

ADVICE TO
JK FROM
COSTELLO

26/11/03

SUB 261/03
(Nov)

FROM: David Woods
Head of Curriculum & Post Primary Review Division

DATE: 26 November 2003

To: 1. Gerry McGinn [Approved by Mr McGinn 26/11]
2. Jane Kennedy

cc see distribution below

Objective: To announce receipt of the Costello Working Group's advice.

Issue: Public interest in advice from the Costello Group on future Post-primary arrangements.

Timescale: Immediate

Recommendation: That you approve the attached press release for issue on Monday 1 December 2003.

Presentational Issues: There will be intense interest in what the Group's advice says, and when it will be published. A question relating to clarity for current P5's can also be expected. Lines to take dealing with each of these issues are attached.

On a more damaging note, it is possible (based on previous experience) that elements of the Report could begin to leak out. To begin to comment on what is, at this stage, essentially speculation, would be counter productive and a short holding line to this effect is also attached. Political antennae will be highly tuned to what has become a manifesto issue for all local parties.

This has been agreed by the Press Office.

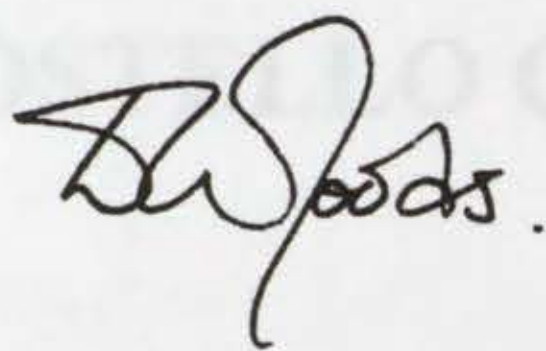
Background

The final meeting of the Post-Primary Review Working Group, chaired by Steve Costello, will take place on 28 November 2003. At the meeting, the Group will sign off the final report containing the advice on future post-primary arrangements in line with its remit.

2. There has been a high level of interest in the work of the Group in the education sector, the wider public and particularly in the media. As the deadline for the completion of the work approaches, there is a growing expectation that the findings of the group will be made immediately available. The Belfast Telegraph carried a report on 21 November under the heading "Pressure on for 11-plus report to be published". This report carried quotes from Danny Kennedy and Fern Turner (NAHT) calling for the Costello Report to be published as soon as possible. On issuing the short press statement to confirm your receipt of the report, the media are likely to continue this line of questioning, and to seek information as to when you will make your decision on the way forward.
3. Apart from the political considerations of publishing the advice at the present time, it will be important that you (or a Minister in a devolved administration) should have the time to consider the advice fully before determining the next stage of the review, including the publication of the advice.
4. At this stage it should be sufficient to acknowledge receipt of the report and indicate that you will announce the next steps as soon as you have fully considered the recommendations of the report.

5. Attached are:

- a draft press statement which has been cleared with Press Office; and
- Line to Take briefing, should you be asked for comment.



David Woods

☎ 59427

Email: david.woods@deni.gov.uk

**cc Eddie Rooney
Leslie Ashe
Des Whyte
Jill Garrett**

Draft Press Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10am - 1 December 2003

JANE KENNEDY MP RECEIVES REPORT FROM THE COSTELLO GROUP

Jane Kennedy today announced that she has received the report on future post-primary arrangements from Steve Costello, Chairman of the Post-Primary Review Working Group.

Commenting today Jane Kennedy said:

"I want to thank Steve Costello and each of the members for their report"

"The Report deals with many complex issues and will require detailed consideration before announcements can be made about the next stage of the review, including the publication of the report, the shape of future post-primary arrangements and the Transfer Test after 2004. However parents with children currently in P5 can be assured that they will be notified in good time of any alterations that may directly affect their children."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The intention to establish a Working Group was announced on 24 April 2003, with membership being announced on 3 June. The group was chaired by Mr Steve Costello MBE, and its members have wide experience with the NI education service.

