



# **Providing Pathways**

**Draft Strategic Area Plan  
for School Provision**

**2017-2020**

**Outcome of and Response to  
Consultation**

**January 2017**

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**Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision**  
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**Contents Page**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Response to Consultation Findings</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Section 1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 2 Purpose, Objectives and Context for Area Planning</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Section 3 Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 4 Response Rates</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Section 5 Online Survey Responses</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Section 6 Other Responses Received</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Section 7 Summary of Written Comments</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Section 8 Conclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendices i – xx</b>	<b>30</b>

## Executive Summary

The Education Authority (EA), working with colleagues from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) and the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC), and within the context of the Department of Education's Sustainable Schools Policy, set out in *'Providing Pathways – A Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017 – 2020'* (the Area Plan), a set of key themes which were unanimously agreed as the key drivers for the future planning of school provision, namely;

- Securing parity of access for all to appropriate pathways
- Enhancing choice for all children and young people
- Promoting co-operation, collaboration and sharing across all sectors
- Maximising the use of resources
- Informing strategic infrastructure planning.

The strategic themes and priorities for action set out in the Area Plan are intended to be the determinants of any proposals for change to school provision moving forward. Therefore, in the autumn of 2016 the EA presented for consultation *'Providing Pathways - A Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020'* to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders and interested parties to respond to these strategic themes and priorities for action, either as applied at regional or local level.

The focus of the Area Plan is on the need to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs within a diverse system of education through a network of sustainable schools. The plan advances a strategic Area Planning process and seeks to provide clarity and timescales which will inform schools and the wider community about Area Planning. It also indicates milestones for action, an Area Planning Cycle and the governance structure which have been developed. The consultation period ran for eight weeks and closed on 12 December 2016.

The Area Plan sets out the roles and responsibilities for the statutory and non-statutory bodies involved in area planning (Section 1.7) as well as outlining an overview of the present contextual considerations identified, (Section 2). This overview identified, for each of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs), the strategic actions required to ensure a network of sustainable schools.

Interested individuals, groups and organisations were invited to respond to the consultation by means of the online survey or by written response, (see page xx for

full details of the Consultation Communication Strategy). During this period the EA facilitated a number of consultation workshops for local district councilors, chairs of Boards of Governors and school principals. Social media was used to encourage school pupils and the wider public to engage with the consultation process. Senior officers from EA met with representatives from Trade Unions, and along with colleagues from the Department of Education (DE) and CCMS appeared at the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee to discuss the draft plan with MLAs.

At the close of the consultation 985 responses had been received. Of the 938 online survey responses 68 were received from school principals, 157 from school staff members (including teachers), 69 from school Boards of Governors, 291 from pupils, 237 from parents and guardians and 54 from the public. In addition to those received online, 47 written responses (10 from individuals, 10 from individual Boards of Governors and 27 from organisations/groups) were also received.

Responses were received from all LGD areas and all bodies representing sectoral interests. The spread of responses and the numbers involved showed a significant degree of variation, see below. Sections 4 and 5 of this report provide a detailed analysis of all the responses received.

The responses received have been collated and analysed in the context of the strategic themes and priorities for action contained in the draft plan. The main findings are outlined, below:

- i Only 69 (6%) of Boards of Governors and 68 (6%) of school principals responded of the 1,063 schools in the authority and less than 1% of teachers responded to the consultation. Of all the responses received, 350 (37%), were from the Voluntary Grammar sector (VGS) with 327 (35%) of all responses from the same Mid-Ulster Voluntary Grammar school. Furthermore, there were 258 (27.5%) respondents who identified themselves with the Special Education Sector, of whom 238 (25%) were from the Belfast LGD;**
- ii The highest responding category was that of 'Pupils' with 291 (31%) submissions. Of these most, 253 (87%), came from one Mid-Ulster Voluntary Grammar school and were almost identical, (see page 53) and a further 20 (7%) came from one Special School in Belfast;**

- iii **The highest responding LGD areas were Mid-Ulster: 357 (38%); and Belfast: 295 (31%). Yet, as indicated above, 327 (92%) of the Mid-Ulster responses came from the same school, and 238 (81%) of the Belfast responses were in relation to the Special Education Sector. The lowest responding LGD areas were Derry City & Strabane: 18 (2%); and Fermanagh & Omagh: 12 (1%);**
- iv **Apart from the responses within the VGS sector detailed above, the highest number of respondents by management type was from the Controlled sector: 191 (20%); followed by the Maintained sector: 50 (5%). There were very few responses from either the Integrated sector: 14 (2%); or, the Irish Medium sector: 9 (1%). Question by question analysis reflects a significant degree of variation in responses per management type. For example, in response to Question 5, a minority of all respondents, 179 (19%), agreed that *'the Area Plan is focused on children and young people'*, whereas a majority, 118 (62%) of responses from the Controlled sector agreed with this proposition, and a majority, 28 (56%) of responses from the Maintained sector disagreed. This pattern is replicated throughout the consultation survey. (A question by question breakdown is provided in the appendices);**
- v **Overall the volume of responses to the consultation was disappointing given the fundamental importance of Area Planning.**
- vi **When all responses are considered (and the large numbers of responses from one school are treated as individual responses) there is neither a clear endorsement nor a clear rejection of the Area Plan. A large percentage of respondents (40 %+), mainly from the voluntary grammar school sector, were "uncertain" about many of the questions raised.**
- vii **With the agreement from DE, the EA has treated the 327 (same) responses from one voluntary grammar school as one response. When this is taken into consideration, the outcomes of the consultation indicate a much more positive response and the majority of respondents were in agreement with the strategic themes and priorities for action in the Area Plan.**

## **Response to Consultation Findings**

As outlined above, 565 (60%) of all responses are from two sectoral groups with very specific interests that they wish to highlight: the respondents within the Special Schools' sector disagreed with the strategic themes and priorities for action identified in the Area Plan, whereas the comments attached from respondents from the one VGS in Mid-Ulster **did not address** the strategic themes and priorities for action identified in the Area Plan.

The EA notes the concerns raised within the Special Schools' sector as part of the consultation response and would direct respondents to page 95 of the Providing Pathways document which states that 'A phased and managed process to any change will be an essential part of the Area Planning process to ensure parental confidence and appropriate professional development of staff as the special schools' estate is reshaped to meet pupil need.' There is no suggestion that children currently placed in a special school will be transferred to specialist centres within mainstream schools. The proposals do however suggest increased opportunities across Northern Ireland for pupils with Special Educational Needs to have their needs met within a broader continuum of provision in line with assessed need; the Special School remains a core element of this spectrum of provision.

However, no new key themes or priorities for action were identified by the consultation. The outcomes of the consultation do not suggest that any substantive changes should be made to the Area Plan.

Consequently the process of area planning of school provision should now seek, by working through Area Planning Local Groups, the Area Planning Working Group and the Area Planning Steering Group, to establish proposed actions that will be needed over the period 2017-2020 to the emerging issues identified in Section Four of the Area Plan:

- The need to ensure that the required number of school places are available to children and young people in the locations where they are needed
- Schools where sustainability is an issue
- Ensuring parity of access for children and young people to the curriculum and the Entitlement Framework
- Overprovision of available school places
- Development of sustainable Integrated and Irish Medium schools
- Promotion and development of Shared Education
- Provision of common 3-19 special education schools
- Provision of Learning Support and Autism Centres in mainstream schools
- Configuration of specialist provision in the special education sector.

## Section 1 Introduction

The focus of *'Providing Pathways - A Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020'* is on the best educational interests of children and young people and outlines the shape of educational provision for:

- Primary schools
- Post-primary schools
- Learning support provision in mainstream schools
- Special Schools

The Area Plan differs significantly from the previous five Education and Library Board Area Plans; it is a single regional plan covering the whole of Northern Ireland and is a strategic plan which sets out a series of key strategic themes and priorities for action at system level, applied locally to the 11 LGD areas.

The purpose of the consultation process was to gauge whether those with an interest in the development of school provision across Northern Ireland felt that the key strategic themes and priorities for action identified in the Area Plan provided an appropriate framework that would give direction to the operational actions required to address the issues facing school provision planners.

