



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Integrated Education Bill:
Responses to Call for Evidence

13 October 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Chris Lyttle (Chairperson)
Ms Nicola Brogan
Mr Robbie Butler
Mrs Diane Dodds
Mr Harry Harvey
Mr Justin McNulty
Mr Robin Newton

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Bearing in mind the information on the response to the call for evidence on the Integrated Education Bill and the stakeholders the Committee would invite to give evidence, it might be useful for me to recap on the extent of the responses received to the call for evidence.

The call for evidence on the Bill was issued to stakeholders on 17 July, and it ran on the publicly accessible Citizen Space platform until 10 October. A Committee motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Bill to 24 November was agreed by the Assembly on 4 October. The call for evidence received 1,116 responses. Of those, 523 came through Citizen Space. Clerk, is it worth saying a bit about what Citizen Space is? It is an Assembly platform that we use on calls for evidence.

The Committee Clerk: Yes, it is a survey platform. Initially, we were using the Civil Service platform. Just as the Education Committee was about to issue its call for evidence on the Bill, the Assembly decided to procure its own account. It is like SurveyMonkey, but it has additional intuitive capacity, so it does a bit more analysis, for instance, than some other platforms. It is particularly useful for Bill stages.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): Excellent. A total of 575 responses were from individuals under the Support the Integrated Education Bill campaign, and 18 came via email. As you say, Clerk, Citizen Space is an online survey platform, and 523 individuals filled it out there.

The 18 submissions by email included those from the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC); Church of Ireland Board of Education; Controlled Schools' Support Council (CCSNI); Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); Equality Commission; Integrated Education Fund (IEF); National Secular Society (NSS); Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC); Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Workers' Party; Labour Party; Catholic Schools' Trustee Service; Governing Bodies Association (GBA); Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); Northern Ireland Humanists; Shane Greer, a trustee of Integrated AlumNI and board member of NICIE; Co-operative Party in Northern Ireland; Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG); and the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Those submissions are being uploaded to an electronic pack that will be with members as soon as possible. Clerk, is that right?

The Committee Clerk: That is true, Chair.

The Chairperson (Mr Lyttle): As the Clerk said, a number of those organisations are already in the forward work programme. I will not go through everyone named in the 523 responses via Citizen Space, but the responses and the analysis of the responses to the Citizen Space survey are available in the papers. There are some fairly interesting findings. In response to the question, "Do you agree with the policy objectives of the Bill?", 95.79% said yes. In response to the question, "Do you think the provisions of the Bill will be effective in achieving policy objectives?", 85% said yes. There are a good few other questions there as well, but 523 responses are broken down into other issues. Clause 5 is the definition of the term "promotion", so in response to the question, "Do you consider the duty to promote to be a reasonable duty?", 93% said yes. There is good data there and a wide range of respondents. That will definitely assist the Committee with its deliberations. Is that fair enough, Clerk?

The Committee Clerk: It is indeed, Chair.