

Integrated Education – Action Plan 2025 -2030

ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

This Action Plan is designed to achieve five outcomes that have been identified in consultation with persons with knowledge and experience of Integrated schools including teachers, governors, pupils, families, and sectoral and community bodies namely:

- Increased access to Integrated Education
- High-quality support services for Integrated Education
- Development, maintenance and protection of the Integrated Ethos;
- Increased public knowledge and understanding of Integrated Education; and
- Increased school collaboration and a more shared society

Actions have been identified through this consultation and are intended to achieve these outcomes. The organisation responsible for delivery of each action and the target date for delivery are detailed in the plan. The plan also includes provision for review.

In partnership with stakeholders and supported by departmental statisticians, we have developed a suite of indicators which will be updated annually and used to monitor success in achieving the outcomes in the Action Plan and delivery of the strategy.

Using this approach, it is neither necessary nor achievable to have a quantifiable indicator for every action. It is the cumulative effect of the wide range of actions across all relevant organisations and services on a select number of indicators which identifies progress towards the achievement of the outcomes, or flags where actions need reviewed and revised.

Progress towards achieving each action will also be reported on annually by the relevant organisation and collated and published by the Department. This will include an indication of progress based on a Red/Amber/Green rating.

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What: Priority Outcomes	How: Activities	Who: Responsibility	When: Target date for delivery
1. Increased access to Integrated Education	Action 1: DE will commission NICIE to engage with Integrated schools and EA in the six localities currently identified where Integrated Education is oversubscribed. - NICIE and the other educational stakeholders will engage in partnership with Integrated schools in Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Ards and North Down, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Mid and East Antrim, and Newry, Mourne and Down to review their enrolment numbers and school capacity and, as required prepare, and bring forward Development Proposals with their Board of Governors to increase admissions and enrolment numbers. - This work is completed by NICIE as the Department will be the decision-maker on the Development Proposals and must not compromise the operation and outcome of that key statutory process.	NICIE DE Collaboration and Climate Change Directorate (DE CCCD). DE Statistics & Research Team (DE SRT) EA	Commenced by March 2025 and then Annually
	Action 2: DE will commission NICIE to engage with local communities in those localities identified where Integrated Education is not currently available.	NICIE DE	Commenced by September 2025

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	NICIE and other educational stakeholders working in partnership will engage with communities to identify whether there is sufficient community support to develop new or transformed Integrated provision and provide a detailed report on this engagement.		
	Action 3: Support and enhance the transformation process. - The Department will review the Integration Works Guidance for transformation to ensure it is fit-for-purpose by November 2025. - The Department, NICIE and EA will commence a programme in support of Transformation in September 2026. - The Department will work with NICIE and wider educational stakeholders to improve understanding of what legally constitutes Integrated Education with reference to Section 1 of the Integrated Education Act. - The Department will undertake research within schools in the voluntary and maintained sectors regarding their attitude to transformation. - The Department will also conduct a wider review of the operation of the transformation process to ensure that it is working effectively for stakeholders; how it can best develop and promote the Integrated ethos for transforming schools; and to ensure it is continuing to work well to promote the expansion of Integrated Education. - NICIE and other educational stakeholders working in partnership will continue to provide guidance and support for schools that are interested in transformation.	DE IMIE & Assisted by DE Area Planning Development Team (APDT) Sustainable Schools Policy Planning (SSPPD)	Commenced by September 2025.
	Action 4: DE will commission NICIE to issue a ‘Call for Transformation’.	NICIE DE	September 2025

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	The ‘Call for Transformation’ will be issued no later than February 2026 and will be particularly directed at schools with sustainable enrolments, or where Transformation could lead to a sustainable enrolment in priority localities. The Call will bring a fresh visibility, prominence and momentum to the transformation process and should act as a catalyst for the further growth of Integrated Education. It will commence on conclusion of work to update the existing Transformation guidance.		
	Action 5: DE report on Demand for Integrated Education published by June 2025 and annually thereafter. As set out in Chapter 3, the Department will gather more comprehensive evidence on demand to inform a detailed report on demand for Integrated Education, which will provide the foundation for informed decision making and allow the Department to prioritise actions for the development of Integrated Education which will have greatest impact.	DE CCD DE SRT EA	December 2025 Annually
	Action 6: DE to commission a report and assessment on the impact of admissions criteria on access to Integrated Education to inform next steps. The report will consider in detail the impact of admissions criteria on access to Integrated Education and produce a detailed assessment of key issues and potential next steps.	DE School Admissions Team (SAT) SSPPD	September 2025