The consultation is firmly set in the context that any future proposals to address strategic challenges involving a school(s) would be subject to consultation at a formative stage and subsequently, should firm proposals emerge, full statutory consultation processes.

This report outlines the outcomes and findings of the eight-week consultation exercise carried out by the EA which ended 12 December 2016.

## **Section 2 Purpose, Objectives and Context for Area Planning**

### **2.1 Purpose and Objectives**

The Area Plan aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools within a diverse system of education. It sets out the key strategic themes and priorities for action in providing access to a network of sustainable schools for the EA, CCMS, and other sectoral bodies.

The plan has been developed in accordance with the Department of Education's Sustainable Schools Policy, as described in Section 1.2 of the Area Plan.



## Section 3 Methodology

Details of the consultation carried out by the Authority are outlined in the following sections.

### 3.1 Consultation

On Monday 17 October 2016, the Minister made a statement in the NI Assembly to formally launch the consultation on the Education Authority's *'Providing Pathways - Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020'* document. During this statement the Minister encouraged 'local communities and their elected representatives to consider the Education Authority's Area Plan and to make their views known'. He stated, also, that he hoped the focus would be on the 'strategic issues and not on individual schools'.

In advance of the Minister's statement, the EA and its educational partners discussed a Consultation Strategy and this was agreed by all members of the Area Planning Working Group. In this, the EA committed to consulting with and engaging local people in the planning and delivery of all services. This Consultation Strategy outlined the methodology that was adopted to enable key stakeholders and the entire community to comment about *'Providing Pathways - the Strategic Area Plan for School Provision for the period 2017 -2020'*, involving a range of mechanisms for publicity to ensure ongoing communication with a wide range of stakeholders at every stage of the Area Plan's development.

#### The Consultation Plan

The EA believes that engagement/consultation with a wide range of stakeholders plays a key part in a strategic approach to developing future plans:

"Effective consultation is a key part of the policy-making process. People's views can help shape policy developments and set the agenda for better public services."

(Code of Practice on Consultation, 2004)

During any consultation exercise, identifying the target audience is important and will affect the methods used to consult and the information produced for stakeholder groups. Consultation also means effectively consulting with those who are representative of the local community and those who use the services provided by the Education Authority. This includes hard-to-reach groups in line with the EA

Equality Scheme. Specific efforts will be needed to ensure the consultation reaches groups in the format that best meets their needs, for example, the consultation documentation will be made available upon request, in other languages for those not fluent in English, and/or in braille or larger print.

The Authority will observe the principles of the Consultation Charter (Consultation Institute), which are:

1. Integrity - Honest intention, willing to listen and be prepared to be influenced.
2. Visibility - Stakeholders should be aware of the consultation exercise.
3. Accessibility - Methods that meet the needs of the intended audience.
4. Confidentiality - Ensure all stakeholders are aware as to the level of information that will be made public.
5. Disclosure - Disclosure of information that can influence the exercise and disclosure on behalf of consultees, for example, if the consultee represents an organization.
6. Fair Interpretation - Objective collation and assessment of information and viewpoints.
7. Publication - Publication of both the output and the outcomes of the exercise.

By observing these principles, the EA will demonstrate their commitment to best practice and to assisting stakeholders to participate fully in the process.

The Authority will also provide a 'Summary of Consultation' report regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced development of the Area Plan.

Appendix ii identifies the wide range of EA stakeholders and the methods by which they were consulted.

A Public Consultation was commenced on 17 October 2016 and closed on 12 December 2016.

The consultation was carried out, in main, through an on-line survey, below:

1. Name/ Organisation/School (optional)

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2. Please select the category that best describes you as a respondent (please choose one option only):

Parent/Guardian		Pupil	
Principal		Member of school staff	
Education/Sectoral support group		Political representative	
Board of Governors of above named school		General public	
Other (please specify)			

3. Please indicate the local government district area to which your response refers (you may choose more than one):

Antrim and Newtownabbey		Fermanagh and Omagh	
Ards and North Down		Lisburn and Castlereagh	
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon		Mid and East Antrim	
Belfast		Mid Ulster	
Causeway Coast and Glens		Newry, Mourne and Down	
Derry City and Strabane		General response only	

4. Please select the category which best represents your sectoral interest:

Controlled schools sector		Maintained schools sector	
Voluntary grammar sector		Integrated schools sector	
Irish medium sector		Special education sector	
General interest		Not applicable	
Other (please specify)			

Having read the draft area plan, Providing Pathways 2017-2020:

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	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
5. Do you agree that the plan is focussed on children and young people?			
6. Do you agree that the plan correctly identifies the issues within your local government district Area?			
7. Do you agree that the proposals identified in the 'what will we do?' section will address the issues in your local government district Area?			
8. Do you agree that the plan explains the reasons why change is required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the quality of provision (page 28)?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure the sustainability of schools (page 27)?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take account of the financial context (page 25)?</li> </ul>			
9. Do you agree that the plan clearly outlines the key areas to be addressed, as set out on pages 33-44, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>primary schools?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>post-primary schools?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>special schools?</li> </ul>			

<p>10. Do you agree that proposals should be developed for primary and/or post-primary schools to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure a network of sustainable schools that are of the right type, of the right size, located in the right place?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work in collaboration with the Further Education sector to increase access to the Entitlement Framework?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish additional learning support and autism-specific provision within primary and post-primary schools?</li> </ul>			
<p>11. Do you agree that proposals should be developed for special schools to (see pages 86-97):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide a common structure so that all children and young people who attend a special school are able to do so from the age of 3-19 years in their closest special school?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide pre-school provision at all DE-funded special schools?</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore innovative solutions to equality of access to specialist provision in special schools?</li> </ul>			
<p>12. Do you agree that this plan provides an appropriate foundation to deliver a network of viable and sustainable schools that have a focus on raising standards?</p>			
<p>Please use the space below if you wish to make further comment on the</p>			

draft area plan:

During the period of consultation the EA engaged in five consultation meetings: Londonderry (15 November 2016); Antrim (16 November 2016); Omagh (17 November 2016); Belfast (22 November 2016); and Newry (23 November 2016). Two consultation events were held in each venue on each day: one for local councillors and one for the Principal and chair of governors of schools.

In advance of these meetings, the EA wrote to all eleven local government councils and every school in Northern Ireland encouraging councillors, principals and their chairs of governors to attend one of the consultation events. In response to this, of the 462 councillors invited across the eleven LGDs, only nine councillors (2%) attended the five consultation events, in total, held across Northern Ireland. 177 schools (17%), of the 1063 schools in Northern Ireland attended the five consultation events, in total, held across Northern Ireland.

A separate meeting with trade union officials was held in Antrim (25 November 2016.) All trade unions were invited to attend, though only two were in attendance at the consultation meeting.

The purpose of these meetings was to provide a general overview of and information on the process of area planning and to outline the main aspects of the Area Plan. A presentation was made at each event including video input from the Minister, input from senior department of education area planning officers and input from senior EA officers of the consultation, followed by a question and answer session. The presentation from the consultation events was placed on the EA website and all participants were informed it was available for use in schools or other venues.

### **3.2 Public Consultation**

Over the period from 17 October 2016 to 12 December 2016, respondents were invited to submit their views by using a range of approaches. These included:

- completion of the online survey
- hard copy submissions of the online survey; and
- by letter or written submission.

## Section 4 Response Rates

### 4.1 Number of Responses and Range of Respondents (see figures 1 and 2, below)

- 938 responses were received via the online questionnaire
- 47 responses were submitted in written form

Of the 938 online survey responses 68 were received from school principals, 157 from school staff members (including teachers), 69 from school Boards of Governors, 291 from pupils, 237 from parents and guardians and 54 from the public. In addition to those received online, 47 written responses (10 from individuals, 10 from individual Boards of Governors and 27 from organisations/groups) were also received.

Of all the responses received, 350 (37%), were from the Voluntary Grammar sector (VGS) with 327 (35%) of all responses from the same Mid-Ulster Voluntary Grammar school, despite the Minister asking for respondents to focus on the 'strategic issues and not on individual schools'. Furthermore, there were 258 (27.5%) respondents who identified themselves with the Special Education Sector, of whom 238 (25%) were from the Belfast LGD.

