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cc **Mary Bunting**
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To: **Andrew Elliott**
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EDUCATION STANDARDS IN GREATER SHANKILL

Tuesday 5 July 2005 at 2pm in the Minister's Room, Rathgael House

1. Thank you for agreeing to join the Protestant Working Class Areas sub-group on education in the Greater Shankill. Neither Mary nor Billy are free to join us on this occasion but I am copying these papers to them for information. We will aim to minimise the demands on your time from this group, consistent with your being able to represent properly the necessary input from your Department as we go forward.
2. The broad Terms of Reference for this work (Tab 1) were agreed at the PWCA Interdepartmental Taskforce meeting in May. This minute and attachments present some background, and I suggest we take paras 8 and 9 below as an initial agenda.
3. As a baseline, it will be important that we take account of existing and planned activity in the Greater Shankill area – in our case, this would include Communities in Schools (EAZ), the West Belfast & Greater Shankill Joint Working Group's IDF Bid, the planned North Belfast City Learning Centre and other existing DE interventions (School Support Programme, Group 1, Interface Funding, Literacy/Numeracy Strategies, etc). However, you will have many other initiatives/measures/interventions your own fields which will impact upon community capacity-building and thus, directly and indirectly, children and young people's readiness and capacity to learn – in particular, perhaps, the N&WB Health Action Zone and Neighbourhood Renewal; but there are doubtless myriad activities ongoing, especially in the FE/training and voluntary/community sectors, and it will be important that we identify these and factor in their impact.
4. This group is being established because the Greater Shankill is perceived as having extraordinary problems in comparison, even, to other very difficult Protestant Working Class areas. We therefore also need to pay particular

attention to what makes the Shankill's problems so unique, and how best we can tailor solutions to meet these unique needs.

5. A critical factor, therefore, in securing an improvement in educational (and other) outcomes will be the close involvement of those most affected – in our case the individual schools, the Belfast Education and Library Board and the local community. Any initiative will be doomed to failure if done in isolation or imposed from above. It is essential therefore that we take every opportunity to involve the community living in the Greater Shankill area and their representatives (a not altogether straightforward task in itself).

The Scope of the Problem

6. Key performance data relating to the schools in the Greater Shankill are set out in Tab 2 (post-primary) and Tab 3 (primary).

Post Primary:

Castle HS¹
Mount Gilbert
Boys' Model
Girls' Model

2004/05 School Year	Nos from Shankill	Total enrolment	Percentage of enrolment with Shankill postcodes
BELFAST MODEL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS	775	1,049	75.0
BELFAST BOYS' MODEL SCHOOL	758	1,055	72.3
CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL	41	132	31.5
MOUNT GILBERT COMMUNITY COLLEGE	140	151	95.9

Their Contributory Primary Schools:

Black Mountain
Ballysillan
Currie
Edenbrooke
Forth River
Glenwood
Grove
Harmony
Ligoniel
Lowwood
Malvern
Springfield
Springhill
Wheatfield

¹ We are including Castle, even though it is technically in North Belfast, as over 30% of its pupils come from the Greater Shankill area, see table.

7. In summary we can say:

- Enrolments have dropped in Mount Gilbert and Castle and there are serious questions as regards their viability (on both educational and financial grounds) – the September 2005 intake at Mount Gilbert is down to 11;
- Educational results and attendance levels in these 2 post-primary schools are poor, even allowing for the high incidence of pupils with FSME, and fall well short of expected levels;
- Results in the Girls' Model are consistently above NI (non-grammar) average, and yet this school, traditionally well over-subscribed, was undersubscribed in its Year 8 intake last year for the first time, and will be 22 short of its approved admissions number in September.
- The Boys' Model results are lower than average², and it has not achieved its intake figure for the past decade. This September it will be 54 short of its approved intake, although, like the Girls' Model, enrolments overall remain buoyant at over 1,000.
- Significant numbers of pupils prefer the Models and other post-primary schools to Castle and Mount Gilbert, and often have to travel further as a result;
- By and large the overall performance of the contributory primary schools is not out of line with that expected, though there is the possibility that lower ability pupils are opting for Castle and Mount Gilbert (or have not been able to get into a preferred school);
- Within the Greater Shankill area a much lower proportion of children access grammar school (13%) compared to 35% in BELB and 42% across NI as a whole); and
- The level of opt-outs is very high and, when viewed against Key Stage 2 results, suggests that some children, otherwise capable of achieving a 'fighting chance' grade, may decide to opt out of the Test (it could be that they simply prefer to go to one of the two Model Schools).

