

Identifying Potential for Sharing Education in Interface Areas

Dr Orna Young

Institute for Conflict Research
North City Business Centre
2 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast BT15 2GG

T: 028 9074 2682

Email: orna@conflictresearch.org.uk

Web: www.conflictresearch.org.uk



*Belfast
Interface
Project*

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 1.2 Methodology..... | 4 |
| 2. Context..... | 6 |
| 2.1 Education in Northern Ireland..... | 7 |
| 2.2 Shared education..... | 8 |
| 3. Parents..... | 12 |
| 3.1 Proximity/ location of the school..... | 12 |
| 3.2 Community/family ties..... | 13 |
| 3.3 Parents' experiences of the conflict..... | 15 |
| 3.4 Parents' views on current levels of sharing..... | 17 |
| 3.5 Parents' attitudes to increasing sharing..... | 18 |
| 4. Teachers..... | 20 |
| 4.1 Teachers' views on current levels of sharing..... | 20 |
| 4.2 Funding and resource allocation..... | 23 |
| 4.3 Teachers' attitudes to increasing sharing..... | 24 |
| 5. Secondary school pupils..... | 25 |
| 5.1 Boys' Model Secondary School Belfast..... | 25 |
| 5.1.1 Demographics..... | 25 |
| 5.1.2. Current attitudes to sharing in education..... | 27 |
| 5.1.3 Attitudes to increasing sharing..... | 29 |
| 5.2. Little Flower Secondary School Belfast..... | 30 |
| 5.2.1 Demographics..... | 30 |
| 5.2.2 Current attitudes to sharing in education..... | 31 |
| 5.2.3 Future sharing..... | 33 |
| 6. Schools Compared..... | 35 |
| 7. Obstacles to shared education..... | 37 |
| 8. Opportunities and achievable measures..... | 39 |
| 9. Conclusions..... | 41 |

1. Introduction

The Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) and Belfast Interface Project (BIP) have undertaken research into the potential for sharing education in schools in interface areas of North Belfast. Funded by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), this research is part of a broader regional discussion on the nature of shared education and what it currently constitutes for communities and what the opportunities are for its development.

This research investigates the following areas:

- a) attitudes towards current levels of sharing in education, and towards potentially increasing levels of sharing in education, amongst a range of parents of post-primary school-age children in two pairs of interface communities in the city;
- b) attitudes towards current levels of sharing in education, and towards potentially increasing levels of sharing in education, amongst a range of school management and teaching staff of post-primary school-age children in the same two pairs of interface communities in the city;
- c) mechanisms by which to increase levels of sharing in education amongst post-primary school-age children in the two pairs of interface communities; and
- d) achievable measures that would increase levels of sharing in education amongst post-primary school-age children in interface communities.

This research engages with two primary schools and two secondary level schools in close proximity to interface areas in North Belfast. The two primary schools were:

- Star of the Sea Primary School (Catholic maintained); and
- Carr's Glen Primary School (Voluntary State controlled)

The two secondary schools were:

- Belfast Boys' Model Secondary School (voluntary state controlled); and
- Little Flower Girls' Secondary School (Catholic maintained)

1.1 Methodology

This research was conducted between March 2012 and January 2013. Contact was made with six schools in the area of North Belfast prior to this and four schools were selected. However, September 2012 witnessed a period of inter-communal violence in the Carlisle Circus area of North Belfast, and due to tensions surrounding issues of community relations a voluntary controlled primary school chose to withdraw from the process. This school was replaced with Carr's Glen Primary School.

The research involved three distinct elements. A series of focus groups were organised with teachers in each of the four schools, and with parents in the two primary schools, while a small questionnaire was circulated among pupils in the two post-primary schools. The principals of the four schools who participated in the research assisted ICR staff by facilitating access to teachers, parents and pupils.

Four focus groups were conducted with teachers representing both sets of primary and secondary schools engaging with this research. Each focus group had between five and six participants. They sought to ascertain the views of teachers on shared education presently, to identify the obstacles to sharing in education, as well as the potential for increasing levels of sharing in education in the future. This was conducted on a school by school basis so as to gauge whether there were different views or issues according to school or indeed, specific areas.

Two focus groups were also arranged with parents of children attending the primary schools engaging with this research. Six parents participated in each of the focus groups. The discussions were aimed at exploring the impact of sharing (or a lack thereof) on their children, as well as the potential for increasing levels of sharing in education. This was with a view to assessing whether primary schools are reflecting the needs and aspirations of parents in terms of how much sharing in education currently takes place, and if this needs to be tailored accordingly.

A questionnaire was devised by ICR, BIP and staff from the IEF. It was distributed by teachers in each of the participating secondary schools to pupils. The response rate from the Boys' Model Secondary School was 94 questionnaires, with 64 from Little Flower Secondary School. The questionnaire was structured in a manner which questioned the pupils' ages; gender; community backgrounds; areas; and factors which influenced them in attending their specific school. This was with a view to assessing the impact of these factors on attitudes to and experiences of shared education. The questionnaire was also tailored to gauge the potential to increase the nature of sharing between schools and pupils in the area. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Context

While there has been significant political stabilisation in Northern Ireland in recent years, the region is still composed of fundamentally divided areas and spaces. Individual experiences of segregation and sectarianism differ and are impacted on by age, gender, social background and place of residence. Hamilton et al. note that these, and individual experiences, are used to construct 'mental maps' of the places in which individuals move which develop and change over time. These

*... are used to guide and structure personal routines and practices, and the mental maps are in turn reinforced and at times challenged by routine experiences.*¹

There is considerable evidence to suggest that these mental maps are important to individuals and can influence behaviour.

The interface areas of North Belfast are evidence of how these 'mental maps' manifest themselves physically. These areas are the focus of this study due to the tenacity of segregation and inter-communal divisions here which are evidenced in the fragmented nature of community relations in the area, as well as the predominance of the ubiquitous 'peace walls'. An 'interface' is a term that has come to denote a common boundary between an area perceived as being predominantly Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) and an area that is perceived as being predominantly Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR). Each area is almost wholly exclusive in its perceived ethnic/national/religious composition, which leads the urban geography of many areas of North Belfast to being defined in exclusive and essentialised sectarian terms.

Historically, North Belfast has experienced a disproportionate level of violence during the period known colloquially as 'the Troubles'. The continuing legacy of division is seen in the 'single-identity' communal composition of residential spaces in the area. Similarly, this is reflected in the nature of the communal composition of schools in the area. This is by no means a unique feature of education in interface areas in Northern Ireland.

¹ J. Hamilton et al., 2008. *Segregated Lives: Social Division, Sectarianism and Everyday Life in Northern Ireland*.(Belfast: ICR), p144.

However, these areas provide a concentrated space to explore the nature of 'shared' education in communities where inter communal relations appear to be at their most protracted.

2.1 Education in Northern Ireland

The education system in Northern Ireland is predominantly segregated not only on the basis of religious denomination but also on the basis of gender and ability.² In practice two systems of schooling have emerged in Northern Ireland: 'maintained' (in effect Catholic) schools and 'controlled' (*de facto* Protestant) schools. The situation has changed a little since 1987 when another sector developed: 'integrated' schools. These schools have the aim of educating Catholics and Protestants together. In 2011 there were 61 integrated schools, of which 20 were 'post primary' (or secondary schools). While a growing sector in terms of school and learner numbers, particularly when set against a backdrop of falling rolls and school closures, it is still a small proportion of the 1,219 total school numbers, 217 of which are secondary schools.

Previous research has suggested that segregation has prevented the creation of shared identities and created geographical and social division, including education and has been described in the following terms by the First Minister Peter Robinson: 'a benign form of apartheid, which is fundamentally damaging to our society'.³

Graham and Nash have discussed the micro-geographies affecting the Northern Ireland population, including school children, in which

... exclusive territories ... essentially function as alternative worlds, each ... demarcated with parallel cultural, social and educational structures.⁴

The Bain Report also recognised the potential of schools to make a significant contribution to a shared society which focused on 'the dynamic of integrating education

² A. Gallagher & A. Smith. (2000). *The effects of the selective system of secondary education in Northern Ireland* (Bangor, DENI).

³See:

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/peter-robinson-calls-for-end-to-school-segregation-14978235.html> (accessed 12/08/12)

⁴ Graham B, Nash C (2006). A shared future: territoriality, pluralism and public policy in Northern Ireland. *POLIT GEOGR* vol. 25, (3) 253-278.

across the school system⁵. In March 2011 the Department of Education (DE) outlined its Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy and strategy. It aims were set out as ensuring that every child in Northern Ireland, in the age range 3 to 25 in the education and youth sectors, should grow into adulthood:

- Understanding and respecting the rights, equality and diversity of all;
- Having the skills attitudes and behaviours their enable them to value and respect difference and engage positively within it;
- Confident in their ability to relate to others from different cultures;
- Skilled at engaging constructively in sensitive conversations, articulating their own views and beliefs and listening to others;
- Knowledgeable about their own cultural background and that of others in Northern Ireland;
- Recognising the rights of all as equal citizens; and
- Prepared for a changing and diverse society in which confident adults engage, learn from and trust one another as members together of a shared society.⁶

This CRED policy was initiated with a view to replacing the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme (which commenced in 1989). However, despite the longevity of such initiatives the orientation of communities towards schools that they felt 'represent' 'their' community (i.e. Catholic or Protestant) persists. It is this exclusive pattern of education that 'shared' education seeks to address.

2.2 Shared education

Before measuring attitudes towards current levels of sharing in education and towards potentially increasing levels of sharing in education in interface areas of North Belfast, it is important to outline what is meant by 'shared' education. This is important as it moves beyond misunderstandings of 'shared' education as simply integrated education under a different guise. According to research commissioned by the Integrated Education Fund,

⁵ Independent Strategic Review of Education (2006): *Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing*. 11.26.