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	Action 7: NICIE to prepare a comprehensive sector profile in the context of the Sustainable Schools Policy. Development of a sector profile in partnership with EA will consider how each existing Integrated school meets the viability criteria within the Sustainable Schools Policy and identify those schools which require support to fulfil these requirements.	NICIE	December 2025
2. High-quality support services for Integrated Education	Action 8: DE will review current support services (HR, legal, professional learning, governor support) for Integrated schools in order to improve and streamline services and to ensure appropriate access for Integrated schools. The Department will work with EA and NICIE to review existing arrangements and develop mechanisms to ensure Integrated schools who wish to avail of EA services can do so. We will survey principals and governors of Integrated schools on a biennial basis and utilise the survey findings to refine service delivery	DE CCCD through governance structures.	By March 2025
	Action 9: DE will review the school governance arrangements within Integrated Education and in particular the strengths and challenges of the Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) governance model. The Department will work with NICIE and existing GMI schools to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the model and inform potential next steps.	DE CCCD EA NICIE CSSC IEF	By April 2026
	Action 10: DE will review the objectives, resources and funding of NICIE and prepare a report for Ministerial consideration.	DE CCCD NICIE	By April 2026

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	In recognition that this Strategy will have considerable impact on the role of NICIE, the Department will commission the Innovation and Consultancy Service (ICS), within the Department of Finance to review the objectives, resources and funding of NICIE.		
3. Development, maintenance and protection of the Integrated Ethos	Action 11: DE will work with NICIE and other educational partners to review how the Integrated ethos is developed and promoted within Integrated schools and report on these findings to support further guidance. - This report will provide detailed information on Integrated schools current ethos practice and their views on future development and enhancement. It will make recommendations on how it can be further enhanced. - The action will support the Department’s statutory requirement to report on the development, maintenance and protection of the Integrated ethos.	CE CCCD NICIE CSSC EA	March 2026 and then annually
	Action 12: DE will promote the use of a school-based self-evaluation ‘Framework for Integrated Education’ Toolkit. This toolkit has been developed by EA and NICIE to help Integrated schools (and those seeking to Transform) evaluate the nature, extent, and quality of their Integrated ethos. The Framework offers a progressive pathway within which all Integrated schools can develop, expand, promote and embed their Integrated ethos and actions are evolving to the stage where they may wish to consider pursuing formal recognition within the Excellence in Integrated Education award scheme.	EA NICIE CSSC	Commenced Ongoing

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	Action 13: DE will support the use of NICIE’s Excellence in Integrated Education Award. This award scheme developed by NICIE recognises and champions good practice within existing Integrated schools. It sits alongside and complements the Department of Education’s ‘Every School a Good School’, the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy, and the Education and Training Inspectorate’s Self-Evaluation Frameworks. It is at heart a process for school improvement set within the context of the Integrated ethos and the legal definitions of the new Integrated Education Act (2022).	NICIE EA CSSC	Commenced Annually
	Action 14: DE will work with the Higher Education Institutions to incorporate Integrated Education/inclusion considerations within initial teacher training courses in Northern Ireland as appropriate. We want our education workforce equipped to meet the diverse needs of our society	DE CCCD	December 2026
4. Increased public knowledge and understanding of Integrated Education	Action 15: DE will commission qualitative and quantitative research on the extent of public understanding and knowledge about Integrated Education. The Department recognises that public understanding of Integrated Education could be improved and undertaking survey work will inform future plans to improve understanding and knowledge.	DE CCCD DE SRT NICIE	March 2026 And then annually

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	Action 16: DE will work with NICIE to develop and publish a communication and engagement plan focused on improving public understanding of Integrated Education. Promoting Integrated Education is a key objective for NICIE. DE will work with NICIE to support it in undertaking this role.	DE CCCD NICIE	September 2025
5. Increased school collaboration and a more shared society	Action 17: We will work with the Executive Office, other government Departments and their agencies to support ongoing implementation of the Together Building a United Community (TBUC) strategy. TBUC sets out the Executive’s commitment to improving community relations and building a united and shared society.	DE CCCD NICIE EA CSSC	Commenced Ongoing
	Action 18: We will encourage Integrated schools and education professionals to collaborate and share good practice in exploring controversial issues. We will utilise existing Shared Education initiatives to highlight how Integrated schools explore potentially controversial issues in a diverse classroom.	DE CCCD NICIE CSSC EA	Commenced Ongoing
	Action 19: We will encourage Integrated schools to engage with Aspire PeacePlus. We will work with EA and other stakeholders to encourage Integrated schools to engage in the Aspire Programme.	EA NICIE CSSC	Commenced Ongoing

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