The highest responding category was that of 'Pupils' with 291 (31%) submissions. Of these most, 253 (87%), came from one Mid-Ulster Voluntary Grammar school and were almost identical, (see page xx) and a further 20 (7%) came from one Special School in Belfast.

The highest responding LGD areas were Mid-Ulster: 357 (38%); and Belfast: 295 (31%). Yet, as indicated above, 327 (92%) of the Mid-Ulster responses came from the same school, and 238 (81%) of the Belfast responses were in relation to the Special Education Sector. The lowest responding LGD areas were Derry City & Strabane: 18 (2%); and Fermanagh & Omagh: 12 (1%);

Apart from the responses within the VGS sector detailed above, the highest number of respondents by management type was from the Controlled sector: 191 (20%); followed by the Maintained sector: 50 (5%). There were very few responses from either the Integrated sector: 14 (2%); or, the Irish Medium sector: 9 (1%).



## Number of Responses received per Council Area

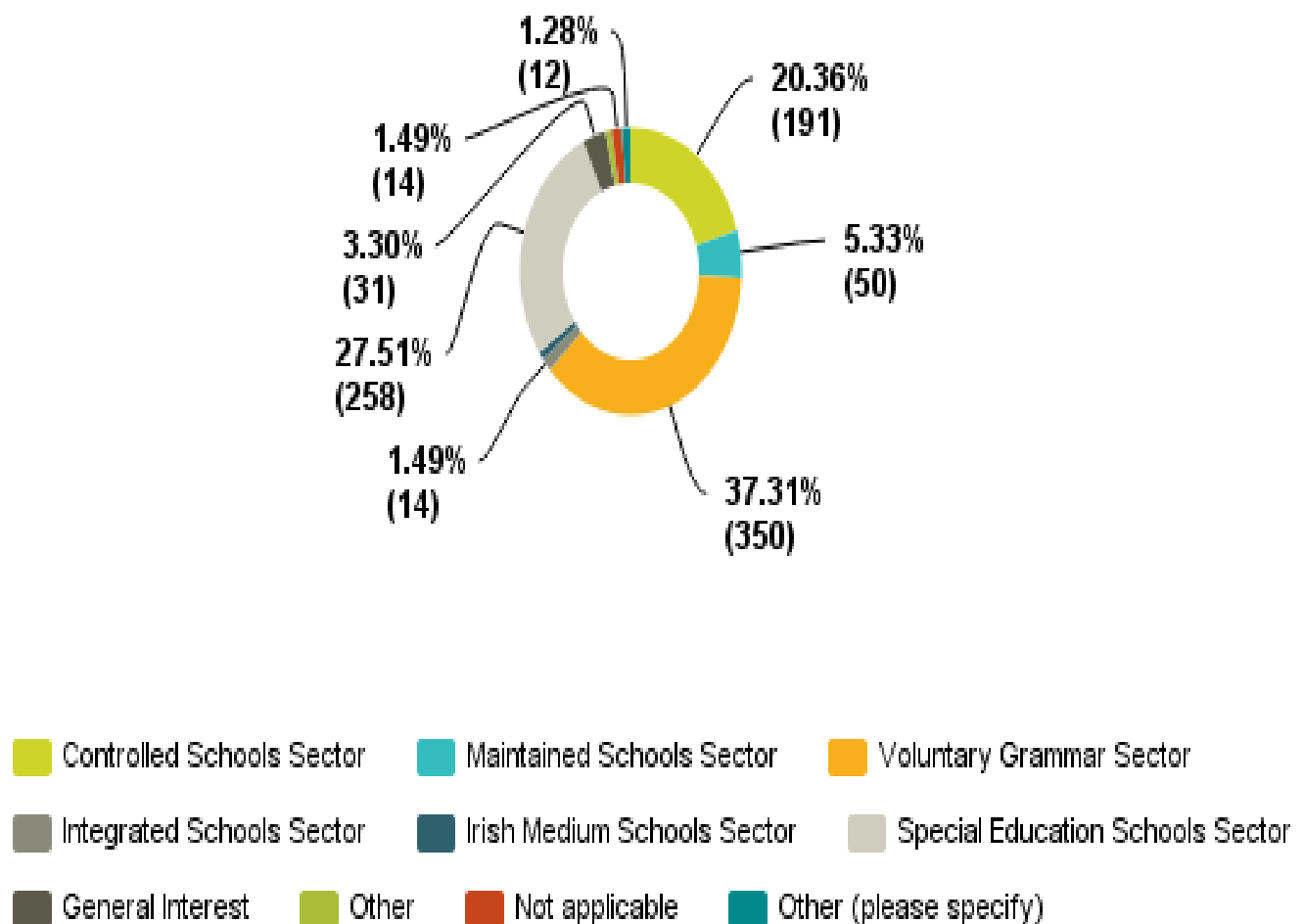
Table 1 – Number of Responses received by Council Area

<b>Council Areas</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Online Percentage</b>
<b>Ards and North Down</b>	32	3%
<b>Antrim and Newtownabbey</b>	66	7%
<b>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon</b>	53	6%
<b>Belfast</b>	295	31%
<b>Causeway Coast and Glens</b>	58	6%
<b>Derry City and Strabane</b>	18	2%
<b>Fermanagh and Omagh</b>	12	1%
<b>Lisburn and Castlereagh</b>	90	10%
<b>Mid and East Antrim</b>	23	3%
<b>Mid Ulster</b>	357	38%
<b>Newry, Mourne and Down</b>	50	5%
<b>General responses</b>	26	3%
<b>Total</b>	1080	100%

## 4.2 Number of Responses received by Education Sector

Figure 1 outlines the number of responses received from each of the Education Sectors in Northern Ireland:

Figure 1



### 4.3 Range of Respondents

The EA received responses from a wide range of people from within the community including pupils, parent/guardians, teaching staff; governors and others. Figure 2 shows the distribution of replies received from each of these categories.

**Figure 2**

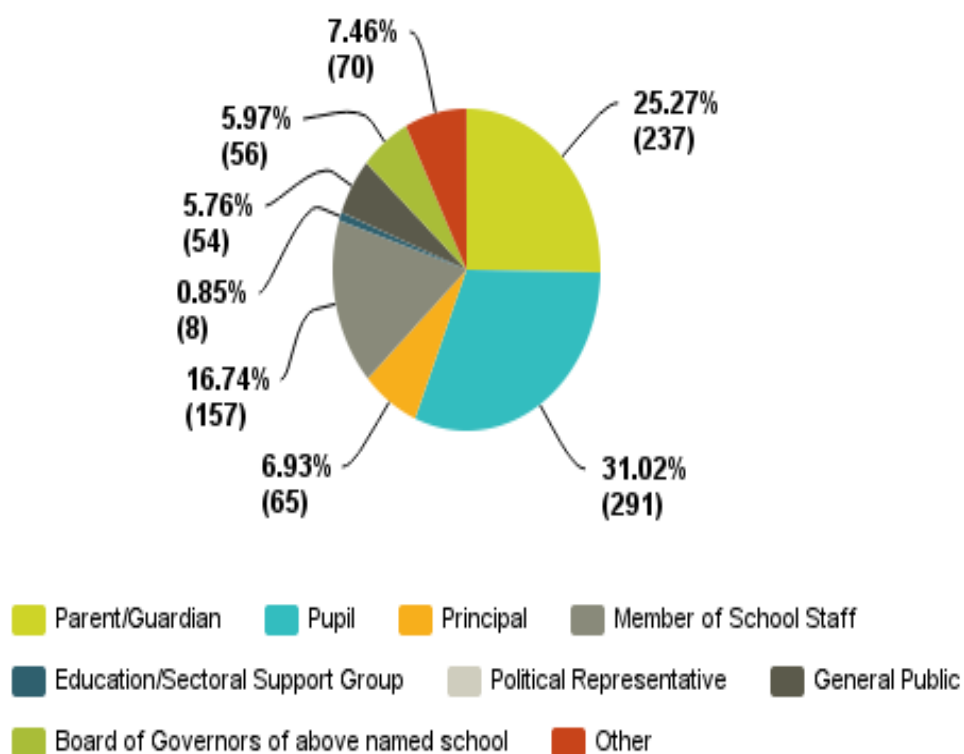


Figure 2, above, shows that 291 pupils completed the questionnaire online. As previously mentioned, it should be noted that 253 of these responses were from a single school in the Mid-Ulster LGD. A further 20 pupil replies were from a single special school in Belfast.