⁶ See:

The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education policy document:

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/20-community-relations-pg/20-department-of-education-s-community-relations-policy.htm> (Accessed on 12/11/11)

shared education, including integrated education, is an approach where schools and teachers can deliver educational services to local communities in a joined-up and collaborative manner.⁷

The Department of Education claims that shared education not only delivers educational benefits to learners but it also promotes the efficient and effective use of resources, as well as promoting: equality of opportunity; respect for diversity; and community cohesion. This inclusive approach to education is espoused as being beneficial for both pupils and the strengthening of local communities through retaining the delivery of education within local areas.

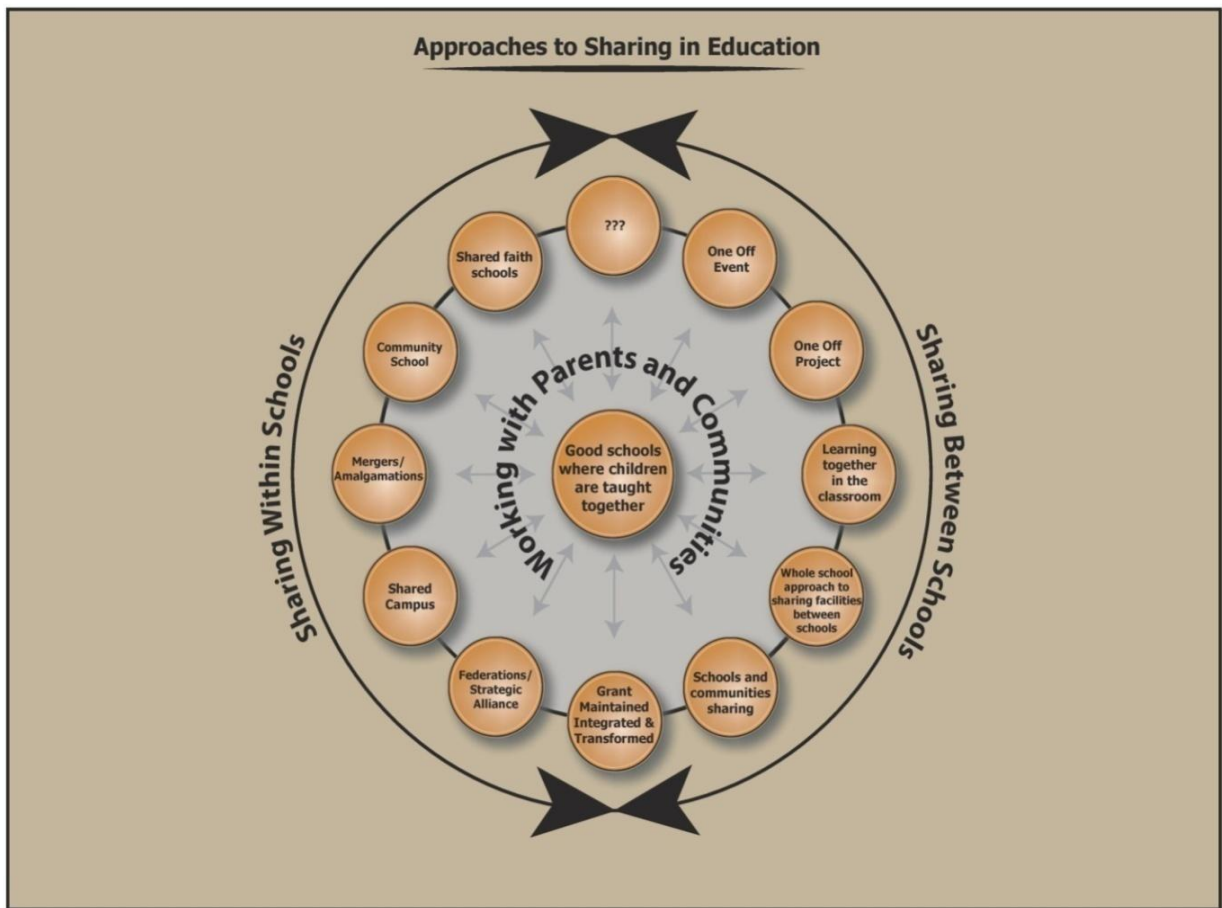
An attitudinal survey on integrated education commissioned by the IEF in 2011 identified five levels of sharing in education, the most advanced level being integrated education:

1. integrated schools;
2. schools with mixed enrolment (do not consciously try to achieve religious balance);
3. sharing of teachers and facilities between schools (primary and post-primary level);
4. sharing facilities for one-off projects (e.g., annual events that involve cross-community work); and
5. sharing capital facilities.⁸

⁷Oxford Research.*Developing the case for shared education* (September 2010). Accessed at: <http://www.ief.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Economic-case.pdf>

⁸See : Attitudinal Survey on Integrated Education (2011). Accessed at <http://www.ief.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Attitudinal-Survey-Final-Report.pdf> (01/10/12)

To understand the practical application of shared education, it is helpful to consider the *Approaches to Sharing in Education* or *Shared Education Continuum* diagram:



This diagram underpins the IEF’s commitment to what it terms ‘good schools’, where children are taught together regardless of ability, ethnicity and cultural and social backgrounds and reflects its commitment to supporting any undertaking which moves beyond the often bifurcated paradigm of education as it exists in Northern Ireland presently.

The continuum also illustrates an awareness that not all individuals and communities are in a position to enter into alternatives to the established systems of education in Northern Ireland at the same point. For example, this means that while some may feel at ease with a shared campus for schools, others may only feel in a position to engage with a ‘one off’ ‘shared’ event. It is from the ethos underpinning this continuum that this

research seeks to investigate the attitudes of parents, teachers and young people to shared education in interface areas of North Belfast.

It is important to position the schools engaging in this research in relation to shared education as the Integrated Education Fund understands it. The two primary schools (Star of the Sea Primary School and Carr's Glen Primary School) are engaged in shared education practices such as:

- One off event;
- One off project; and
- Learning together in the classroom (albeit on an ICT basis).

The two secondary schools (Boys' Model Secondary School and Little Flower Secondary School) are engaged in several areas of the shared education continuum, such as:

- One off event;
- One off project;
- Learning together in the classroom;
- Whole school approach to sharing facilities between schools; and
- Schools and communities sharing.

The difference in the nature and extent of sharing between primary and secondary schools was attributed by teachers to the location of the schools in question. Many felt that given the location of these primary schools in areas which are considered to be composed of one particular community, sharing education for young people was not the most immediate issue for the school.

The participating secondary schools aired slightly different views on this issue, which is due to the fact that their pupils come from the immediate areas but also further afield. The issue of school facilities and mutually beneficial arrangements also meant that secondary schools are more inclined to cooperate in this light. The majority of these approaches to shared education in the post primary schools in question are orientated around sport.

3. Parents

The discussions with parents informing this research were structured in a bid to ascertain views on the current levels of sharing between schools in North Belfast, as well as to gain an insight into the potential for increasing levels of sharing between schools in the area. It was also deemed an important aspect of this research to gain an insight into the factors influencing parents in their selection of particular schools for their children. This provides a context for the motivational factors underpinning school selection which ultimately structure young peoples' social worlds in a particularised manner from the outset of their education.

There were recurrent themes identified in the focus groups with parents. Factors such as the proximity of the school, family/community links to a particular school, and the legacy of the conflict were identified as influencing parental choices made in terms of school selection.

3.1 Proximity/location of the school

The practicality of the location of schools was cited as a primary factor in why parents selected particular schools. The location of schools meant that a 'local school' was a favoured option in terms of ease of accessibility and mobility:

I just live down the road and it made sense [to send my child to this school]

While this view was echoed by many of the parents, issues of safety were also raised as influencing school selection at primary level:

I'm not happy to put my child on a bus... I want to bring them to school myself.

This was further reinforced by other parents who expressed concern over the safety of sending their children to schools outside their immediate area or to other areas of North Belfast:

I think the main thing is walking up and walking down and knowing that they're safe and I wasn't sure.

This issue of safety in terms of school selection is certainly not an exclusive concern of parents in North Belfast, but it was related to the issues of inter-communal tensions in the area by parents themselves. This evidences the impact of the sectarian geography of the interface areas on school selection. Furthermore, the sectarian geography of areas of North Belfast means that the 'local school' will most certainly fall within an area identifiable with one community over the other. This not only effectively limits the choice for parents but also the potential for children and young people to come into contact with young people from the 'other' community.

It is also important to note that there were also parents who engaged with this research who self consciously chose to send their children outside of their immediate locality to attend school. The reason for this was cited as parents wanting their children to engage with children from other areas:

...I suppose I wanted the kids to go outside the area and mix with people from other areas.

This is an interesting point as when the parents in question discussed the choice of schools outside their immediate area, their hope was that it would increase their childrens' social circles. However, while these parents chose to send their children to schools outside their immediate areas, this was done exclusively on a 'single-identity' basis with the schools being easily identifiable in their communal affiliation.

The views of the parents engaging with this research exemplify how the issue of school location provides a central challenge for increasing the levels of shared education in North Belfast. The 'mental maps' discussed earlier provide a framework for school selection and require unpacking in this context.

3.2 Community/family ties

Ideas of community or family ties to a particular institution were also evidenced as a motivating factor in school selection by parents. This is exemplified by the fact that many of the participating in this research parents (as well as their family members) attended the specific schools themselves. This was the case at both primary and secondary level:

I came here myself and wanted her to have the same education and experience of school [that] I did.

Of those who also attended the same schools some likened the experience of a school as in a sense an extension of a wider 'communal family'.

The issue of a wider communal affiliation of the school was reinforced by some parents, particularly in relation to the nature of Catholic maintained schools, where many parents focused on the religious foundation of the school as a motivating factor in their selection of school for their children:

I think it's very important [that the school is Catholic].

It is important to reference how much of this was attributed to a school's religious ethos in terms of the religious foundation of the school and how this applies to the framework of education a child would receive there:

I understand how the school works, the school's philosophy, I would have found it very difficult to choose somewhere else...

