Planning and Development Partnerships break down?

- Local Planning and Development Partnerships are new concepts that require a change of culture and attitude to work effectively. Area Planning and Development Partnerships will facilitate the work of the schools in the Local Planning and Development Partnerships and provide support and advice in dealing with any issues.

RESOURCES

- Until specific arrangements emerge at local level reliable estimating is impossible. I will work with my Ministerial colleagues to secure the necessary resources to enable the new arrangements to be implemented.
- Removing the planning uncertainties will enable managing authorities to bring forward projects for consideration as part of the Strategic Investment Programme, as part of the urgent work we are doing to redress the past under-investment in the schools estate.

TEACHERS

Teacher Support

- We have a highly committed and professional teaching force. I am confident that they will see the benefits of the proposed changes for all pupils. The implementation arrangements will ensure that teachers and schools will be supported in taking the proposals forward and developing new arrangements for their areas.

Teacher training

- The timeframe for introducing the new arrangements will allow adequate time for teacher training.
- Resources will be made available to support teacher training and development.

POLICIES TO BE REVIEWED

Open Enrolment

Will popular schools [grammar schools] be able to use local flexibility to expand at the expense of weaker schools?

- Proposals for new arrangements at local level will be determined through discussion and agreement involving all the schools. The aim will be to make the best possible provision for all pupils.
- The Working Group recommended greater flexibility at a local level in relation to enrolments and admissions numbers. My officials will examine this issue and determine the detailed arrangements and whether legislative changes are required.

Transport Policy

What will the new arrangements mean for transport policy?

- The Working Group recommended that the current Home to School Transport Policy should be reviewed to ensure that it supports and facilitates the implementation of the Entitlement Framework. I have asked my officials to examine this issue immediately.

LEGISLATION

Will legislation be required?

- Legislation will be required to give the Entitlement Framework statutory authority. My officials are considering whether other legislative changes are required to implement the new arrangements. This work will be taken forward immediately.
- There will be consultation on proposals for new legislation.

How long will it take to introduce new legislation?

- This will depend on the nature of the legislative change required.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ENGLAND

Will the Tomlinson Report impact on Northern Ireland?

- The Tomlinson Report, when it is published, will deal specifically with the education system in England and it will be a matter for the Minister responsible for Northern Ireland to decide if its recommendations could benefit the system here.

The Review of Post Primary Education has been ongoing since 1998 when research into our current system was commissioned. This was followed by the establishment of the Independent Review Body which produced the Burns Report. Subsequently, the Burns Report was issued for consultation in the biggest ever consultation exercise on an education issue.

Following the publication of the responses to the consultation, the Post-Primary Review Working Group was established to provide advice to the Minister on future arrangements for post-primary education, taking account of the consultation responses. The Minister received this advice at the end of November, and today sees the publication of the government's response to this advice.

We will hear first from Steve Costello, the Chairman of the Working Group, who will say a few words about the group and their deliberations. Then the Minister with responsibility for Education, the Right Honourable Jane Kennedy will outline the Government's response and the way forward for post-primary education.

Launch of the New Post-Primary Arrangements

Speech for Gerry McGinn

Good morning everyone. I'd like to welcome you all. In particular, I would like to welcome many of our education partners to today's event and thank you for taking the time to be here. Today is a very important day for education as it marks a major step forward for post-primary education.

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We will hear first from Steve Costello, the Chairman of the Working Group, who will say a few words about the group and their deliberations. Then the Minister with responsibility for Education, the Right Honourable Jane Kennedy will outline the Government's response and the way forward for post-primary education.

There are still some issues that require further work, but in the main, I think we have crossed a vision for the future. The changes proposed will present challenges to all parts of the education service. But if it is properly managed it is achievable. All sectors in the education service will need to work together in a culture of real partnership as never before.

It is for the Minister to decide what to do with the advice we have given her, but the members are very clear that now is the time for decisions: the time to provide a clear route of the way ahead. We need our young people to lead.

Launch of the New Post-Primary Arrangements

Speech for Steve Costello

Good morning everyone. It seems like no time ago that I was here in Castle Buildings meeting the Minister when she announced the establishment of the Working Group. I felt very privileged to be asked to Chair the Group and I know that all of the members also felt privileged to be involved. We were under no illusions that this was a formidable task and a heavy responsibility, but the Group was committed and dedicated to the task. I would like to thank each of the members of the group for their diligence and hard work. It is a tribute to their experience and expertise that we have reached this point today.

The members brought to the table a tremendous breadth of knowledge and experience and different perspectives on many issues, but we all had one thing in common and that was to ensure that whatever recommendations we brought forward would create better opportunities for all of the children of Northern Ireland. Putting the interests of the pupil first was central to our thinking. We reached a view first on what educational opportunities should be accessible to each pupil. Only then did we turn our minds to structures and systems.

We have managed to produce a report for the Minister in a very short space of time. Despite the different backgrounds of members the report has the unanimous support and agreement of all of the members of the group.

There is much that is good about education in Northern Ireland. We want to build on that to ensure that all young people, regardless of background or circumstance, are able to reach their potential and to make a full and positive contribution to society and the economy in the future. I believe that the advice given to the Minister will achieve that objective.

There are still some issues that require further work, but in the main, I think we have created a vision for the future. The changes proposed will present challenges to all parts of the education service. But if it is properly managed it is achievable. All sectors in the education service will need to work together in a culture of real partnership as never before.

It is for the Minister to decide what to do with the advice we have given her, but the members are very clear that now is the time for decisions; the time to provide a clear view of the way ahead. We owe our young people no less.

Costello Report Launch: Invitees

- Chairpersons and Chief Executives of
Education and Library Boards
CCMS
CCEA
NICIE
CnaG
- Chairpersons and Secretaries of
GBA
Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC)
- Vice Chancellors of
Queen's University
University of Ulster
- Director of BIFHE
- Representatives of
Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC)
3 Main Protestant Churches
Northern Catholic Bishops
5 main teacher unions (INTO, ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, UTU)
- Costello Working Group members