Moving Forward

8. I would suggest that the group needs to consider the following:

- undertaking a thorough review of the demographics of the area and the movement of pupils (in particular, in the light of demography and the proposals for Post Primary Education, DE will shortly be discussing with BELB the future of Mount Gilbert and Castle);
- developing a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of current educational provision, including existing interventions, so that we

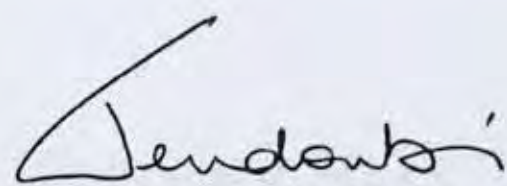
² 2004 NI non-grammar GCSE average 5+ A*-G = 81%; Girls' Model 84%, Boys' Model 72%.

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can identify the effectiveness of these and what further interventions can be put in place;

- conducting a survey of families in the BELB area (or better still across NI) to identify the level of support for education in each ward and any factors that cause this support to be higher or lower across wards/areas;
- factors unique to the Shankill that present barriers to learning and that can be tackled effectively either in an inter-agency way or individually by agencies for which our Departments are responsible;
- we need also to examine the best way to secure and manage inter-agency and community co-operation within the area to bring about change.

9. Tab 4 is a first shot at a Project Plan, for discussion on Tuesday. I would suggest that we establish ourselves as a Project Team, but with the inclusion of BELB, to take the work forward. DE's School Development Branch will take charge of the review of school enrolments, but we have included it within the Plan because the Project team will need to be aware of likely outcomes as their work proceeds.
10. We would expect that the entire exercise will take about a year from initiation until clear decisions are made on the way forward. This may seem somewhat protracted but we have to bear in mind that the problems are complex and deep-rooted, and attempts at developing solutions thus far have not achieved a turnaround to the extent required. We need to get it right this time. This means, too, of course, securing the buy-in of the Secretary of State and the full Ministerial team as necessary.
11. I look forward to our discussion on Tuesday.



CHRISTINE JENDOUBI

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EDUCATION IN THE GREATER SHANKILL AREA – DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

At the last meeting Taskforce members received a detailed presentation covering school provision in the Shankill area. This provided a comprehensive analysis of the position from pre-school to secondary level, setting out in great detail the scale the difficulties in this area. The presentation effectively illustrated the stark differences in educational outcomes attained in the Shankill area compared to other working class areas in Belfast and Northern Ireland generally.

Using this analysis as the basis it is proposed that the Taskforce commission a further piece of work to be undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate focusing on the scope for improvement. Draft Terms of Reference for this work, as set out in the attached paper, are tabled for Taskforce agreement. These have been shared with colleagues in the appropriate departments, (Education, Employment and Learning) and reflect their advice and support.

February 2005

EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE GREATER SHANKILL AREA – DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FURTHER WORK

Background

1. Difficulties with education outcomes and provision have been a recurring theme running through the Taskforce's engagement with stakeholders. During a recent meeting Taskforce members received a detailed presentation from officials from the Department of Education, the Education and Training Inspectorate and two school principals on education issues in the Shankill area covering the spectrum from pre-school, primary and post primary provision. This included areas for improvement across the range of local provision. The analysis focused on outcomes, making appropriate comparisons with schools in Catholic West Belfast. Themes from this analysis echo those issues identified in other areas, most recently with the findings reflected in the Sandy Row report.

Scope of further work

2. This position points to the need for further work to examine the scope for improvement in the Shankill area. This should identify a range of measures capable of delivering improved outcomes which build on the identified strengths in current provision in the Shankill area for consideration by the Taskforce.

Aspects to be examined include:

- How greater emphases on education outcomes can be achieved at all ~~can~~ levels of the education process from pre- school through to formal and vocational training.
- How can greater attention be given to the special education needs of children in the Shankill area given the prelevance of such needs in the area
- Scope to change classroom practice and plans using outcomes of class monitoring, progress outcomes and trends.

- Scope for greater multi-agency working and effective partnership to create greater community in schools environment and more engagement with parents.
- Work has taken place relating to the education issue in this area e.g. Urban 11, Shankill 21, have these lessons been incorporated into practice?
- What can be done to improve the value placed on education generally by the community?
- How can the potential of recent and current interventions be harnessed, e.g. Communities in Schools project?
- What is the scope for greater flexibility in terms of curriculum structure and delivery and potential for greater challenge and work related learning and experience?

Required Outcomes

3. This work should produce a range of measures capable of delivering improved outcomes across education provision taking account of the cultural environment of the Shankill area. These should illustrate the scope for improvement which each is capable of delivering in output terms, provide an indication of the timescale needed to deliver and a broad assessment of the constraints and conditions likely to apply to the implementation of each should be provided.
4. This work is commissioned as part of the Taskforce work programme and outcomes should be available for consideration by May 2005.

February 2005