

14 September 2015

PRESS RELEASE

Equality Commission comments on publication of Assembly Education Committee's Shared Education Report

The Equality Commission has welcomed the publication by the Northern Ireland Assembly's Education Committee of the report on its inquiry into shared and integrated education.

"Education has been, and remains, an issue which is central to the delivery of equality of opportunity," Darren McKinstry, Director of Research and Policy at the Equality Commission, said. "The Commission considers that an education system where sharing impacts meaningfully and substantively on every learner has a key role to play in advancing a shared society. The Commission will give the report careful consideration and we hope that it will add to and inform the debate on this important issue."

The Equality Commission considers that sharing in education, across the full range of equality grounds, has the potential not only to improve educational access and attainment for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds and abilities but also has a crucial role in contributing to the reconciliation of our society.

"For many years now we have been urging that we move to a system of shared education which routinely teaches pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes," Darren McKinstry said. "Sharing can facilitate pupils to access the full curriculum and a wider range of educational, sporting and cultural experiences, offer opportunities to improve standards and outcomes for all learners and foster good relations by providing an environment for longer term-sustained contact for both teachers and learners.

"In addition," Mr. McKinstry said, "the Commission has long called for greater sharing and collaboration in teacher training and for the exemption for teachers from FETO to be abolished at secondary level, with early consideration given to its removal at all levels, so that all teachers would be able to enjoy the same legislative protections as other workers."