When asked to develop on this idea of a religious ethos and its importance many parents related it once again to the idea of a wider religious community and indeed community at a family and wider local level. Religion as a communal marker is therefore an important aspect of how the parents who participated in this research select schools for their children. This provides a sense that schools provide an early mechanism by which to embed ideas of identity, not only at an individual level but also in terms of family, local community and the wider ideas of nationality.

Indeed, parents of pupils who attended Catholic maintained schools identified an inward looking sense of parochialism that exists in some areas of North Belfast which is reflected in the following comment:

It's everyone and communities to themselves. It's about how you're brought up as a Catholic. Where we live you wouldn't think of putting your child into a Protestant school or even a mixed school...

In contrast, there was a sense from the parents of children attending the 'controlled' primary school in question, that ideas of identity were not tied to ideas of religion but rather the area's identity and Protestantism as a communal marker. The parents from the controlled school made no reference to the importance of the religious ethos of the school.

When both sets of parents were asked about the possibility of whether they had considered selecting a school perceived to represent the 'other' community, the answer was a confirmed 'no'. However, the option of integrated schooling was met with less negativity, with the only issue for parents being their lack of availability in particular areas:

The integrated school would have sprung to mind if there had have been one close by at that time.

Therefore, the community ties to particular schools are often based on the location of the school. This provides an obvious challenge for integrated schools in the future in terms of their location and development.

3.3 Parents' experiences of the conflict

The parents who engaged with research also aired views on the issue of their experiences of the conflict and acknowledged that these experiences informed their choice of school for their children. These experiences appear to be intertwined with the previous discussion on school location, as well as family and communal identity in that the historical narrative of the conflict appears to be now embedded in notions of communal belonging. In effect, this means that individuals and groups often self select themselves into single-identity modes of living and as a result their social worlds are limited as a result of the historical legacy of an area.

The selection of schools for their children is also reflective of the legacy of the conflict. This is, as the parents participating in this research evoked, as a direct result of their experiences of the conflict and how that continues to manifest itself in the present. Some parents admitted that their experience of the conflict had influenced their initial

impressions of 'sharing' between the school their child attends and schools, which are perceived to be predominantly attended by those of a different community background:

I wouldn't say it's [not wanting her children to attend a 'mixed' school] to do with bitterness... with me I wouldn't want my child in a mixed school and a Protestant child or parent asking them 'what happened to your mummy during the Troubles?'

However, there was an awareness that these experiences continue to inform the nature of the parents' attitudes to 'sharing' between schools, and hence communities in North Belfast:

I think it's about how we grew up and we grew up in the troubles and we've been affected. I'd say there's very few people that haven't been affected. I was affected. It's not that I'm bitter, I certainly wouldn't be bitter. It is influencing my decisions though.

The parents' recognition of the impact of their experiences also entailed a discussion on how the area has changed in recent years. Focus group participants were mindful to acknowledge the positive changes in the socio-political climate of the area since they attended school:

When we came to school the troubles were on, and it was totally different.

While the evocation of the parents' experiences of the conflict may serve as a stark reminder of the impact the conflict is having on generations almost two decades after the ceasefires which marked its 'official' end, it is nonetheless also an acknowledgement of the movements made towards a more reflective view on the impact of 'the troubles' by parents themselves.

After all we've been through in this area I don't want my kids to experience the things I did...

Therefore, while the legacy of the conflict is a complex issue innately intertwined with issues of space and communal identities, it nonetheless provides a point of departure from which to address exclusive patterns of living. This also incorporates the motivational factors underlying the particularised patterns of school section exemplified in interface areas of North Belfast. Discussions by parents on school selection illuminate

the complex issues at stake in a 'post-conflict' area in terms of school selection and how this manifests itself in a relatively small geographic space of North Belfast.

3.4 Parents' views on current levels of sharing

The discussion on the parents' views of current levels of 'sharing' between schools in the area of North Belfast was almost wholly positive in that it not only identified the beneficial impact of 'sharing' between schools for the area of North Belfast but was more identifiable at the level of the individual. Indeed, one parent identified this in terms of the 'sharing' that currently exists between her daughter's school and other schools in the area:

The girls go there [to the other school]... they share trips and things like that. They come back feeling good about themselves.

The impact of current levels of 'sharing' between schools on confidence among young people was an issue which was alluded to and raised repeatedly in discussions. Some parents viewed this sharing in education as going some way to eliminating established stereotypes which influence young people to feel inhibited in the space in which they live. Similarly, others felt it allowed them to learn about other cultures and areas and in a sense made them more confident in their own identity.

Much of the current 'sharing' discussed by parents is sport related and conducted by external agencies such as PeacePlayers International.⁹ One parent discussed it in the following terms:

The children are involved with PeacePlayers and they love it... they're starting it earlier now... I had absolutely no reservations.

Some of the schools involved in this research work closely with the organisation in developing linkages between young people in the area. Indeed, one parent saw this initiative as one of the only opportunities for her children to meet with children of a different community background, and saw this as a hugely positive experience:

⁹PeacePlayers International is a not for profit organisation which uses sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding and education. They currently operate year-round programs in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Israel and the West Bank, and Cyprus. See: <http://www.peaceplayersintl.org/>

I think that they grow up better and it shows them there's no difference.

It must be acknowledged that contact of this nature between schools is not across the board, and that engagement with the programmes provided by PeacePlayers varied between the schools participating in this research.

This issue goes to the heart of many of the discussions which took place during this research; that of education and educational attainment, particularly at primary school leaver age and how this contributes to segregation in education. References were also made to the issue of the transfer test as impeding sharing between schools and effectively further alienating schools and their pupils from each other. This was in addition to the perceived divisions between communities and was referenced as reinforcing a class divide in North Belfast. One parent articulated this view:

The transfer test causes the class issues... it publically humiliates children.

This sense of an issue of a class divide in North Belfast was repeatedly referenced by both sets of parents in the schools, in that this issue further reinforced inter-communal divisions in the area and as such was the main factor reinforcing divisions between the schools. This was discussed in terms of the opportunities afforded to particular schools, such as school trips, facilities and ultimately academic achievement. Therefore, for the parents participating in this research the transfer test was an increasingly alienating factor for young people in interface areas in North Belfast and is currently serving to inhibit opportunities for shared education between schools in North Belfast.

3.5 Parents' attitudes to increasing sharing

Questions of the possibility of increasing the 'sharing' between schools in the area were met with an overwhelmingly positive response. The need for an increase in 'sharing' in education was attributed to the evolving socio-political context which the region finds itself in as a whole. That is to say, many parents felt that schools should be a central component in addressing the nature of inter-communal divisions and hostilities in North Belfast:

There needs to be more opportunities [for young people to come together], we are living in different times and the area's changed.

Indeed, many felt that cooperation and contact between schools and pupils would not only benefit the area and the nature of relations between communities in it, but would also strengthen the schools individually. One parent articulated this in saying:

They need to be in classes from other schools to realise you know what, I'm just as good.

The age at which young people begin this 'sharing' was also cited as important, with many references made to the need to begin the process at an earlier stage:

I think it's very important for the children to be out of their wee comfort zone and to be out meeting new people... the earlier they mix together the better.

However, it must be noted that the potential for increasing 'shared' education in the future was tempered by discussions on the importance of schools in the sense of single identity communities. The parents' narratives of education were innately tied to networks (i.e. family and wider community areas).

There was also some concern amongst the parents about the ability of schools to address the issue of shared education in these areas while maintaining educational standards.

There needs to be a balance between class time and these trips and things...

There was an acute sense among parents of the work load of the standard curriculum for schools at present, which it was felt generally could not be compromised to accommodate increased sharing between schools.

4. Teachers

This research chose to engage directly with teachers from the selected schools in a bid to gain an insight into the practicalities of facilitating sharing between schools in North Belfast. It assesses how teachers feel their schools are currently engaging with shared education with other schools and also provides an insight into the obstacles and opportunities for sharing in the future.

4.1 Teachers' views on current levels of sharing

Teachers engaging with this research identified the multi-faceted issues at stake for schools in the area of North Belfast which were impacting on their ability to engage with shared education practices. When questioned on the impact of current inter-communal relations, issues of division and hostilities appeared to be perceived as less of a factor now than in the past. One teacher stated:

In north Belfast at the community level there has been great progress made... Very rarely would we have community differences being brought into school.

Similar views were expressed by other teachers in all of the participating schools. However, this was tempered by the fact that some teachers expressed the view that while inter-communal hostilities are rarely a factor in school life, there is an awareness that some students have family members who may be directly involved in some aspect of inter-communal violence.

In relation to the current levels of sharing between schools, many teachers were also mindful of the role of schools as in a sense 'representing' the communities in which they are based. Indeed, one teacher from a voluntary controlled school recognised that schools have an important role to play in the communal identity of areas:

...there is a Protestant identity [in this area], and I suppose as a school you are a reflection of the area you are in.

This echoes the views of parents participating in this research, who viewed the sense of community as a primary reason for the selection of particular schools for their children. One teacher viewed this sense of community as a basis for the success of the school:

There's a strong link to the school, there's a huge sense of community and that is something we are proactively trying to build on; that sense of community.

This 'sense of community' appears to provide the baseline for schools in participating in 'sharing' with other schools. Indeed, for some of the teachers the confidence in their own school's identity is reflected in how there has been a change in how parents feel about their children having contact with pupils from other schools than in the past:

Parents have had some objections from parents in the past. I remember children going to swim in Ballysillan and there were objections from parents. You don't really have that now.

The increase in parental support for sharing between schools was cited as an enabling factor for the effectiveness of initiatives between schools.

Some teachers related the increased contact between schools as being reflected in the apparent change in the nature of the movement of their pupils in the area, despite the identifying factors of school uniform:

You wouldn't have seen girls in our uniform in Tesco near Woodvale in the past, now you do, I find that amazing.