2. The group's remit was "to take account of the responses to the consultation on the Burns Report, including the diversity of views on academic selection, and provide advice on options for future arrangements for post-primary education. The advice was to provide for:

- development of alternative transfer procedures with a view to the current Transfer Tests being withdrawn as soon as practicable;
- development of a Pupil Profile to inform parental and pupil choice;
- access for all young people to a broader curriculum providing greater choice;
- flexible arrangements that can meet the developing needs of young people;
- greater co-operation and collaboration among schools and with the further education sector;
- the development of local arrangements that meet local needs, wishes and circumstances.

3. The Working Group was also to advise on:

- guiding principles and measurable outcomes for future post-primary arrangements;
- criteria for the development and assessment of proposals together with measures to encourage and support their development and implementation;
- outline arrangements for the planning and implementation of future post-primary arrangements.

4. The Post-Primary Review Working Group had 18 Meetings between June and end of November.

Briefing - Announcement of the receipt of the Costello Report

Publication of the Costello Report

The advice deals with many complex issues. It will require full and careful consideration before announcements can be made about the next stage of the review, including the publication of the report and the shape of future post-primary arrangements.

If Pressed

I recognise the need to remove the uncertainty about future arrangements. The shape of future post-primary arrangements will impact on the lives of all our young people and it is therefore very important to give full consideration to the advice of the group and ensure that future arrangements are right for all pupils.

Timescale for decisions by the Minister

The review of post-primary education is currently the biggest issue facing the education sector and there are many complex issues involved. I wish to give full and carefully consideration before announcing the next stage of the review, including the publication of the report and the shape of future post-primary arrangements.

Informing the parents of current P5 pupils on alternative transfer arrangements

Parents of P5 children will be informed in good time of the arrangements that will apply to their children.

If required

Leaking of the contents of the Report/Speculation about content of Report

The advice deals with many complex issues and requires full and careful consideration before announcements can be made about the next stages of the review. Speculation about the content of the advice is unhelpful and I do not wish to comment.



FROM: JANE KENNEDY

24th November 2003

Secretary of State (B&L) - O

Dear Paul

REVIEW OF POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

As discussed today

You will be aware that I established a working group chaired by Steve Costello to give me advice and recommendations on options for future arrangements for post-primary education. The Working Group will be submitting its advice by the end of November and we need to consider the next steps in taking this important issue forward.

The future of post-primary education has generated significant debate and controversy since the Burns report was published for consultation in October 2001. The debate polarised down party political lines with the UUP and DUP defending academic selection and the retention of grammar schools and the SDLP and Sinn Fein supporting the abolition of academic selection. There is common agreement on ending the present Transfer Tests but not on what arrangements should follow.

It will be important to give the advice full consideration before making decisions about the next steps. The timing of the advice, following so closely after the election, and in the context that the election may not provide a clear way forward politically, creates a degree of uncertainty about decisions. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to publish the report as early as possible perhaps in January depending on the wider political picture (it may leak out, otherwise) and we have to decide what our stance on the report should be.

It would be helpful if we could meet as soon as possible, together with my senior officials, to discuss the issues including:

VON



- Political context following the election
- Implications and timing of decisions
- Arrangements for announcement of decision

My officials would provide a briefing on the content of the Costello Working Group's advice at the meeting.

Background

- The responses to the extensive consultation undertaken by the Department of Education on the Burns Report showed widespread demand for change.
- The consultation indicated an emerging consensus, including amongst the political parties, for the ending of the current Transfer Tests.
- There was consensus on the development of a Pupil Profile, the need for greater cooperation and collaboration among schools and a common curriculum up to age 14.
- There was support for young people having greater curricular choice and flexibility and for different approaches so that arrangements could reflect the differing needs and circumstances in local areas.
- I announced that the review of post-primary education would be taken forward and that I would be working towards abolishing the Transfer Tests as soon as was practical.

Working Group

- The Costello Working Group was established to provide advice on future arrangements for post-primary education taking account of the responses to the Burns consultation.



