

NURSERY EDUCATION

The need for very young children to attend school close to their homes makes it inevitable that the enrolment of a nursery school will reflect the denominational character of the immediate neighbourhood. In areas of segregated housing - particularly in Belfast and Londonderry, there is therefore virtually no integration, though there are some exceptions to this rule. In rural districts, however, where the catchment area of a small town can extend for some miles into the surrounding countryside, there is often a greater degree of integration.

So far, only about 1,000 of the existing 5,000 nursery places have been provided by the voluntary school authorities and to help meet the consequent need for nursery facilities for Catholic children, Area Boards have, in recent times, provided controlled nursery schools in areas which would traditionally have been served by maintained schools, notably Newry and Londonderry. Even in these cases, however, the location of such nursery schools will mean that their enrolments will be almost wholly made up of Roman Catholic children. There are also a number of controlled nursery schools in Catholic areas of Belfast. This, however, has largely come about through population movement, as a result of which areas which were once mixed have now become totally Catholic.

A number of factors indicate that, in the short term, there will be limited scope for the encouragement of greater integration at nursery school level. Firstly, the expansion of controlled nursery provision into maintained areas may be opposed by voluntary school authorities and, in any case, boards will not have the resources for nursery schemes in their capital programmes. Secondly, the declining primary school population and the consequent surplus of accommodation will mean that, in the present financial situation, nursery provision will increasingly be centred on low-cost conversions of existing primary school premises, thus basing the provision on segregated primary schools. It is nevertheless better to make some provisions than to do nothing until more resources are available.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

For the primary, and secondary sectors, we have indicated the total number of pupils in each and have estimated how many attend "Protestant" and "Catholic" schools. These figures must be used with extreme caution as they are based on the assumption that Controlled Schools are attended entirely by Protestant children, and that voluntary and maintained schools (apart from the Voluntary Grammar Schools) are attended by Roman Catholic children. Voluntary Grammar Schools were, as far as possible analysed individually and allocated by religion. However it should be remembered that not all maintained and voluntary primary schools are under RC management, and that there is in practice some degree of integration in many schools. The figures therefore give a general indication of the overall situation rather than a completely accurate assessment of it.

In Northern Ireland, there are 602 primary schools (including 33 preparatory departments

of grammar schools) which could be deemed "Protestant". These have a total enrolment of 109,331 pupils. The 501 primary schools (including just one preparatory department) which are deemed Catholic have a total enrolment of 94,639.

A number of these primary schools are attended by children from both communities. However, these are inevitably more common in areas where there is little incidence of segregated housing. In particular, the 11 schools which are listed in the Appendix have a significant tradition of catering for all the children in their areas. However, even some primary schools in the highly segregated areas of Belfast have taken part in the activities and schemes which have helped to bring Protestant and Catholic children together in a social context. The range of activities can be seen in the Appendix.

Controlled Integrated Schools. One application, from the Throne Primary School, Belfast, has been made for recognition as a controlled integrated school. It is clear that this application was not made primarily in the interests of integrated education and in any event, the voluntary school authorities made it known that they would not support the proposal. The application from the Throne Primary School has, however, given the Department experience in exercising the provisions of the Act and has shown some areas where amending legislation may be required, namely to limit the parents whose view must be sought to those with children attending the school, as was intended, and to bring the arrangements for the establishment of a controlled integrated school into line with those for development proposals under Article 11A of the 1972 Order.

There are only 7 independent schools in Northern Ireland catering mainly for primary age children. There would appear to be no significant degree of integration in them. Dr Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church has, however, stated its eventual aim of establishing primary schools at each of its 40 churches throughout the Province. Provisional registration has already been granted to the first of these, at Kilskeery, near Enniskillen, where 14 children have been so far enrolled. This could have serious implications for the development of Integrated Education. If, at some time in the future, maintained status is sought and granted, it will increase the likelihood of the Free Presbyterian plan coming to fruition. In this, a precedent may be set by the Bunscoil Gaelaght, an independent school in Belfast for Irish speaking children, which has applied to be recognised as a maintained school.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Our provisional figures show that, in January 1979, there were 158,601 children in secondary education in Northern Ireland; of these, 31,328 were attending 46 "Protestant" grammar schools, and 55,262 were in 92 "Protestant" secondary intermediate schools. On the other hand the 32 "Catholic" grammar schools had a total enrolment of 21,400 and the 91 secondary intermediate were attended by 50,611 pupils.

