



Dear School Families,

Archbishop Eamon has asked me to inform you about a potentially significant development in education legislation, which could impact negatively on the future of our school and indeed schools from other sectors.

Currently a private member's bill, the 'Integrated Education Bill', is progressing through its final stages in the Northern Ireland Assembly. It aims to elevate Integrated Schools above **every** other type of school.

The Bill as introduced will put education bodies in an impossible position by placing additional duties that will create conflict with their existing duties. There is a finite education budget, which is already stretched, and no one should be under any illusion that if the Bill is not amended appropriately it will put further pressures on that budget.

Concerningly, if this Bill is passed in its current form, the legislation will potentially advantage the integrated sector over all other sectors on a range of educational issues. Our school and indeed all Catholic schools in Northern Ireland will be negatively impacted by the outworking of this bill. Details of the bill can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/non-executive-bill-proposals/integrated-education-bill/>.

Catholic schools are part of a global network of 60 million pupils of all faiths and none. We believe parents should continue to have the right to access equitable education for all. Catholic schools continue to be the very heartbeat of communities and as you know, our school is well established and has been supporting this area for many years. It is open to all children and young people as a safe space to be educated together, as are all schools across the wider Catholic sector.

Prior to drafting there was no direct consultation with schools, parents, or the community about the practical implications of this Bill. There are a number of different school types in Northern Ireland, and it is important that each type of school has equal access to resources, funding and opportunities and that one school type is not elevated above another. We also firmly believe that all children and young people should be educated together. This Bill ignores the diversity of Catholic schools and assumes diversity is only possible in an integrated school.

If you share our concerns, we ask you to ensure that all our local (MLAs) are aware of this, **as a matter of urgency**. The Bill is scheduled to reach its final stages in the Assembly later in February. It is important that the wider community is aware of our concerns around the considerable impact of this Bill on our school.

Below are the email addresses of the MLAs who represent our constituency. Your local Councillors can be found on the Local District Council webpage.

I thank you for taking the time to read these concerns and would encourage you to act if you share them.

Yours sincerely,

Newry and Armagh	Cathal Boylan	Sinn Féin	cathal.boylan@mha.niassembly.gov.uk
Newry and Armagh	Conor Murphy	Sinn Féin	conor.murphy@mha.niassembly.gov.uk
Newry and Armagh	Justin McNulty	SDLP	justin@mcnulty@mha.niassembly.gov.uk
Newry and Armagh	Liz Kimmins	Sinn Féin	liz.kimmins@mha.niassembly.gov.uk
Newry and Armagh	William Irwin	DUP	willian.irwin@mha.niassembly.gov.uk