The perception is while the idea of sharing is perceived as being a very positive step for schools in the area, it is nonetheless in the context of deeply engrained divisions which have and continue to inform the nature of movement and social interaction in the area. Other teachers stressed the prominence of mobility issues as still constituting a very real problem for pupils (particularly secondary level) in North Belfast with one teacher tempering the progress made by articulating:

Our girls know also know where not to go.

School uniforms are a primary marker of communal identity and affiliation and as such teachers still appear to be conscious of the movement of their pupils in this light.

This research identified sport as the primary area where sharing between schools is currently well established. A small number of secondary school teachers coach sports between schools and explained the opportunities and obstacles in this type of 'sharing' between schools in the area, with one stating:

We go through the coaching programme, to give them the opportunity to coach and get qualifications with other schools. To me that's shared. It's not integration but it's a shared focus where the teachers work together and then bring them [the pupils] together.

Teachers made reference to the importance of established relations with particular teachers in other schools as a point of contact. These relationships were viewed as being an essential component in the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial programmes and initiatives. Discussions were also orientated around the location of this sporting contact which frequently took place in what are viewed as 'neutral' sporting facilities / recreational centres. However, reference was also made to the 'controlled' secondary school utilising facilities in areas which are perceived to be almost wholly Catholic/Nationalist/Republican. Teachers from the Catholic 'maintained' secondary school were also keen to emphasise ongoing work which brings pupils to each school site, and has resulted in what one teacher termed 'real friendships' between young people. This has been seen in the extension of social circles of the young people involved to include young people from these other schools, as a direct result of this contact.

This engagement in sport by schools is in addition to the programmes run by external agencies (such as PeacePlayers), and illustrates the efforts by individual schools to address the issue of shared education through the medium of sport. However, many teachers were keen to emphasise that much of this additional work is on top of their core curriculum work load, and is often as a result of the goodwill of individual teachers. The emphasis on sport as a key mechanism of sharing between schools often involved trips to different sporting facilities and/or other schools and as such requires a large level of commitment, resource allocation and funding.

One primary school was keen to emphasise its engagement with the 'Dissolving Boundaries' programme. This programme is funded by the Department of Education and involves schools from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland forming and maintaining friendships through the use of ICT.¹⁰ For Carr's Glen Primary School, this

¹⁰ See: <http://www.dissolvingboundaries.org/>

culminates in a meeting with their 'twinned' school from the Republic of Ireland, once a year. Many teachers felt such programmes are an important element in breaking down misconceptions and educating young people about people from different community backgrounds. However, the issue of time and resource allocation was continually referenced as inhibiting an increase in programmes of this nature.

4.2 Funding and resource allocation

Many teachers felt that they are ultimately curtailed in their work towards increasing 'sharing' with others schools in the area by a lack of wider strategy and funding. One teacher articulated this, stating:

There's nothing long term, no strategic vision or long term plan.

There was a sense among some teachers that 'sharing' between schools is simply not being prioritised and has in fact been demoted in recent years. All the schools engaging with the research outlined the current predicament in terms of the funding and resourcing of work within the current curriculum as problematic and ultimately obstructive.

....with the removal of the funding and the pressure put on teachers to apply for CRED funding, an added burden, and as a result that part of our programme has certainly drifted away.

The current funding procedures for cross community work between and within schools places the onus on teachers and individual schools to prioritise work of this nature in their existing workload. In effect, this means that there is not an over-arching strategic approach to the issue and as such each school determines their own involvement in these initiatives and activities. This is problematic as it effectively relinquishes the responsibility for fostering good relations between schools and young people onto individual schools and teachers.

The lack of a comprehensive approach to funding shared education in schools is viewed by teachers as placing the financial burden for supporting this work onto parents. Many of the teachers participating in this research articulated this and saw it as unacceptable, particularly in light of the socio-economic positioning of many of the schools:

The funding is so important for schools in these areas... We cannot ask our parents in our school to continually stump up that money; we just can't do it.

The change in the nature of funding for initiatives aimed at increasing sharing between schools is impacting acutely the ability of schools and teachers to create sustainable linkages between schools in the area.

4.3 Teachers' attitudes to increasing sharing

When discussing the future of 'shared' education in North Belfast the entire discussions evolved around the funding and resourcing of the programmes or activities involved:

The opportunities are there and it's just about resourcing it.

Looking towards the future of shared education in North Belfast many positives were identified in relation to current relationships and opportunities in the area. The small geographical spread of schools in the area meant that many secondary teachers felt that there was in a sense a 'natural' orientation towards cooperation which would benefit each of the schools individually.

However, the logistics of shared education provides the biggest challenge for schools in the area. When we consider aspects of it such as 'learning together in the classroom', such approaches will require a seismic shift in how schools work operationally and engage in terms of mutually beneficial arrangements. Practical issues, such as school time-tabling, will require a vast amount of effort initially. However, teachers recognised that the rewards of such arrangements would not only be seen in terms of building relations between schools and students in the area but would also increase the spectrum of subject areas and facilities available to students in North Belfast, regardless of what specific school they attend. As one secondary school teacher stated:

In a sense we are in the same catchment area and looking after the same children.

5. Secondary school pupils

Secondary level school pupils in participating schools (Boys' Model and Little Flower Secondary Schools) were asked to complete questionnaires as part of this research. The questionnaires covered areas such as demographics; current levels of sharing; obstacles to sharing; and potential for sharing. This was with a view to covering all the areas influencing attitudes to sharing in education, as well as revealing the obstacles and opportunities to increasing this sharing in schools in North Belfast.

5.1 Boys' Model Secondary School Belfast

5.1.1 Demographics

A total of 94 pupils from Boys' Model aged between 12 and 16 completed the questionnaire.¹¹ The overwhelming majority of pupils identified themselves and their families as coming from a 'Protestant community background' (90% or 85 pupils), with 6% (or 6 pupils) indicating their community background is 'mixed' and 2% (or 2 pupils) stating that their community background is 'Catholic'.¹² In terms of broader ideas of identity and nationality the pupils often identified more than one nationality/identity as describing themselves. The majority of those participating in this identified themselves as 'Northern Irish' (62% or 65 pupils), while 60% (or 58 pupils) identified themselves as 'British'. This was followed by 'Ulster' (8% or 7 pupils), 'Irish' (2% or 2) and 'other' (1% or 1 pupil).

Almost all of the pupils (99% or 93 pupils) viewed their schools as being 'mostly Protestant'. Only 1% (1 pupil) deviated from this view in selecting 'don't know'. This statistic is striking as it reveals the community affiliation of the school as being unquestionable in the eyes of the pupils themselves. While this is not to suggest that this is the ethos or indeed the intention of this particular school, it is nonetheless the lived reality for those selecting schools for their children in the area of North Belfast.

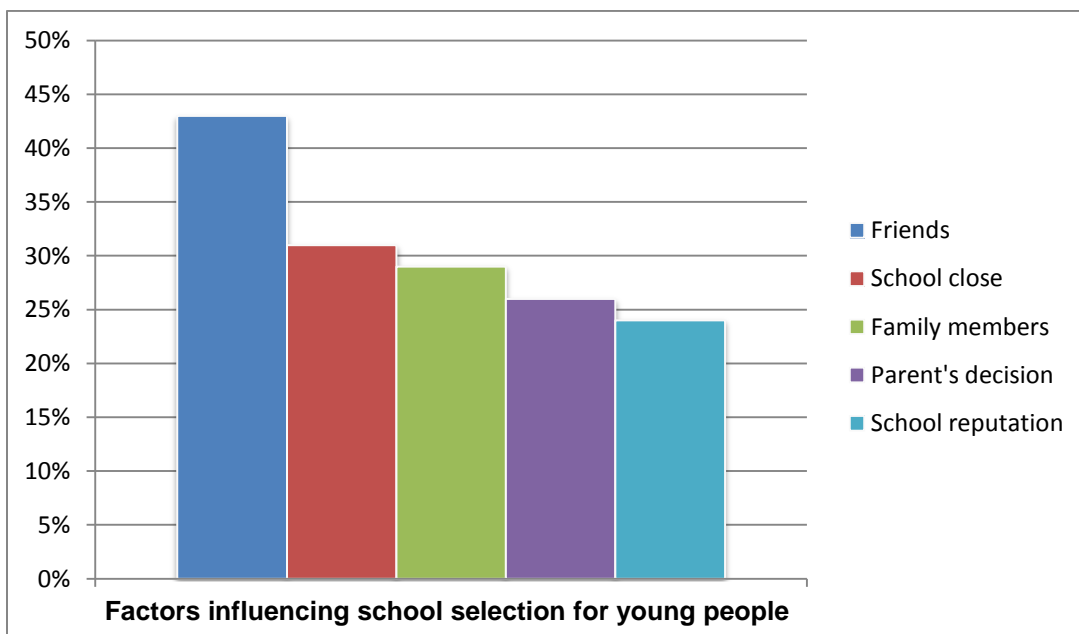
¹¹ Of those who participated 2% or 2 were aged 12, 20% or 19 were aged 13, 53% or 50 were aged 14, 22% or 21 pupils were aged 15 and 2% or 2 were aged 16.

¹² 1 pupil indicated he had no community background.

The results of the question 'how would you describe your group of friends?' also reflect this view in that 81% (or 70 pupils) answered 'mostly Protestant', with only 14% (or 12 pupils) indicating that they had a 'mixed' group of friends.

However, the potential for young people to engage with young people from different community backgrounds was suggested by the findings in the questionnaire. When questioned about how they would feel about 'hanging out' with young people from a different religion/community background the responses were overwhelmingly positive. 45% and 42% respectively answered 'I would feel fine about it' and 'I have friends from other communities/backgrounds'.

The issue of community representation/identity is also evidenced in the responses to what factors influenced the pupils in selecting their particular school. The majority of respondents indicated that 'friends' were the main factor in their schools selection (43% or 40 pupils) being closely followed by: the school being close to where they live (31% or 29 pupils); 'other family members attended' (29% or 27 pupils); 'parent's decision' (28% or 26 pupils); and the school's reputation (24% or 23 pupils).