The diagram also shows that 237 (25%) respondents to the questionnaire categorised themselves as parents. Of this number 74 (31%) respondents were parent/guardians of children in the special education sector.

Figure 2 also shows that only 65 principals and 56 members of boards of governors completed the online survey. There are currently 1,063 schools in the province, therefore, disappointingly, just 6% of all the principals of schools, and boards of governors in the province replied to the questionnaire, despite the fact that 177 schools were represented at the Consultation events held by the EA.

## Section 5 Online Survey Responses

The EA received 938 responses to 'Providing Pathways' submitted for consultation via the online survey. As previously noted 926 of these responses arrived before the published closing date of 12 December 2016 and have been reflected in the statistics presented in the appendices. Respondents had an opportunity to indicate their level of agreement with a range of questions presented in the online survey. Detailed statistics can be found in the appendices that show a breakdown of responses by sector, by council area and by various groupings.

### 5.1 General Summary

Sections 5 to 12 of the online survey sought views from respondents through a series of questions in relation to the Area Plan. When **all** responses are considered together, not taking into account the statistical significance of the 35% of respondents from the one school, it is evident that there is neither a clear endorsement, nor rejection of, the Area Plan:

- In response to **question 5**, 19% of all respondents agreed that the document was focused on children and young people; 40% were uncertain and 41% disagreed.
- In response to **question 6**, 17% of all respondents agreed that it had correctly identified the issues within their own LGD, whereas 42% were uncertain and 42% disagreed with this statement.
- In response to **question 7** 'Proposals identified in the 'what will we do?' section will address the issues in your Local Government District Area?' - 15% agreed, 42% were uncertain and 42% disagreed.
- When asked if the draft plan explains the reasons why change is required, **question 8**, 54% agreed that change was required to improve the quality of provision; 24% agreed that change was required to ensure the sustainability of schools and 55% agreed that change is required to take account of the financial context of our education system.

**Questions 9, 10 and 11** moved on to consider the views of respondents in each of the main school groups ie primary, post-primary and special schools.

- 19% of respondents agreed that the key areas were clearly outlined in primary schools with 46% uncertain and 35% disagreeing.
- 11% of those responding in post-primary schools felt that the draft plan clearly outlined the key areas, 55% were uncertain and 34% disagreed.
- In respect to the special school sector proposals, 10% of respondents agreed that the draft plan clearly outlined the key areas to be addressed, with 53% uncertain and 38% disagreeing that these key areas were clearly outlined.
- When asked if the respondents agreed that proposals should be developed for primary and post-primary schools to ensure that a network of sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place, 27% agreed, 38% were uncertain and 34% disagreed.
- 27% of respondents agreed that schools should work closely in collaboration with FE, especially in the Entitlement Framework.
- 61% of respondents agreed that additional learning support and autism specific provision should be made in primary and post-primary schools.

**Question 11** was specific to special education provision. Respondents recorded the following in response to these three statements:

- (a) Provide a common structure so that all children and young people who attend a special school can do so from the age of 3-19 years in their closest special school? – 58% agreement; 8% were uncertain and 34% disagreed;
- (b) Provide pre-school provision at all DE funded special schools? – 64% agreement, with 10% uncertain and 26% disagreeing; and
- (c) Explore innovative solutions to equality of access to specialist provision in special schools? – 61% agreement and 9% uncertain and 30% disagreeing.

In **question 12** the respondents were asked to indicate their overall agreement with the statement - This plan provides an appropriate foundation to deliver a network of viable and sustainable schools that have a focus on raising standards?

8% of all respondents agreed that the draft plan did provide an appropriate foundation to deliver a network of viable and sustainable schools that have a focus on raising standards, 50% were uncertain and 42% disagreed that the draft plan could achieve this objective.

However, with the agreement from DE, the EA has treated the 327 (same) responses from one voluntary grammar school as one response. When this is taken into consideration, the outcomes of the consultation indicate a much more positive response and the majority of respondents were in agreement with the strategic themes and priorities for action in the Area Plan, as follows:

- Q5: Agreement rises from 19% to 43%; with 21% uncertain
- Q6: Agreement rises from 17% to 39.5%; with 21% uncertain
- Q7: Agreement rises from 15% to 35%; with 25% uncertain
- Q8 (a): Agreement rises from 54% to 55%; with 12% uncertain
- Q8 (b): Agreement rises from 24% to 50% with 19% uncertain
- Q8 (c): Agreement remains at 55%; with 16% uncertain
- Q9 (a): Agreement rises from 18% to 42%; with 23% uncertain
- Q9 (b): Agreement rises from 10% to 21%; with 47% uncertain
- Q9 (c): Agreement rises from 9% to 18%; with 53% uncertain
- Q10 (a): Agreement rises from 27% to 53%; with 16% uncertain
- Q10 (b): Agreement rises from 27% to 55%; with 24% uncertain
- Q10 (c): Agreement rises from 60% to 68%; with 12% uncertain
- Q11 (a): Agreement rises from 58% to 65%; with 14% uncertain
- Q11 (b): Agreement rises from 64% to 69%; with 15% uncertain
- Q11(c): Agreement rises from 61% to 66%; with 15% uncertain
- Q12: Agreement rises from 8% to 15% with 45% uncertain

The EA will address the 'uncertainty' that still remains in relation to some of the key strategic themes and priorities for action in the post-primary sector by seeking further dialogue with stakeholders and their representatives in this sector.

Also, the EA will address the ‘uncertainty’ that still remains in relation to the plan providing ‘an appropriate foundation to deliver a network of viable and sustainable schools’, by seeking further dialogue with all stakeholders to convince them that these key strategic themes and priorities for action are in the best educational interests of children and young people.

The vast majority of respondents from the Special Schools Sector are in disagreement with the proposals for their sector as opposed to the agreement for these proposals in **all** responses. Similarly there is support for the additional learning support and autism-specific provision within primary and post-primary schools in **all** responses but not from within the Special Schools Sector.

A minority of the written comments (16%) came from the Special Education Sector. Nearly all, of the responses (95%) pointed out the excellent work carried out by the Special School Sector and the work of one of these schools. Furthermore, a minority (13%) of the written comments were completed by pupils of a school in Belfast. These contributions took the form of ‘case studies’ with most referring to the problems they face in attending school and the associated impact that this has on their learning. The pupils then outlined the support they receive at present from the staff and the likely impact on their educational experience if their school were to change because of the Plan.

Having analysed the comments of the respondents three strategic issues were highlighted:

- 1 Nearly all (97%) of the written comments argued that Special Schools should be dealt with as a separate entity and should not be subject to a 'one size fits all ' approach.
- 2 Nearly all (99%) of written comments put forward the belief that Special Schools were under threat by the suggestion that some children presently educated in them were likely to be transferred to units within main stream schools.
- 3 Nearly all (93%) of written comments expressed concern about managing the transition to new provision.

The EA notes the concerns raised as part of the consultation response and would direct respondents to page 95 of the Providing Pathways document which states that



'A phased and managed process to any change will be an essential part of the Area Planning process to ensure parental confidence and appropriate professional development of staff as the special schools' estate is reshaped to meet pupil need.' There is no suggestion that children currently placed in a special school will be transferred to specialist centres within mainstream schools. The proposals do however suggest increased opportunities across Northern Ireland for pupils with Special Educational Needs to have their needs met within a broader continuum of provision in line with assessed need; the Special School remains a core element of this spectrum of provision.

## **Section 6 Other Responses Received**

In addition to the hard copy survey responses, there were 47 other responses received by letter and email. These responses comprised:

- 10 from individuals;
- 10 from individual school's Boards of Governors; and
- 27 from organisations/groups and Regional Equality Unit.

## Section 7 Summary of Written Comments

The summary comments below have been drawn from:

- respondents to the free text section of the online survey;
- respondents who completed the online survey after the closing date and these comments were collated manually;
- those people who attended the five consultation meetings held across the province; and
- the written responses from members of the public, schools, education support groups and any other respondents.