- The membership of the Group was drawn from the main representative organisations and managing authorities who will be responsible for developing and implementing future arrangements.
- The Working Group's advice will be available by end November.
- We have to decide fairly quickly on publication of the report, whether for further consultation or with an announcement on the way forward in order to end the already lengthy period of uncertainty.

Jane

JANE KENNEDY

VON

Post-Primary Review Working Group

Key Recommendations

- Changes to our post-primary system are necessary if we are to compete with the rest of the world in the 21st Century.
- Future post-primary arrangements should be based on the principles of equality, quality, relevance, access, choice, respect and partnership.

Entitlement Framework

- An Entitlement Framework should be established to guarantee each pupil, including those with special educational needs, access to a wide, varied and flexible range of learning opportunities.
- The Entitlement Framework should include:
 - At Key Stage 3, a sound general education, as proposed by CCEA. This should occupy the majority of teaching time.
 - At Key Stage 4, access to a menu of at least 24 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third academic.
 - At Post-16, access to a menu of at least 27 courses of which one third must be vocational and one third academic.
 - Access to extension courses and enrichment opportunities.
 - Access to high quality Careers Education and Guidance.

Meeting the entitlement

- All pupils should have choice and flexibility in their post-primary education.
- Each school must provide its pupils with access to a range of learning pathways.
- Access is likely to ^{require} include school to school and school to FE collaboration.
- There should be a new relationship between schools and the FE sector so that pupils can be exposed to a range of learning experiences through a blended curriculum of academic and vocational education.
- The precise form of cooperation and collaboration should be determined locally.
- CCEA should continue with the development of a Pupil Profile, which will provide information to help parents and pupils to make informed choices.
- There should be a coherent programme of continuing professional development and teacher specific training to ensure teachers and school leaders are fully equipped to deal with the changes required.

Entitlement criteria and options for new arrangements

- Schools and managing authorities should assess their current provision in light of the Entitlement Framework and criteria and draw up proposals for new arrangements.
- Schools and managing authorities should engage with others in the local area to consider how the overall provision required by the Entitlement Framework should best be secured at local level.
- School structures in a local area can take a wide variety of forms and exist under a number of different management arrangements so long as the Entitlement Framework criteria are met.
- Specialist schools could be developed where appropriate to meet specific needs.

Transfer arrangements

- The Transfer Test should end. No other means of academic selection should replace the Transfer Tests.
- Transfer decisions at age 11 should be on the basis of informed parental and pupil choice.
- Immediate steps should be taken to reduce the impact of the Transfer Tests; the final date on which the Transfer Test should be held is Autumn 2008, and sooner where possible.
- School should draw from a limited range of admissions criteria to deal with any oversubscription situations.
- The Department of Education should commission immediately the necessary work to establish the menu of admissions criteria so that schools can migrate to these as soon as possible.
- Decisions about learning pathways at age 14 and 16 should be based on informed pupil and parental choice.
- At age 16, there may be minimum requirements for entry into specific courses.

Making it happen – Delivering the Entitlement

- Implementation arrangements should be based on partnership and should not require the development of additional administrative structures.
- Schools and managing authorities working together in Local Planning and Development Partnerships (LPDPs) should develop proposals for new arrangements in their locality.
- Area Planning and Development Partnerships (APDPs) will support the work of the LPDPs and evaluate proposals for new arrangements.
- The Department of Education should provide the strategic leadership in managing the implementation of new arrangements advised by a Strategic Planning and Implementation Group.

Implementation

- The Department of Education should provide a cohesive and strategic approach to the planning and development of the schools estate.
- Schools and managing authorities should take a fundamental and critical look at the physical facilities available to ensure they are fit for purpose, of sufficient standard and used effectively.
- The Department of Education should review policies on school funding, open enrolment, school transport, and expulsions/powers to direct and make the necessary policy changes to facilitate the development of new arrangements.
- The Department of Education should seek the necessary additional recurrent and capital resources to implement these proposals.
- A coherent and multi-stranded information and communication strategy should be put in place to provide information to teachers, parents, pupils and the wider public.
- The Department of Education should monitor the implementation of new arrangements on a continual basis and an evaluation of the new arrangements should take place in 2014.