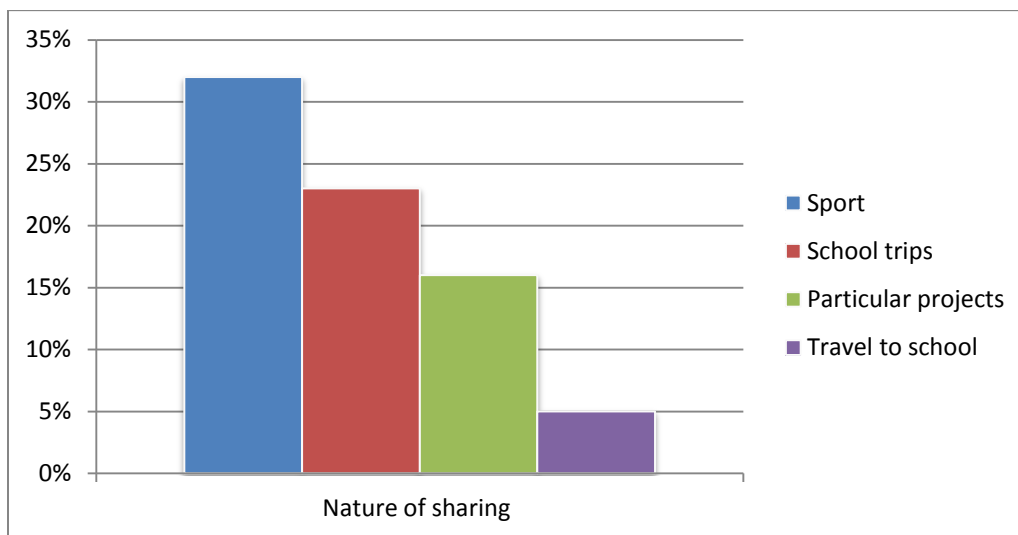


In contrast to the statistic that the pupils overwhelmingly viewed their school as being 'mostly Protestant', the factor of the pupils' community background did not feature strongly in the responses for the question of what influenced them in selecting their school (6% or 6 pupils). This indicates that while the school may in effect have a vast majority of pupils from a particular community background (in this case, Protestant), this is in fact a far less important issue for the pupils themselves.

5.1.2. Current attitudes to sharing in education

Current levels of sharing in education were also assessed in the questionnaire. This found that almost two thirds (65% or 61 pupils) of respondents had taken part in activities with pupils from different types of school through their school. The majority had had this contact since primary school (27% or 26 pupils), followed by two years (20% or 19 pupils); one year (17% or 16 pupils); and less than one year (7% or 7 pupils).¹³

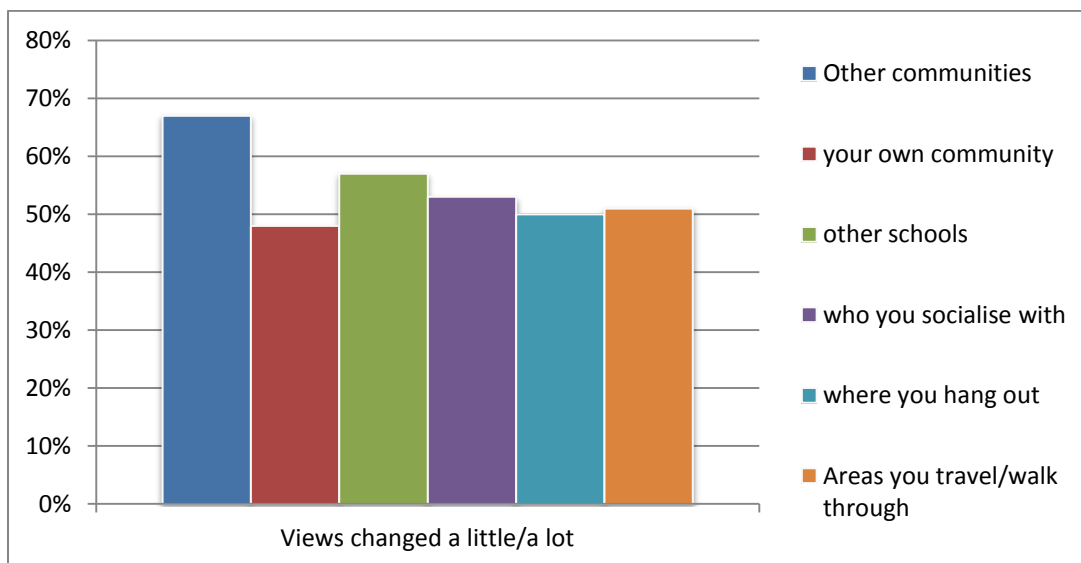
The nature of these activities was also questioned with the majority identifying sports (32% or 30 pupils) and school trips (23% or 22 pupils). This was followed by projects with other schools (16% or 15 pupils), travel to school (5% or 5 pupils) and particular projects (4% or 4 pupils). At this point it is important to note that the 'school trips' referenced by pupils in the questionnaire are often directly related to the 'sport' they emphasise as participating in.



¹³ It must be noted that 29% (or 27 pupils) did not complete this question.

We also questioned those who indicated that they had partaken in particular activities as to what extent they enjoyed these activities so as to assess the success of each approach to sharing in education. The highest proportion of those engaging with these approaches selected that they enjoyed sport ‘a lot’ (56% of those who took part), this was followed by joint school trips (42% of those who took part). It is also interesting to note where this contact took place: 52% in the pupils’ own school; 24% in a sports facility; and with only 14% of this contact occurring in other schools.

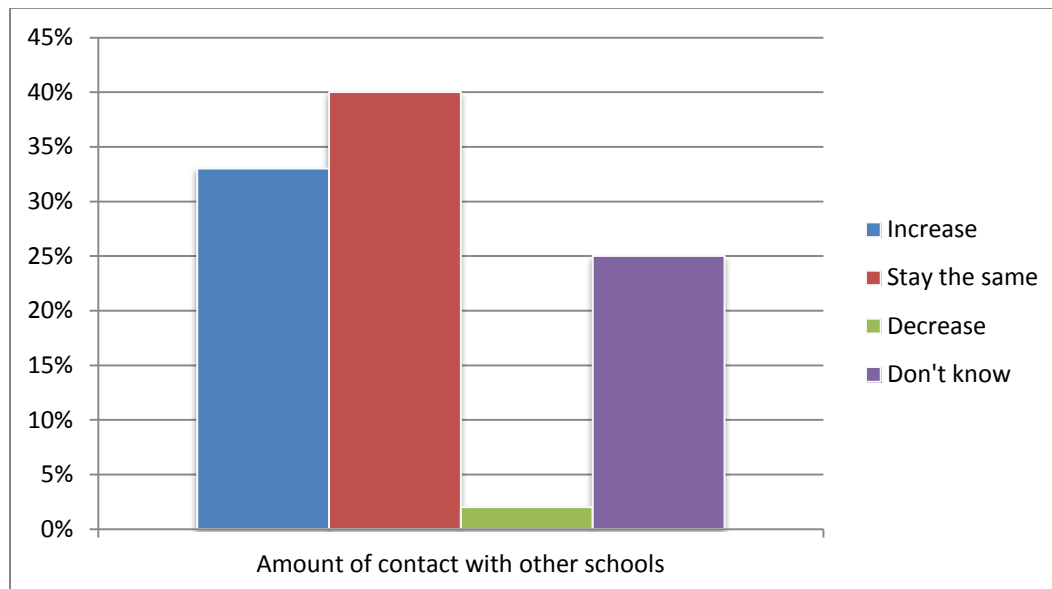
The pupils were also questioned as to whether they felt that this sharing/contact had impacted on their views on the following: (a) other communities; (b) your own community; (c) on other schools; (d) who you socialise with; and (e) where you hang out; (f) areas you travel/walk through. The majority of those who responded to the question felt that their views on ‘other communities’ had changed as the combined response of ‘a lot’ and ‘a little’ was over two thirds (67%). This was followed by those who indicated that their views had changed ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’ on ‘other schools’ (57%); ‘who you socialise with’ (53%); ‘areas you travel/walk through’ (51%); and ‘where you hang out’ (50%). An interesting point emerged in that 48% of those who responded who responded to this question viewed the sharing/contact as ‘impacting ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ on their views on their own community.



However, the long standing issue of school uniform and issues of safety were also identifiable in the responses to the questionnaire. 28% of those who responded to a question on school uniform believe they have been either called names or physically attacked as a direct result of their school uniform. Almost 50% have felt intimidated or avoided particular areas while in school uniform. These stark findings demonstrate how school uniform continues to act as a communal ‘badge’ for young people in Northern Ireland and how this ultimately informs the nature of interactions in spaces such as North Belfast.

5.1.3 Attitudes to increasing sharing

The students’ attitudes to the general amount of contact they currently have with other schools was also assessed. It was found that 33% (or 27 pupils) wanted the amount of contact to increase. Almost 40% (32 pupils) wanted the amount of contact ‘to stay the same’. Just over a quarter of respondents stated that they ‘didn’t know’. Only 2% (or 2 pupils) wanted the amount of contact that they currently have with other schools to decrease.



The majority of pupils have participated in activities with pupils from an integrated school (49% or 46 pupils). However, this sharing/contact appeared to make little difference to the pupils perceptions of integrated education with 42% (or 39 pupils) stating that ‘they are fine but I wouldn’t go to one’ and 15% (or 14) stating that ‘I would

not attend one as I think the type of school I attend is better). However, almost a quarter of pupils (24% or 23 pupils) indicated that 'they are good and I would not mind going to an integrated school'.