Examples of individual comments can be found in the Appendix xix.

There were a number of issues that attracted comments from respondents which reflected the Key Themes of the Area Plan:

### **Maximising Resources and Sustainability**

- Action is required to improve the effectiveness of the use of the resources available to schools
- The impact that the current duplication of education provision is having on the use of resources
- The financial challenges facing schools
- The need to review the sustainability of schools in the context of their local area
- The potential impact of area planning on small schools, particularly in rural areas

### **Securing Parity of Access/Enhancing Choice for all Children & Young People**

- The need for consultation as specific proposals concerning individual schools emerge through the action plans
- The need to address equality issues
- The importance of equality across and between different sectors
- Concerns about the possible impact on special school pupils during any period of transition to revised provision
- The lack of proposals that may impact on grammar schools.

## Section 8 Conclusion

The EA notes the range of individuals and bodies that responded to the consultation on *Providing Pathways - Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020* and is appreciative of the time and effort allocated to commenting on this area of its work. Again, it is important to note that this was a regional plan in which the managing authorities and sectoral support bodies engaged together to prepare and agreed on the key themes and priorities for action contained therein.

With the agreement from DE, the EA has treated the 327 (same) responses from one voluntary grammar school as one response. When this is taken into consideration, the outcomes of the consultation indicate a much more positive response and the majority of respondents were in agreement with the strategic themes and priorities for action in the Area Plan; apart from respondents within the Special Schools' Sector.

Again, as stated in section 5.1, the EA notes the concerns raised within the Special Schools' sector as part of the consultation response and would direct respondents to page 95 of the *Providing Pathways* document which states that 'A phased and managed process to any change will be an essential part of the Area Planning process to ensure parental confidence and appropriate professional development of staff as the special schools' estate is reshaped to meet pupil need.' There is no suggestion that children currently placed in a special school will be transferred to specialist centres within mainstream schools. The proposals do however suggest increased opportunities across Northern Ireland for pupils with Special Educational Needs to have their needs met within a broader continuum of provision in line with assessed need; the Special School remains a core element of this spectrum of provision.

Appendix xix highlights the areas and issues raised by respondents: many of which are not within the scope of this consultation. However, the EA will continue to work with DE and its educational partners to address the complex and difficult backdrop to Education.

Therefore, as no new key themes or priorities for action were identified by the consultation, and, given the endorsement of the majority of respondents to most of them, these key themes and priorities for action can now form the basis of the next stage of the area planning process, namely the development of action plans, initially for the 2017/2018 year and subsequently for the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 years.

The responses to consultation highlighted and supported the need for action to be embarked upon to ensure that all children and young people have parity of access to high quality education through a network of sustainable schools. Responses also supported the need to make the most effective use of education resources at this time when school budgets are facing unprecedented challenges. It was recognised by respondents that those responsible for the planning of education provision need to embark on actions to address the challenges facing education provision at this time and in the future.

## Appendices

### Appendix i      Equality of Opportunity

#### Responses to the Section 75 Questionnaire

The EA conducted an equality screening exercise in relation to the Area Plan; the result of which was that the policy was screened out. As priorities for action develop, each development proposal will be screened individually.

#### Overall Quantitative Analysis

877 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire; however, not all respondents answered each question.

In accordance with statistical reporting conventions, the response rates are described as follows:

Nearly all – greater than 90%

Most – 75% to 90%

Majority – 50% to 74%

Significant minority – 30% to 49%

Minority – 10% to 29%

Very few – fewer than 10%.

A minority of respondents (ranging from 13.2% to 15.5%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on either Equality of Opportunity or the Promotion of Good Relations.

Very few or a minority of respondents (ranging from 9.9% to 18.4%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on either Equality of Opportunity or the Promotion of Good Relations.

A majority of respondents (ranging from 66.1% to 76.1%) did not wish to provide an opinion. It may be worth noting that a small number of respondents indicated that the Draft Strategic Area Plan did not contain sufficient information to enable them to form an opinion.

In all the categories, the positive and negative responses are in the “very few” or “minority” ranges. Those respondents not wishing to provide an opinion are in the “majority” or “most” categories. These levels would indicate that, at this stage, there are minimal equality concerns regarding the Section 75 categories.

A few trends appeared in that in all categories the controlled sector was the most positive response and the maintained sector the most negative response.

## **Quantitative Analysis by Category**

### **Between Persons of Different Religious Belief**

870 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different religious beliefs.

A minority of respondents (14.8%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a significant minority (31.5%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (15.2%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (40.0%) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (70.0%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

### **Between Persons of Different Political Opinion**

872 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different political opinions.

A minority of respondents (14.2%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a larger minority (29.4%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (15.3%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (43.5%) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (70.5%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

### **Between Persons of Different Racial Groups**

869 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different racial groups.

A minority of respondents (14.7%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a larger minority (29.3%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (11.0%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (33.3%) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (74.2%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

### **Between Persons of Different Ages**

873 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different ages.

A minority of respondents (15.5%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a significant minority (31.0%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (12.5%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (35.6%) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (72.1%) did not wish to provide an opinion.



## **Between Persons of Different Marital Status**

871 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different marital status.

A minority of respondents (14.0%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a larger minority (26.5%) responded in this manner.

Very few respondents (9.9%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (34.1%) responded in this manner.

Most respondents (76.1%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

## **Between Persons of Different Sexual Orientation**

870 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons of different sexual orientation.

A minority of respondents (13.2%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a larger minority (25.0%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (10.9%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (35.6%) responded in this manner.

Most respondents (75.9%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

## **Between Men and Women Generally**

868 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of men and women generally.

A minority of respondents (14.9%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a significant minority (37.8%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (10.0%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (31.1%) responded in this manner.

Most respondents (75.1%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

### **Between Persons with a Disability and Persons Without**

877 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons with a disability and persons without.

A minority of respondents (15.5%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a significant minority (33.9%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (18.4%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school and special school sectors, a significant minority (40.0% and 36.6% respectively) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (66.1%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

### **Between Persons of with Dependents and Persons Without**

868 respondents completed the Section 75 Equality Questionnaire in respect of persons with dependents and persons without.

A minority of respondents (15.1%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact positively on this category. In the controlled school sector, a significant minority (30.4%) responded in this manner.

A minority of respondents (11.5%) consider that the Draft Strategic Area Plan will impact negatively on this category. In the maintained school sector, a significant minority (37.0%) responded in this manner.

A majority of respondents (73.4%) did not wish to provide an opinion.

## Appendix ii EA Consultation Strategy

Stakeholder	Type of Engagement/ Consultation	Other Information
EA Board	Via Board meetings	TBA
School Principals	Consultation On-line Consultation	Schools from various management types ie Controlled, Maintained, Integrated, Grant Maintained, Voluntary etc
Young People	On-line Consultation	Liaison with Head of Youth Service and Senior Youth Officers (Quizdom Handsets)
Boards of Governors	Consultation On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways)
Parents/Guardians	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Education Partners: CCMS CSSC CCEA NICIE CnaG GBA Libraries NI	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Other Government Departments	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Trade Unions: Teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INTO</li> <li>• UTU</li> <li>• NAHUWT</li> <li>• ICTU</li> <li>• ATL</li> <li>• NAHT</li> </ul> Non-Teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary School Governors' Association NI</li> <li>• NIPSA</li> <li>• Unison</li> <li>• GMB</li> <li>• UNITE</li> <li>• ASPECT</li> </ul>	Consultation Available via Internet Survey -Providing Pathways Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways	

• Association of Educational Psychologists		
Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Catholic Heads Association	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
The General Teachers' Council for Northern Ireland	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
The Transferors' Representative Council (TRC)	Consultation On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Public Record Office of NI (PRONI)	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Northern Ireland Ombudsman	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Northern Ireland Audit Office	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Equality Commission	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Equality Consultees	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways <i>(List of over 100 consultees includes churches, race group, LGBT groups, disability groups and community groups)</i>
Human Rights Commission	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Equality Coalition	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Northern Ireland School Caterers Association (NISCA)	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Rural Communities Network NI	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Local Councils in Northern Ireland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antrim and N'Abbey</li> <li>• Ards and North Down</li> <li>• Armagh City, Banbridge and</li> </ul>	Consultation On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways)

Craigavon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast</li> <li>• Causeway Coast and Glens</li> <li>• Derry City and Strabane</li> <li>• Fermanagh and Omagh</li> <li>• Lisburn and Castlereagh</li> <li>• Mid and East Antrim</li> <li>• Mid Ulster</li> <li>• Newry, Mourne and Down</li> </ul>		
Health and Social Care Trusts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast</li> <li>• Northern</li> <li>• South Eastern</li> <li>• Southern</li> <li>• Western</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
NICCY	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
NI Anti Bullying Forum (NIABF)	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
SENAC	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
Autism NI	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
NIPPA	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways
SENAC	On-line Consultation	Available via Internet Survey - Providing Pathways

Please note that not all 938 respondents answered all questions.