There has always been a limited degree of integration in this sector because, for some pupils, attendance at what might be regarded as the "appropriate" school would involve either excessive travel or boarding. For this reason, grammar schools such as Rainey Endowed School in Magherafelt, Limavady Grammar School, and others which are mentioned in the Appendix, as well as secondary intermediate schools, such as Fivemiletown and Kilkeel have over the years attracted a significant number of Catholic pupils.

As the Inspectorate have pointed out, there are also encouraging signs that an increasing number of Roman Catholic parents are making a conscious decision to send their children to schools such as Methodist College and Sullivan Upper, Holywood, because they are attracted by the academic reputation of the schools and also, perhaps, in the interests of integration itself. This tendency is particularly evident after "O level" stage and might become greater as 6th form places are rationalised by response to demographic trends.

On the other side of the coin are the moves being made by Roman Catholic school authorities to provide co-educational facilities in areas, where previously boys or girls had either to travel a considerable distance to go to a "Catholic" school or else to attend the local "Protestant" school. This, though educationally sound, has the effect of reducing the possibilities for integration in the area. An example is the case of St Mary's Convent, Magherafelt, which became co-educational and has consequently brought about a drop in the number of Roman Catholic boys enrolled at Rainey Endowed School. A similar development has taken place in Ballycastle. However, integration still takes place, and in some unlikely areas, such as Templemore Secondary School, the only controlled secondary school on the city side of Londonderry which has developed a Catholic enrolment of some 30%. There are also many examples of "Catholic" and "Protestant" schools co-operating closely and engaging in joint activities particularly in the field of community service. These activities also help to bring teachers from the two sectors into closer contact. Examples of these activities can be seen in the Appendix.

FURTHER EDUCATION

The colleges of further education operate on an integrated basis and cater for over 11,000 full-time and over 29,000 part-time students from both communities. They provide a setting where young people can make social contact, from the age of 15 onwards, with people of different denominations. In addition, FE colleges in most towns are centrally situated, and are thus much less influenced by the character of a neighbourhood than is the case with primary and secondary schools. There are, however, some instances, such as Millfield and Rupert Stanley in Belfast, and the

Technical College in Lisburn, where the situation of the college means that the enrolment tends to be predominantly from one or other section of the community. This is also the case where FE out centres are situated in segregated housing areas.

It is in an effort to avoid such a situation that an important consideration in the siting of a 4th FE College in Belfast, will be to find a location which while accessible to the people of West Belfast, will nevertheless allow students from other areas to attend it without having to cross sectarian boundaries.

In the adult and continuing education sphere, apart from some community education courses designed for a particular area, evening classes mounted by FE colleges, the Workers Educational Association, QUB Extra Mural Department etc, are all supported by a wide cross-section of the community. Our latest figure for non-vocational FE and Adult Education showed an enrolment of 47,373 people.

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMME

Courses provided for the young unemployed by FE colleges are to be found throughout Northern Ireland in towns where there is a youth unemployment problem. While the YOP courses are open to all unemployed young people, the enrolment naturally reflects the nature of the local community. However, opportunities are provided for students from highly segregated areas to meet one another, such as the sporting activities arranged jointly for the Youthways groups from Andersonstown and the Rupert Stanley College in East Belfast.

The YOP lecturers all receive their training together.

HIGHER EDUCATION

All the higher education institutions, apart from the teacher training colleges, are fully integrated in practice, though the actual degree of integration within each cannot be quantified. Although the 3 teacher training colleges are almost entirely segregated, they represent only about 10% of a total higher education enrolment of over 17,300 in the Province. Moreover integrated teacher training is provided by Queen's University, NUU and the Ulster Polytechnic, and established teachers from controlled and maintained schools meet each other through induction courses, in-service training and in teachers' centres, as well as through inter-school events.

Teacher centres operate on a fully integrated basis and are now in operation at the 2 universities, the Institute of Continuing Education at Magee College, as well as

those provided by the Education and Library Boards in towns throughout Northern Ireland.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

There are 24 special schools in Northern Ireland catering for over 2,400 pupils, as well as 9 "Hospital" schools. Only 3 of the schools are under Roman Catholic management, while one other, the Stewart Memorial School is identified with the Presbyterian tradition. As the Inspectorate point out (see Appendix) religiously mixed enrolments do occur even in these schools. There is thus a high degree of integration among special schools, although some Roman Catholic parents send their children to denominational schools in the Republic of Ireland and in Great Britain in preference, even though specialist facilities are available in Northern Ireland.