5.2. Little Flower Secondary School Belfast

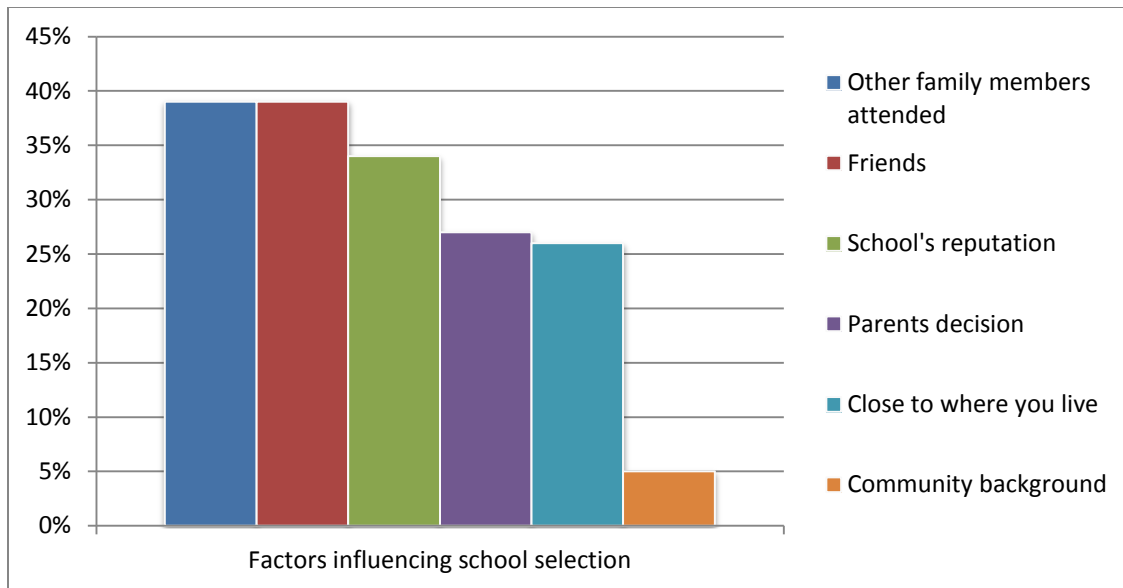
5.2.1 Demographics

62 pupils from Little Flower Secondary School completed the questionnaire. The pupils were all aged 15. The majority of pupils stated that they or their family were from a Catholic community background (84% or 52 pupils). An additional 16% (or 10 pupils) indicated that their background was 'mixed'. No pupils identified a having a 'Protestant community background' or 'other' background. In terms of broader identities, the vast majority of respondents identified themselves as 'Irish' (84% or 52 pupils), with the remainder indicating 'Northern Irish' (13% or 8 pupils) and 'other' (1% or 1 pupil).¹⁴

Like Boys' Model Secondary School, the pupils from Little Flower overwhelmingly described their school as representing a particular community; in this case the Catholic community. This was indicated by 94% of respondents (or 58 pupils). Only 2% respectively viewed the school as 'mixed', with the same number selecting the 'don't know' option to this question. The single-identity nature of the school is also reflected in the pupils groups of friends, with almost three quarters of the respondents identifying their group of friends as 'mostly Catholic' (71% or 44 pupils). However, an interesting finding is that almost a quarter indicated their group of friends was 'mixed' (24% or 15 pupils).

Factors influencing the selection of a particular school were also explored with key influences reported as: friends (39% or 24 pupils); other family members attended (39% or 24 pupils); school's reputation (34% or 21 pupils); parent's decision (27% or 17 pupils); close to where you live (26% or 16 pupils); and community background (5% or 3 pupils).

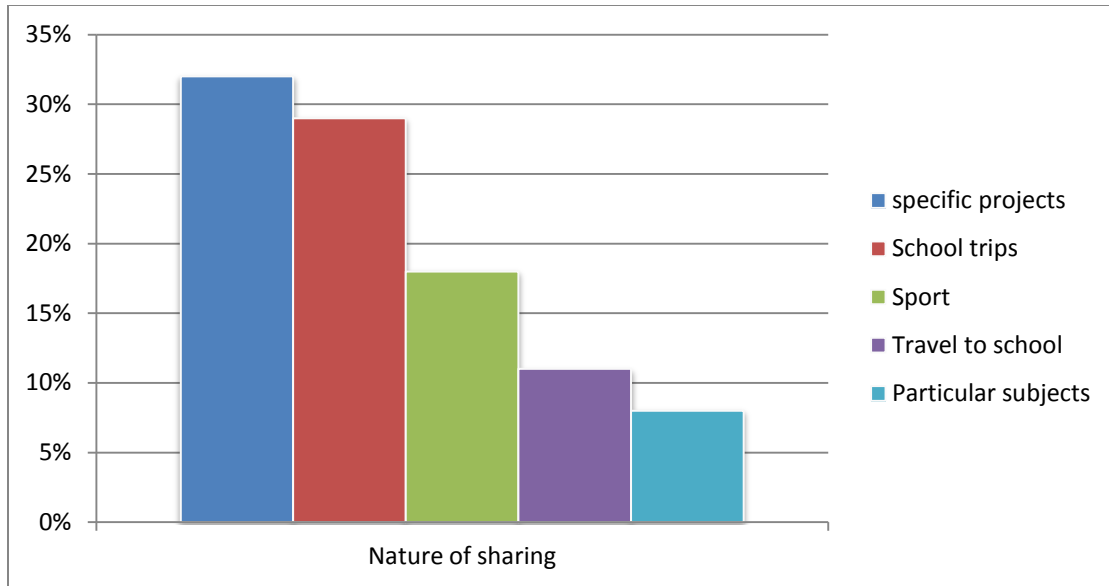
¹⁴ 'other' was selected by a pupil who viewed themselves as Indian.



In a similar finding to that of the Boy's Model, the fact that their school is viewed as being 'mostly Catholic' by the vast majority of respondents appeared to have little bearing on the pupils' decisions to attend the school, with only 5% (or 3 pupils) selecting this option as a reason for their the pupils' community background. This indicates that while the school may in effect have a vast majority of pupils from a particular community background (in this case, Catholic) this is in fact a far less important issue for the pupils themselves. Rather it was pre-existing networks (such as friends and family) which served as the main influencing factors on school selection.

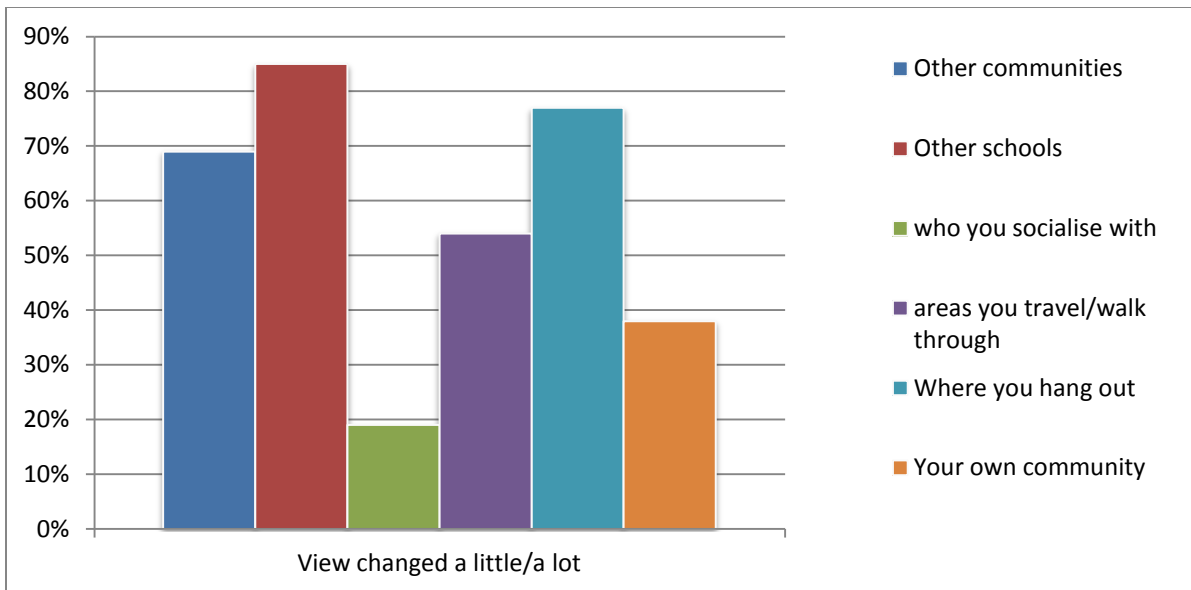
5.2.2 Current attitudes to sharing in education

Current levels of sharing in education were also assessed in the questionnaire. This found that over a half (53% or 33 pupils) of respondents had taken part in activities with pupils from different types of school through their school. The majority had contact of this nature since primary school (26% or 16 pupils). The nature of these activities was also questioned. This found that the majority of contact/sharing was orientated around specific projects with other schools (32% or 20 pupils), followed by: school trips (29% or 17 pupils); with much smaller proportions for the other options, e.g. sports, specific subjects, and travel to school.



The highest proportion of those engaging with these shared education approaches selected that they enjoyed school trips ‘a lot’ (43% of those who took part), this was followed by joint school trips (26% of those who took part). It is also interesting to note where this contact took place: 56% in the pupils’ own school; 28% in a sports facility; and only 14% in other schools.