### Appendix iii

#### Q 5 The plan is focussed on children and young people?

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	118	15	58	191
	62%	8%	30%	21%
<b>Maintained</b>	10	12	28	50
	20%	24%	56%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	25	316	9	350
	7%	90%	3%	38%
<b>Integrated</b>	5	4	5	14
	36%	29%	36%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	1	5	3	9
	11%	56%	33%	1%
<b>Special Education</b>	8	7	243	258
	3%	3%	94%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	9	8	14	31
	29%	26%	45%	3%
<b>Others</b>	2	3	4	9
	22%	33%	44%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1	2	11	14
	7%	14%	79%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	179	372	375	926
	19%	40%	41%	99%

## Appendix iv

### Q 6 The plan correctly identifies the issues within your Local Government District Area?

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	111	24	56	191
	58%	13%	29%	21%
<b>Maintained</b>	8	9	33	50
	16%	18%	66%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	13	328	9	350
	4%	94%	3%	38%
<b>Integrated</b>	5	2	7	14
	36%	14%	50%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	1	2	6	9
	11%	22%	67%	1%
<b>Special Education</b>	6	10	242	258
	2%	4%	94%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	6	10	15	31
	19%	32%	48%	3%
<b>Others</b>	2	1	6	9
	22%	11%	67%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1	2	11	14
	7%	14%	79%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	153	388	385	926
	17%	42%	42%	99%

## Appendix v

**Q 7 The proposals identified in the 'what will we do?' section will address the issues in your Local Government District Area?**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	101 53%	30 16%	60 31%	191 21%
<b>Maintained</b>	6 12%	12 24%	32 64%	50 5%
<b>VGS</b>	18 5%	320 91%	12 3%	350 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	3 21%	3 21%	8 57%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	1 11%	2 22%	6 67%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	7 3%	11 4%	240 93%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	4 13%	10 32%	17 55%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	1 11%	4 44%	4 44%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1 7%	2 14%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	142 15%	394 43%	390 42%	926 99%



## Appendix vi

### Q 8(a) Change is required to improve the quality of provision

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	126 66%	17 9%	48 25%	191 21%
<b>Maintained</b>	14 28%	10 20%	26 52%	50 5%
<b>VGS</b>	313 90%	26 7%	10 3%	349 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	6 41%	3 21%	5 36%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	3 33%	1 11%	5 56%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	15 6%	14 5%	229 89%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	13 42%	5 16%	13 42%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	4 44%	0 0%	5 56%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2 14%	1 7%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	496 54%	77 8%	352 38%	925 99%

## Appendix vii

### Q 8(b) Change is required to ensure the sustainability of schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	125	17	47	189
	66%	9%	25%	20%
<b>Maintained</b>	15	7	28	50
	30%	14%	56%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	33	307	9	349
	9%	88%	3%	38%
<b>Integrated</b>	6	4	4	14
	43%	29%	29%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	2	7	0%	9
	22%	78%		1%
<b>Special Education</b>	22	12	222	256
	9%	5%	87%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	14	5	11	30
	47%	17%	37%	3%
<b>Others</b>	3	2	4	9
	33%	22%	44%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2	1	11	14
	14%	7%	79%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	222	362	336	920
	24%	40%	37%	98%

## Appendix viii

### Q 8(c) Change is required to take account of the financial context

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	124 66%	23 12%	41 22%	188 20%
<b>Maintained</b>	13 27%	9 18%	27 55%	49 5%
<b>VGS</b>	319 91%	24 7%	6 2%	349 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	6 43%	4 29%	4 29%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	3 33%	6 67%	0%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	22 9%	11 4%	223 87%	256 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	11 39%	7 25%	10 36%	28 3%
<b>Others</b>	3 33%	2 22%	4 44%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	3 22%	0 0%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	504 55%	86 9%	326 36%	916 98%

## Appendix ix

### Q 9(a) Key Areas in Primary Schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	113	23	49	185
	62%	12%	27%	20%
<b>Maintained</b>	10	10	26	46
	22%	22%	57%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	17	324	5	346
	5%	94%	2%	37%
<b>Integrated</b>	5	3	6	14
	36%	21%	43%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	2	1	6	9
	22%	11%	67%	1%
<b>Special Education</b>	10	30	196	236
	4%	13%	83%	25%
<b>General Interest</b>	8	9	13	30
	27%	30%	43%	3%
<b>Others</b>	0	6	3	9
	0%	67%	33%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1	1	12	14
	7%	7%	86%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	166	407	316	889
	18%	44%	34%	95%

## Appendix x

### Q 9(b) Key Areas in Post-Primary Schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	35	101	43	179
	20%	56%	24%	19%
<b>Maintained</b>	11	14	21	46
	24%	30%	46%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	17	322	10	349
	5%	92%	3%	38%
<b>Integrated</b>	3	6	4	13
	23%	46%	31%	1%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	2	2	5	9
	22%	22%	56%	1%
<b>Special Education</b>	9	34	192	235
	4%	14%	82%	25%
<b>General Interest</b>	11	7	13	31
	35%	23%	42%	3%
<b>Others</b>	0	5	4	9
	0%	56%	44%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2	1	11	14
	14%	7%	79%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	90	492	303	885
	10%	53%	33%	94%

## Appendix xi

### Q 9(c) Key Areas in Special Schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	29 17%	106 62%	36 21%	171 18%
<b>Maintained</b>	7 17%	15 36%	20 48%	42 5%
<b>VGS</b>	18 5%	323 93%	5 2%	346 37%
<b>Integrated</b>	4 31%	6 46%	3 23%	13 1%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	3 33%	5 56%	1 11%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	9 4%	7 3%	242 94%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	7 23%	8 27%	15 50%	30 3%
<b>Others</b>	2 22%	4 44%	3 33%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2 14%	1 7%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	81 9%	475 51%	336 36%	892 95%

## Appendix xii

**Q 10(a) Ensure a network of sustainable schools that are of the right type, of the right size, located in the right place?**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	113 70%	11 6%	46 24%	190 21%
<b>Maintained</b>	18 36%	8 16%	24 48%	50 5%
<b>VGS</b>	26 7%	313 90%	10 3%	349 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	8 57%	3 21%	3 21%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	7 78%	2 22%	0%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	37 14%	15 6%	206 80%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	16 52%	5 16%	10 32%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	3 33%	3 33%	3 33%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2 14%	0 0%	12 86%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	250 27%	360 39%	314 34%	924 99%

## Appendix xiii

### Q 10(b) Work in collaboration with the Further Education sector to increase access to the Entitlement Framework?

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	131	23	35	189
	69%	12%	19%	20%
<b>Maintained</b>	18	26	5	49
	37%	53%	10%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	21	319	7	347
	6%	92%	2%	37%
<b>Integrated</b>	7	4	3	14
	50%	29%	21%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	8	1	0%	9
	89%	11%		1%
<b>Special Education</b>	34	24	198	256
	13%	9%	77%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	16	4	11	31
	52%	13%	36%	3%
<b>Others</b>	4	2	3	9
	44%	22%	33%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2	0	12	14
	14%	0%	86%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	241	403	274	918
	27%	44%	30%	98 %