THE YOUTH SERVICE

The Youth Committee for Northern Ireland has stated that one of the main aims of the Youth Service must be to promote tolerance and understanding, and encourage communication between young people.

The various elements which go to make up the youth service in Northern Ireland have, to varying degrees, potential for integrated social activity in Northern Ireland. Of the clubs with full-time youth leaders, 44 are controlled by Education and Library Boards; 17 are under what could be regarded as Protestant management and 28 are under what is basically Roman Catholic management. All youth clubs are in theory open to all young people regardless of religion. However as is the case with schools, many local youth clubs inevitably cater for young people from one section of the community alone. Many clubs, however, outside areas with strictly segregated housing, are mixed to varying extents. There are also numerous opportunities for club members to meet members from other clubs, through competitions, sporting activities, conferences, seminars and courses.

Youth leaders play an important part in promoting contact between young people, and in this task they are undoubtedly helped by the fact that in Northern Ireland the only course leading to a Diploma in Youth and Community work is provided at the Ulster Polytechnic and caters for both Catholic and Protestant students. In addition, most of the short Stage I courses for part-time youth workers are provided by the Education and Library Boards on an integrated basis. This year, for example, 16 three-month courses are being conducted by the Boards and only 4 by church authorities, and even in the latter there is evidence of some religious mixing. The more advanced Stage II

courses for full-time leaders are provided predominantly by the Boards - apart from one course provided by the Down and Connor (Catholic) Youth Council.

There are plans to establish 30 local youth councils throughout the Province. Each will represent all the young people in its area irrespective of religion and will elect representatives to the Northern Ireland Youth Forum which, while primarily promoting the greater involvement of young people in the Youth Service, will have considerable potential in developing a spirit of co-operation.

THE ARTS

Many groups exist in Northern Ireland to promote a diverse range of cultural activities: drama, opera, film, painting, as well as local history, folklore and archaeology, and are supported, directly and indirectly by the Arts Council. The majority are wholly integrated in their membership, except for reasons of location, or where, for example, a choral society is attached to a particular church. It should be remembered, however, that these groups draw their membership mainly from the middle classes among whom there is already a high level of integrated housing and employment, though it is to be hoped that in view of the developing interest in continuing education in the Province, increasing numbers of working class people, from segregated districts, will begin to be more involved. In this connection, the Community Arts Programme, which is funded by DENI and administered by the Arts Council, and designed to promote artistic and creative work in working class areas, may also have some impact.

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Community centres will inevitably reflect the denominational character of the public authority housing estates in which many of them are situated, and thus will offer little potential for inter-denominational activity.

Groups which have been formed to provide a local advice service for the community may show a greater degree of integration, but again, will be primarily influenced by the nature of the area for which they provide the service.

In a similar way community councils in Belfast and Londonderry will generally cover areas which are either Protestant and Catholic, though there is perhaps more evidence of integration at this level.

Although Community Organisations of Northern Ireland (CONI) was originally intended to co-ordinate all community groups in Northern Ireland, it has developed as the Catholic-orientated counterpart to the Ulster Community Action Group, which is made up of Protestant-based community organisations. Opportunities for community workers and representatives to meet are provided, however, by the Advisory Conference of Community Associations, the Community Education Forum and the Community Worker Research Project.

Approximately a dozen bodies make up the Peace Forum, and these are, of course, fully integrated. Some groups such as Protestant and Catholic Encounter (PACE) for example, specify that Protestant and Catholic Chairmen must be appointed, and lay down a minimum Protestant-Catholic ratio which makes groups eligible for membership.

The special children's holiday scheme which is grant-aided by DENI, specifies that groups of children must be mixed. Grants are also provided for follow-up reunions, which aim at building on the friendships made during the holiday itself.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Practically all sports clubs in Northern Ireland are open to all sectors of the community and the membership of the governing bodies for most sports is similarly integrated. The notable exception to this rule is the GAA whose aim and objects promote a separatist approach to sport.

For the players themselves, though they may belong to a team made up exclusively of Protestants or Catholics, league competitions and other sporting events provide excellent opportunities for schools, youth clubs and neighbourhood teams to establish contact across the sectarian divide. The integration at the various leisure centres throughout the Province will largely depend on the denominational nature of the area, with integration greatest in provincial towns and least in the districts of Belfast and Londonderry.

Apart from the gaelic code therefore sport in Northern Ireland helps to build bridges between the 2 communities at all age levels in an unobtrusive and unforced manner.