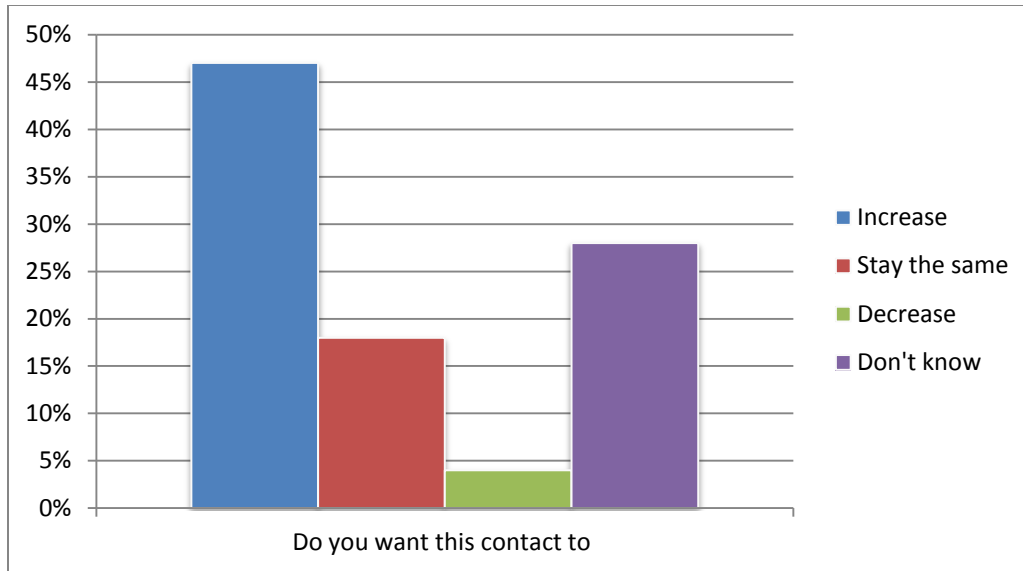
The pupils were also questioned as to whether they felt that this sharing/contact had impacted on their views on the following: (a) other communities; (b) your own community; (c) on other schools; (d) who you socialise with; and (e) where you hang out; (f) areas you travel/walk through. The majority of those who responded to the question felt that their views on ‘other schools’ had been changed; the combined response of ‘a lot’ and ‘a little’ was over three quarters (85%). This was followed by those who indicated that their views had changed ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’ on ‘other communities’ (69%); ‘areas you travel/walk through’ (77%); ‘where you hang out’ (54%); and ‘who you socialise with’ (19%). 38% of Little Flower pupils viewed this contact as having changed their views on their own community.



The identifying nature of school uniform was also pertinent for pupils in Little Flower. While the number of pupils stating that they had been physically attacked as a result of their uniform was much lower (5%) than that of Boys' Model, verbal abuse and intimidation were much more prevalent, with almost two-thirds (64%) indicating these as issues while in uniform. Almost a third (31%) also avoided particular areas of North Belfast while in uniform.

5.2.3 Future sharing

The students' attitudes to the general amount of contact they currently have with other schools was also assessed and found that 47% (or 28 pupils) wanted the amount of contact to increase. Almost 18% (32 pupils) wanted the amount of contact 'to stay the same' and 4% (or 7 pupils) wanted the amount of contact that they currently have with other schools to decrease. 28% (or 17 pupils) responded with 'don't know'.

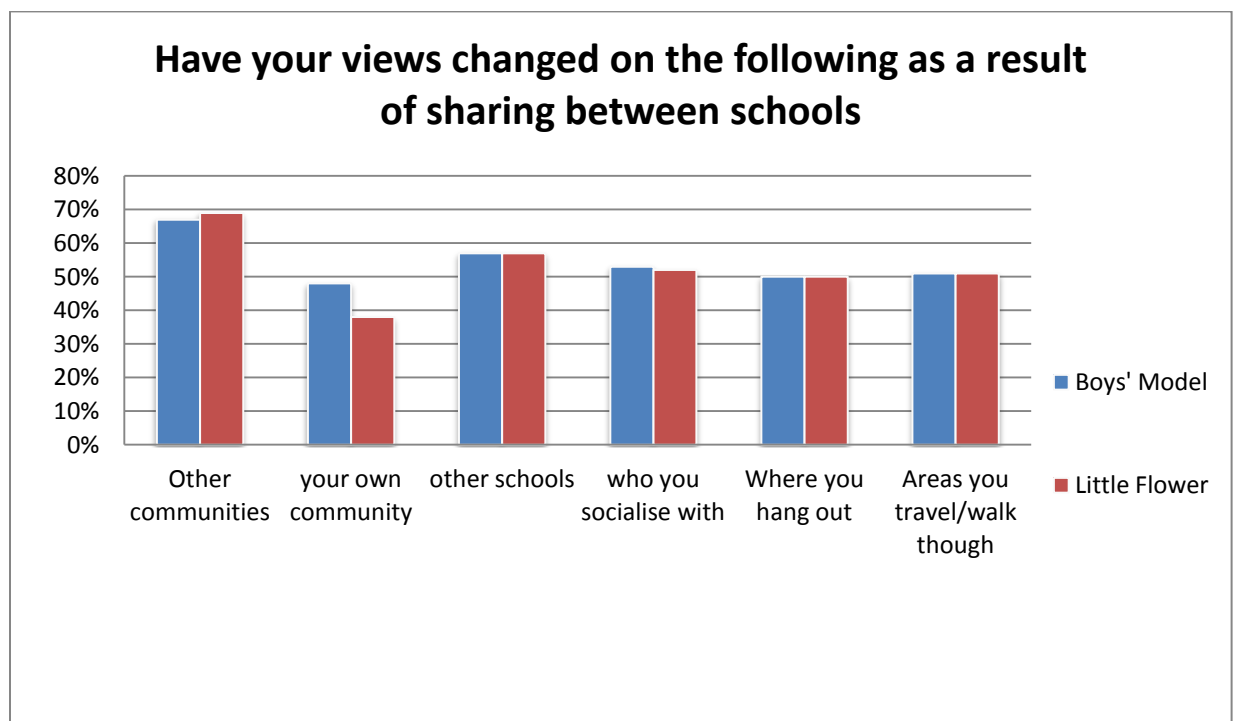


The majority of pupils have participated in activities with pupils from an integrated school (66% or 39 pupils). This sharing/contact appeared to impact the pupils' attitudes to integrated education with 46% (or 27 pupils) stating that 'they are good and I would not mind going to an integrated school'. Half this number of pupils (12 or 20%) indicated that 'I would not attend one as I think the type of school I attend is better'.

6. Schools Compared

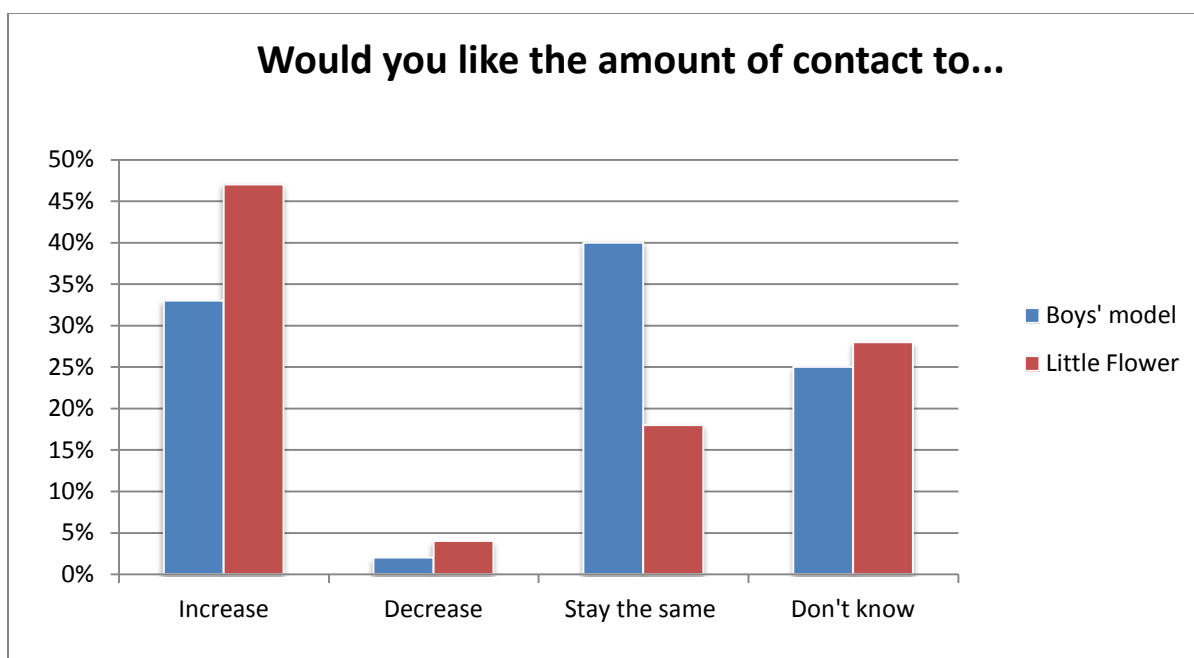
The pupils from Boys' Model and Little Flower Secondary Schools evidenced a similar level of engagement with shared education initiatives (65% and 53% of pupils engaging with this research respectively).

This research also explored the impact of shared education on the views of pupils on various areas, including 'other communities' and 'who you socialise with'. For the most part, findings were very similar amongst those pupils who had engaged with shared education. However, only 38% of Little Flower pupils and 48% of Boys' Model pupils believed that shared education had altered their views of their own communities. This is an interesting point as it correlates with evidence from the views of parents and teachers of both secondary schools, in that the communal identity of the school appeared to be very important and was also tied to issues of religious ethos which may effectively embed notions of this identity.



The higher number of pupils in the Boys' Model Secondary School indicating that contact with other schools has changed their views on their own community, may be viewed as exemplifying the issue of community confidence in relation to shared education in North Belfast. It is also an issue when we consider and compare the findings on the pupils' preferences for the future of contact between schools (i.e. for it to increase, decrease or stay the same).

Little Flower Pupils were more inclined to preference an increase in the levels of contact between schools (47% to Boys' Models with 33%). The Boys' Model pupils appeared to find the current levels of contact the most acceptable option with 40% selecting that they would prefer that it would stay the same. Approximately 25% of both groups responded with 'don't know' to this question.



These findings embody the 'Approaches to Sharing in Education' continuum, in that it illustrates that even within a small geographic area, schools may be at different stages in terms of their willingness/ability to engage with shared education initiatives. The pupils participating in this research illustrate the need for tailored and responsive approaches to sharing in education in North Belfast and beyond.