Appendix xiv

**Q 10(c) Establish additional learning support and Autism-specific provision within Primary and Post-Primary Schools**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	136 73%	18 10%	34 17%	188 20%
<b>Maintained</b>	35 72%	9 18%	5 10%	49 5%
<b>VGS</b>	320 93%	20 6%	6 1%	346 37%
<b>Integrated</b>	8 62%	3 23%	2 15%	13 1%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	8 100%	0 0%	0 0%	8 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	29 11%	29 11%	197 77%	255 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	14 45%	7 23%	10 32%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	4 44%	1 11%	4 44%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	3 21%	0 0%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	557 60%	87 9%	269 29%	913 97%

## Appendix xv

**Q 11(a) Provide a common structure so that all children and young people who attend a special school can do so from the age of 3-19 years in their closest Special School**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	137 72%	18 9%	36 19%	191 21%
<b>Maintained</b>	30 60%	16 32%	4 8%	50 5%
<b>VGS</b>	326 93%	19 5%	5 2%	350 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	9 64%	2 14%	3 21%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	4 44%	5 56%	0%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	12 5%	4 2%	242 94%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	13 42%	6 19%	12 39%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	4 44%	1 11%	4 44%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	2 14%	0 0%	12 86%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	537 58%	71 8%	318 34%	926 99%

## Appendix xvi

### Q 11(b) Provide pre-school provision at all DE-funded Special schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	140	22	26	188
	75%	12%	14%	20%
<b>Maintained</b>	33	13	3	49
	67%	27%	6%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	320	23	3	346
	92%	7%	1%	37%
<b>Integrated</b>	9	2	3	14
	64%	14%	21%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	6	3	0%	9
	67%	33%		1%
<b>Special Education</b>	51	16	190	257
	20%	6%	74%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	16	6	8	30
	53%	20%	27%	3%
<b>Others</b>	4	2	3	9
	44%	22%	33%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	4	0	10	14
	29%	0%	71%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	583	87	246	916
	64%	10%	27%	98%

## Appendix xvii

### Q 11(c) Explore innovative solutions to equality of access to specialist provision in Special Schools

Sector	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totals
<b>Controlled</b>	134	23	30	187
	72%	12%	16%	20%
<b>Maintained</b>	31	14	4	49
	63%	29%	8%	5%
<b>VGS</b>	325	19	3	347
	94%	5%	1%	37%
<b>Integrated</b>	8	3	3	14
	57%	21%	21%	2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	5	4	0%	9
	56%	44%		1%
<b>Special Education</b>	30	15	211	256
	12%	6%	82%	28%
<b>General Interest</b>	15	5	10	30
	50%	17%	33%	3%
<b>Others</b>	5	1	3	9
	56%	11%	33%	1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	3	0	11	14
	21%	0%	79%	2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	556	84	275	915
	61%	9%	30%	98%

## Appendix xviii

**Q 12 This plan provides an appropriate foundation to deliver a network of viable and sustainable schools that have a focus on raising standards?**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	30 16%	101 53%	60 32%	191 21%
<b>Maintained</b>	9 18%	11 22%	30 60%	50 5%
<b>VGS</b>	13 4%	330 94%	7 2%	350 38%
<b>Integrated</b>	4 29%	3 21%	7 50%	14 2%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	1 11%	2 22%	6 67%	9 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	8 3%	6 2%	244 95%	258 28%
<b>General Interest</b>	6 19%	8 26%	17 55%	31 3%
<b>Others</b>	0 0%	5 56%	4 44%	9 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1 7%	2 14%	11 79%	14 2%
<b>All Respondents</b>	72 8%	468 50%	386 42%	926 99%

## Appendix xix

**Q13 Please use the space to make further comment**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>replies</b>
<b>Controlled</b>	120 18%
<b>Maintained</b>	34 5%
<b>VGS</b>	314 48%
<b>Integrated</b>	5 1%
<b>Irish Medium</b>	7 1%
<b>Special Education</b>	159 24%
<b>General Interest</b>	15 2%
<b>Others</b>	5 1%
<b>Not Applicable</b>	1 0.1%
<b>All Respondents</b>	660 70%

## Examples of comments contained in further Comment Section or Written Responses

The comments below have been drawn from:

- Respondents to the online survey;
- Respondents who completed the online survey after the closing date and these comments were collated manually;
- Those people who attended the five consultation meetings held across the province; and
- The written responses from members of the public, schools, education support groups and any other respondents.

In analysing the written responses, it is possible to gain a general view of the issues arising. Some comments made by respondents were of a specific nature to a school or sector within the educational sphere and whilst important have not been included in this section.

A majority of, respondents to the online survey (67%), had made additional comments on the Area Plan in response to question 13. In addition, very few (5%) individuals or organisations and groups made comments by letter, email or other submission. When the overall responses to the online survey and any additional letters or emails are examined, it revealed that a significant minority of responses (48%) was received from two sectors ie Voluntary Grammar and Special Education. A majority of these responses (68%) came from one Voluntary Grammar School in Mid-Ulster. Nearly all (95%) of the respondents used the following comment:

*‘Our school is committed to achieving the highest of standards in all areas and has always sought to put the educational interests of children & young people first. ETI inspection of 2014 rated the school Very Good in leadership & management, achievements & standards & quality of provision and the school was Sunday Times NI secondary school of the year 2016-17. GCSE & A level results place our school consistently in the top 10 NI schools. Our school is a caring school promoting a values-based ethos, ‘for all faiths & none’. It is the only non-denominational voluntary grammar school in the Mid-Ulster area, and thus is unique not only in its highest achieving standards and results but also because it offers these against the backdrop of allowing our children integrate and mix with other faiths and none - this is a*

*unique offering in NI and one that will allow our children grow up and live in a NI which is completely different to the one we were brought up in. Situated in town, the school serves a diverse catchment area & has very good & improving transport links. Our school is over-subscribed by 30+ places for KS3 entry & is over-subscribed at KS5 (225 pupils), offering the largest curricular choice at A level in our local partnership. In line with the growth projections, there is a need to increase enrolment to circa 900, with a yearly intake of 125 pupils. Our school is financially sustainable, vibrant & undoubtedly plays a greater role in the sharing of communities than can ever be imagined and which brings its own immeasurable rewards for the benefit of the next generation, the local community, and the future of NI; this must never be lost.'*

This comment had been placed on the school website and encouragement was given to all members of the school community to use it in their response to the Draft Area Planning questionnaire.

A minority of the written comments (16%) came from the Special Education Sector. Nearly all, of the responses (95%) pointed out the excellent work carried out by the Special School Sector and the work of one of these schools. Furthermore, a minority (13%) of the written comments were completed by pupils of a school in Belfast. These contributions took the form of 'case studies' with most referring to the problems they face in attending school and the associated impact that this has on their learning. The pupils then outlined the support they receive at present from the staff and the likely impact on their educational experience if their school were to change because of the Plan.

Having analysed the comments of the respondents three strategic issues were highlighted namely:

- 1 Nearly all (97%) of the written comments argued that Special Schools should be dealt with as a separate entity and should not be subject to a 'one size fits all' approach.
- 2 Nearly all (99%) of written comments put forward the belief that Special Schools were under threat by the suggestion that some children presently educated in them were likely to be transferred to units within main stream schools.



- 3 Nearly all (93%) of written comments expressed concern about managing the transition to new provision.

There was a significant minority of written comments (33%) made by respondents who categorised themselves as representing other schools or Sectoral Bodies or other general groups. Therefore, the number of respondents who raised common issues was very few. Consequently, in the issues identified below a simple numerical scale has been used to aid analysis:

<i>Fewer than 10</i>	<i>'a few'</i>
<i>Between 10 and 30</i>	<i>'a number'</i>
<i>Over 30</i>	<i>'several'.</i>

The following issues were raised by these respondents which have been grouped by theme:

### **Rural**

- 1 Several respondents said that the Plan could be detrimental to rural schools, small schools, and underplays the very positive contribution they have traditionally made to their communities.
- 2 Several respondents claimed that small schools and rural/neighbourhood schools need to be protected. They said that it is wrong to assume that small schools are economically, socially, and educationally inferior to larger schools and that one size or model of school does not fit all communities. This must be recognised.
- 3 A few respondents said that the potential for an overall adverse impact on the quality of education provided and for parental choice is apparent. This is viewed as particularly prevalent for those small schools within rural areas.
- 4 Several respondents did not feel that the document reflected fairly the benefits and attractions of educating children in small rural and neighbourhood schools.

