

The Fermanagh Trust

The Fermanagh Trust (FT) is a community foundation that seeks to develop positive community relations in the county. In 2007 it was noted how the Western Education and Library Board and the NI Commission for Catholic Education were starting to rationalise the post-primary schools estate on a parallel basis. Each was producing plans for their own sector, with little consideration of the other's.

Following research and with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies and International Fund for Ireland, the FT designed, developed and implemented a successful Shared Education Programme (SEP) in Fermanagh, where schools piloted cross-sector education initiatives. The Fermanagh SEP was instrumental in progressing the mainstreaming of shared education.



Impacts and Successes

42 schools participated in **shared education initiatives** in Fermanagh, involving nearly **5,000 pupils** in weekly joint classes. **37 schools** now wish to explore a cross-sectoral shared model

Inclusion of **four priorities on shared education** in the Programme for Government and the **adoption of the trust's recommendations** in the report on Advancing Shared Education by the Minister for Education

The Education Act (NI) 2014 placing a duty on the Education Authority to **encourage, facilitate and promote shared education**; the Shared Education Bill and a Policy for Shared Education (2015)

Inclusion of shared education in **major government initiatives**, eg Together: Building a United Community Strategy; Peace IV; the DSC Shared Education Signature Project

Sustainable Practices

The journey of shared education to date in Fermanagh has been significant and its impact has been critical to creating a lasting legacy across multiple spheres, including the policy arena; the legislative framework; funding opportunities; and work practices in schools. But the Fermanagh Trust believes there is still a lot of work to be done, particularly with respect to two main areas:

- Safeguarding the mainstreaming of shared education
- Furthering the development of shared education, especially in area-based planning

In relation to the latter, there is a need for independent facilitation and support for school community engagement when identifying possible shared configurations for their schools. Ongoing advocacy is needed to ensure educational bodies address their responsibilities in relation to facilitating, encouraging and promoting shared education and cross-sectoral collaboration. This is why the trust established the **Rural Centre for Shared Education** to contribute to the development and sustainability of shared education.

The Fermanagh Trust has established the Rural Centre for Shared Education to ensure shared education is sustained and embedded and is supported by all educational bodies and initiatives

The Fermanagh Trust / Rural Centre for Shared Education

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