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#### Equality in Education

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#### Abstract

*Education plays a key role in determining an individual's life chances. The Commission recognises and reinforces the wider value of education, beyond solely the achievement of qualifications. It can provide exposure to literature, language, sport, activities, art, and music; as well as allowing individuals to develop an understanding and experience of the value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds.*

**Keywords:** *Equality, achievement, diverse cultures, identities etc.*

#### Introduction

##### Priorities and overarching areas

Education plays a key role in determining an individual's life chances. The Commission recognises and reinforces the wider value of education, beyond solely the achievement of qualifications. It can provide exposure to literature, language, sport, activities, art, and music; as well as allowing individuals to develop an understanding and experience of the value and range of diverse cultures, identities and backgrounds.

##### Priority areas for intervention

The Commission considers, following engagement with stakeholders and wider consideration, that there are immediate opportunities and/or a particular pressing need to secure change in relation to

Tackling prejudice-based bullying;

Addressing inequalities in attainment and access experienced by Traveler, Roma and Newcomer children.

In particular, we call for prompt action to advance childcare and earlyyears provision to meet the diverse needs of all children; to drive attainment via collaborative approaches involving family and the wider community; and to put in place a system for learning from successful interventions

##### Overarching areas for action

The Commission has identified the following overarching areas where it considers that targeted action could serve to address key inequalities, and advance equality of opportunity and good relations: Improve equality data and analysis

Advance a shared society through education.

Tackle prejudice-based bullying and challenge stereotypes

Address inequalities in attainment and access

Mainstream equality in education and in teacher development.

Improve equality data and analysis

Establish robust, reliable education information systems to address existing equality data gaps and provide more disaggregated data.

##### Advance a shared society through education

Move to a system of education which routinely teaches all pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes, in support of better advancing a shared society.

##### Tackle prejudice-based bullying and challenge stereotypes

Ensure actions to tackle one-off incidents and unintentional acts of prejudice-based bullying, which

may not be covered by the statutory definition of bullying, are adequately dealt with in guidance from the Department of Education.

Improve the monitoring of bullying incidents by education providers across the equality grounds.

The Department of Education should provide guidance to schools on how to comply with the recording requirements in the legislation.

Supplementary guidance to support the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act, should provide clear guidance to schools, including governors and senior management on their specific roles.

Strong and visible leadership from the school Principal, senior management team and board of governors is needed to promote an anti-bullying culture within every school.

The Department and other stakeholders should ensure that support materials and opportunities within the curriculum address prejudice-based bullying.

Measures to tackle bullying should include challenging gender roles to further the broader societal aim of preventing gender-based violence.

Extend to schools legislative protection from disability-based harassment.

Address inequalities in attainment and access  
Recommendations of benefit to all children deliver a shared curriculum in shared classes to support improved attainment across equality groups.

Provide, and monitor uptake of, appropriate, accessible and affordable childcare and early-years provision more generally to meet the diverse needs of all children.

Promote collaborative approaches to drive attainment, involving engagement with parents / families / careers and the wider communities of key equality groups.

The Education Authority should put in place a system for learning from successful interventions, and disseminate and share these lessons with other schools.

department of Education should develop a system of postprimary transfer that enables all pupils to maximize their potential.

### **Mainstream equality in education**

Comprehensive action should be taken by the Department of Education, schools and other education bodies to embed equality of opportunity and good relations within the content and delivery of the curriculum.

Equality and good relations issues should be mainstreamed into initial teacher education (ITE) and continuous professional development (CPD).

There should be greater sharing and collaboration between teacher training colleges.

### **Conclusion**

Tackling prejudice-based bullying;

Addressing inequalities in attainment and access experienced by Traveler, Roma and Newcomer children.

In particular, we call for prompt action to advance childcare and early-years provision to meet the diverse needs of all children; to drive attainment via collaborative approaches involving family and the wider community; and to put in place a system for learning from successful interventions.