### **Finance**

- 5 Several respondents said that the Plan is being developed within the context of schools facing a year on year worsening economic situation and does not adequately take this into account.

- 6 A number of respondents expressed a significant degree of scepticism regarding the EA's motives in proposing review and subsequent change - more about saving money than improving the education for all children.
- 7 Several respondents were of the view that the Plan is based on the belief that financial considerations should drive sustainable schools rather than educational need.
- 8 Several respondents were concerned that a lack of resourcing/investment was inhibiting growth in some schools that are presently oversubscribed and in need of additional facilities.

### **Capacity**

- 9 A number of respondents said action should be taken as soon as possible to address under capacity and thus ensure that hard pressed resources are used to develop strong and sustainable schools in central areas.
- 10 A number of respondents claimed that the formula used by the Department and the Education Authority for calculating school capacity/number of surplus places requires review. Some small rural schools' enrolments are already at capacity, and in some instances this is lower than the figure of 105 within the sustainable school's policy.

### **Sustainability**

- 11 A few respondents suggested that there is a need to re-visit the Sustainable Schools Policy (2009) in the light of the evolving context in which schools are operating to-day.
- 12 Several respondents claimed that sustainability needs to be gauged on a school by school basis.
- 13 A few respondents made the point that sustainability of schools is quite a separate issue from raising standards in schools.
- 14 A few respondents said that in future inspection reports the sustainability of a school should be commented on.
- 15 A few respondents expressed a view that selection at eleven has had, and will continue to have, a detrimental impact on the sustainability of non-selective schools.

### **Other Groups/Sectors**

- 16 A few respondents questioned the reasoning for excluding Nursery Provision from the document.

- 17 A number of respondents said that the Plan does not make mention of some minority groups including LGBT needs.
- 18 A few respondents noted the lack of any proposals in relation to Voluntary Grammar Schools.
- 19 A few respondents commented that the Plan does not address the needs of the Irish Medium sector and the support needed to ensure sustainability and continued growth.
- 20 A few respondents expressed the view that if main stream schools were to admit increased numbers of children with special needs that this would increase work load for teachers within the main stream schools.
- 21 Several respondents from the controlled sector raised the issue they believe that schools from other sectors had been permitted to develop at the expense of schools in the Controlled Sector.

### **Action Plans**

- 22 A few respondents expressed the view that the document did not make specific recommendations for action and as such the Plan was described as vague and lacking in real meaning.
- 23 Several respondents claimed that there was a lack of clarity as to how subsequent action plans will be developed monitored and evaluated.
- 24 A number of respondents said that the Plan and subsequent action plans need to have due regard for the EA's obligation to assess policies for their impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity through equality screening and/or an equality impact assessment.

### **Consultation Process**

- 25 Several respondents were concerned that the design of the online survey led respondents to express a view which had been pre-determined by the EA and Department.
- 26 Several respondents pointed out that as more detailed and specific proposals are developed there will be an increasing need for a meaningful consultation process which will involve all stakeholders (including children and young people.)
- 27 Several respondents were concerned that the consultation process failed to directly engage with children and young people.

## **Education/Curriculum**

- 28 A few respondents queried if empirical evidence to support the view that composite classes in primary schools inhibit the educational attainment of children needs is available.
- 29 A few respondents believed that there is a need for curriculum review to precede the strategic review of area planning.
- 30 A number of respondents were concerned that the duplication of educational provision across the various sectors is wasteful and needs to be addressed.
- 31 A number of comments were made regarding the benefits of building and developing collaboration between schools and sectors, and that this was not fully reflected in the document.
- 32 Some made a few references about the role of Area Learning Communities and the relationship between ALCs and local Further Education Colleges when meeting the needs of children at Key Stage 4 and Post-16.
- 33 Several respondents said that the Plan continues to accept the need for a sectoral approach to education. The consequence of which is that within some communities, more than one school serves the pupil population. A more appropriate model would be that one well equipped and well-resourced school would be more efficient and effective.

## Appendix xx

The number of responses received to this consultation exercise is outlined in Table 1 below:

**Table 1 – Number of Responses received**

<b>Type of response</b>	<b>Number</b>
Responses to online consultation ( <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk/providingpathways">www.eani.org.uk/providingpathways</a> )	938
By letter, email, or other submission	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>985</b>

*Please note:*

- *Not every respondent answered each question; and*
- *Submissions received after the closing date have been acknowledged and included in this document.*

*Please note that some respondents identified themselves as representing more than one Council Area*

## **Names of Respondents to the online survey who indicated that their name can be published**

Alex Moore

An tÁisaonad

Andrew Leonard

Anne Dorrian

Antrim Grammar School

Antrim Learning Community

Association of School and College Leaders, Northern Ireland (ASCL NI)

Ballyclare High School

Ballymena Academy

Ballytober Primary School

Banbridge High School

Barbara Lally

Barbara Reeves

Beechlawn School, Hillsborough

Bellaghy Primary School

Bessbrook Primary School and Nursery Unit

Board of Governors for 4 Loughgilly Parish Schools

Bocombra Primary School

Brian McAuley

Caoimhe Duffy

Carol Starsfield

Carrickfergus College

Carrowdore Primary School

Clounagh Junior High School, Portadown

Coagh Primary School

Coláiste Feirste

Conor Byrne

Craig Goodall

Creavery Primary School

Crumlin Integrated College  
Culcrow Primary School  
David Cunningham  
David Read, Ligoniel Primary School  
Dermot Adams  
Duneane Primary School  
Emma Stansfield  
F Rogers  
Fleming Fulton School  
Foyle College  
Gaelscoil na Mona  
Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh  
Gareth Dalzell  
George Beattie  
Glenlola Collegiate  
Glenveagh School  
Glynn Primary School  
Graham Gault, Maghaberry Primary School and Nursery Unit  
Greenisland Primary School  
Greenwood House Assessment Centre  
Heather Read  
Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Jackie Adams  
Jeff Crimmins  
Jim Salt  
John Gallagher  
John McGuigan  
Kathleen Maguire, Glenveagh School  
Kathleen McBride  
Katie Douglas  
Kieran McAdorey

Kilmoyle Primary School and Nursery Unit  
Laura Flannigan  
Lesley Bell, Fleming Fulton School  
Longstone School  
Lorna Quinn  
Maghaberry Primary School  
Malcolm Byrne  
Michelle Wooderson  
Mitchell House School  
Movilla High School  
Mrs O Rodgers  
Mrs O’Kane  
Mura Kennedy  
National Association of Head Teachers, Northern Ireland (NAHT NI)  
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)  
Newtownhamilton High School  
Orchard County Primary School  
Portadown College  
Rachel Robb  
Rainey Endowed School  
Riverside School  
Robert Hamilton  
Ruari McBride  
Ruth Wilson, Dunclug College, Ballymena  
S Kinghan  
Support Acceptance Information and Learning (SAIL)  
South Eastern Regional College (SERC)  
Sperrinview School  
St Gerard’s School and Support Services  
St Joseph’s Primary School, Strangford  
St Michael’s Primary School, Finnis



St Teresa's Primary School, Tullyherron  
St Joseph's Primary School, Ballycruttle  
St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford  
Templepatrick Primary School  
Theo McDevitt  
Tor Bank School  
Ulster Teachers' Union  
Victoria College, Belfast

**Written Responses were received from:**

Colleges Northern Ireland  
Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta  
Community Relations Council  
Controlled Schools' Support Council  
Disability Action  
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council  
Governing Bodies Association NI  
Integrated Education Fund  
Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
Mid Ulster District Council  
National Association of Head Teachers  
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People  
NI Council for Integrated Education  
NI Local Government Association  
NIPSA  
NI Voluntary Grammar Schools Bursars' Association  
Parenting NI  
Regional Equality Unit  
Rural Centre for Shared Education  
Rural Community Network  
Social Democratic and Labour Party

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Special Education Needs Advice Centre

Transferor Representatives' Council

Ulster Farmers' Union

Ulster Unionist Party

Unison