7. Obstacles to shared education

In terms of the general views on shared education espoused by parents, teachers and pupils engaging with this research, it is also important to outline the key obstacles to shared education identified. These obstacles include the legacy of the conflict and funding and resource allocation for shared education initiatives.

- **Legacy of the conflict**

An overarching theme which constituted a serious challenge for shared education in interface areas of North Belfast was that of the legacy of the conflict. This was particularly evidenced by the parents who engaged with this research and who recognised this as a key determining factor in their selection of particular schools. The history of North Belfast is one which is embedded in the narrative of the conflict and as such the continuing residential segregation is mirrored by the nature of schools in the area. Parents felt issues of safety for their children were of particular concern given the continuing prevalence of sporadic outbreaks of inter-communal hostilities and violence.

A sense of 'safety in sameness' provided the basis for many of the discussions with parents on school selection. Similarly, the recourse to schools as part of an extended communal network was often orientated around 'single identity' notions of these networks. It was evident that many felt a particular loyalty to a school for fostering a particular identity in a period when that identity was felt under threat.

For teachers the legacy of the conflict provides a challenge for shared education in that schools in the area are accustomed to a more atomised *modus operandi*. However, there was evidence of established and nascent relations between schools in the area, which were seeking to move beyond this to explore the possibility of sharing with a view to mutually beneficial outcomes.

In terms of the young people engaging in this research, schools continue to provide them with one of the most visible signifier of communal affiliation. This legacy of the conflict informs the mobility of young people in the area. The issue of school uniform is

very pertinent given that more than half of all pupils have been subject to verbal abuse and/or intimidation directly attributable to the uniform they are wearing.

- **Funding and resourcing of shared education initiatives**

There is an apparent disconnect between the aspirations of parents, teachers and students for shared education and the reality of the limitations for the funding and resourcing of such initiatives. It is important to reiterate that the schools participating in this research are based in an area which evidences some of the most acute sectarian geography in Northern Ireland. Despite this, the schools are subject to the same budgetary constraints in terms of sharing in education as schools in areas of relatively non-existent conflict. In terms of funding constraints, this has almost wholly limited the ability of primary schools participating in this research to engage with shared education of any description.

As documented in the quantitative aspect of this research, positive attitudes to sharing and the 'other' community were evidenced among the pupils who had engaged in initiatives/programmes identifiable as sharing since primary school. This exemplifies the need for funding of community relations and shared education initiatives at an early stage in primary school.

Similarly, the very limited or 'piecemeal' shared initiatives as referenced by those engaging in this research also present a problem in terms of the sustainability of the relationships fostered between schools and hence pupils. Recent research conducted by the Institute for Conflict Research identified that young people who engaged in cross-community activities in school felt that there was not sufficient time to provide a major change in the nature of relationships with the 'other' community.¹⁵ Therefore, the lack of a comprehensive and common programme to improve relations between schools means that pupils are effectively subjected to *ad hoc* initiatives which are almost entirely dependent on the schools and teachers in question

¹⁵ Institute for Conflict Research. *Young People and Interfaces*. (Belfast :CRC, forthcoming)

8. Opportunities and achievable measures

A key purpose of this research was also to identify the areas where there are opportunities for increasing shared education in schools more generally in the interface areas of North Belfast.

- **Willingness to engage**

The overarching finding among all three groups who engaged with this research (parents, teachers and pupils) is that there is a willingness to address the issue of shared education between schools in North Belfast.

Parents articulated what they viewed as the benefits of sharing between schools in the area at the individual level of the schools. Shared education as experienced to date is also viewed as having a positive impact on confidence levels amongst young people. This was attributed by parents to the fact that it affords pupils opportunities to engage with young people from different backgrounds and as a result increases their social circles.

Teachers also appeared to be open to shared education in terms of the opportunities it affords individual schools. In terms of achievable measures for sharing between schools, views were primarily orientated around issues of funding and resourcing of initiatives aimed at increasing the scale of existing networks and initiatives between schools. However, when questioned on what would most likely enable schools in sharing, the overwhelming response was orientated around the need for meaningful 'top level' policy engagement on the issue.

For pupils the willingness to engage was one of the primary findings of this research. The fact that many of the young people also evidenced existing relationships with pupils in other schools also exemplifies that an increase of shared education programmes and initiatives may build on these positive findings. While teachers and parents made little reference to specific projects and trips, many pupils selected these options in the questionnaires. This illustrates the broad spectrum of work which may be identified as

sharing, while also demonstrating the willingness of the pupils to engage with other schools on a multi-levelled basis.

- **Existing networks**

The three constituencies (teachers, parents and pupils) who engaged in this research evidenced considerable levels of community cohesion in areas of North Belfast. While this may be seen to exist on a single identity basis, it nonetheless provides a foundation for the relationships in the area. These existing networks also afford an opportunity to break down misconceptions about schools and communities which are embodied in school uniform as a community marker in Northern Ireland.

The schools evidence existing relationships between teachers in different schools in the area, as well as pupils in different schools. As discussed, sport is a primary vehicle by which aspects of shared education have been initiated in the schools in question. Given the existing networks, there is an opportunity to expand on this contact to include different subject areas and/or areas of interest. While initiatives of this nature have been focused on secondary level pupils in the main, there is an opportunity to consider developing this contact at primary level.

9. Conclusions

This research has outlined the attitudes towards current levels of sharing in education, and towards potentially increasing levels of sharing in education, amongst the teachers, parents and primary and post-primary school-age children in interface areas of North Belfast. The factors influencing the parental selection of particular schools in the area were found to be primarily orientated around proximity to a particular school; ideas of community identity; and the legacy of the conflict. These factors also influenced attitudes to current levels of sharing as well as the possibility of increasing sharing between the schools.

We also found that while teachers feel that shared education is a progressive and necessary element of education, it is nonetheless under resourced and as a result is often less prioritised than many feel it should be. Pupils were also predominantly positive about current levels of sharing between schools and the potential to increase it. However, the sectarian geography of North Belfast means that while this sharing may be perceived as positive, the physical divisions between the communities make continuing these relationships outside of the school setting a challenge for young people.

Opportunities to increase shared education are visible in all the schools in question. The continuum of approaches to sharing in education means that while some of the schools are at different stages of the process, they are recognised in their attempts to build relations in these areas. It is therefore an issue for 'top level' stakeholders to support these initiatives to embed this work as a key priority.

Appendix 1

Identifying Potential for Sharing Education in Interface Areas

This is a confidential survey which is measuring attitudes towards current levels of sharing in education, and towards potentially increasing levels of sharing in education. It is being carried out by the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) and Belfast Interface Project (BIP) and is funded by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF). The questionnaire is **CONFIDENTIAL**. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Orna Young at ICR at 02890742682 or alternatively orna@conflictresearch.org.uk

Demographics

1. How old are you? _____

2. Are you? Male Female

3. Are you or your family from a:

- Protestant community background
 Catholic community background
 Mixed community background
 Other (**Please specify**)

4. Would you describe yourself as?

- British
 Irish
 Northern Irish
 Ulster
 Ulster Scots
 Other (**Please specify**)

5. How would you describe **the area in which you live?**

- Mostly Protestant
 Mostly Catholic
 Mixed
 Don't know

6. How would you describe **the school** you attend?

- Mostly Protestant
 Mostly Catholic
 Mixed
 Don't know

7. What factors influenced you attending this school?
(Please tick all that apply)

- Parent/s decision
 Other family members attended
 Close to where you live
 Your community background
 Friends
 School has good reputation/good facilities
 Other (**Please specify**)

Current Levels of Sharing

8. Do you have contact with pupils from different schools through school activities ?

- Yes
 No

9. If yes, how long have you had this contact?

- Since primary school
 2 years
 1 year
 Less than one year

10. If yes, what is the nature of this contact?

- Sports/sports facilities
 Particular subjects
 Projects with other schools
 Travel to school (e.g. shared bus)
 School trips
 Other (**Please specify**)

11. If yes, did you enjoy the experiences:

A Lot+ AL A little=L Not at all=N

- | | AL | L | N |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sports/sports facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Particular subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Projects with other schools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Travel to school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School trips | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Where does this contact take place?

- In your school
 In another school
 In a sports facility
 Other (**please specify**)

13. Has this sharing/contact changed your views on any of the following:

A lot= AL A little=L Not at all=N

- | | AL | L | N |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Other communities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your own community | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On other schools | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Who you socialise with | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Where you hang out | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Areas you travel/walk through | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Obstacles to Sharing

14. How would you describe **your group of friends**?

- Mostly Protestant
- Mostly Catholic
- Mixed
- Don't know

15. How would you feel about hanging out with young people from a different religion/community background? **(tick all that apply)**

- I have friends from other communities/background
- I would feel fine about it
- Wouldn't know what to expect
- Never had the opportunity to meet
- Wouldn't have anywhere to meet safely
- Afraid of being verbally abused
- Afraid of being beaten up
- Parents/family wouldn't like it
- Friends wouldn't like it
- I don't want to meet other young people
- Don't Know
- Other

(please state) _____

16. Have you avoided an area/community because of any of the following outside of school? **(tick all that apply)**

- Name calling/ slabbering
- Physically attacked
- Grafitti, flags, emblems
- Rioting
- Reputation of an area
- Other **(please specify)**

17. Have you ever experienced any of the following while in uniform? **(tick all that apply)**

- Name calling/ slabbering
- Physically attacked
- Felt intimidated/scared
- Avoided particular areas
- Other **(please specify)**

Potential for Sharing

18. Do you have contact with people from other communities in any of the following **(tick all that apply)**

- In your home
- Youth club
- Sports
- Drama/dance club
- Through friends
- Cross-community programmes
- Other **(please specify)**

19. Would you like the general amount of contact you currently have with other schools to:

- Increase
- Decrease
- Stay the same
- Don't know

20. Would you like to see sharing/contact increased in any of the following areas:

- Sports/sports facilities
- Particular subjects
- Projects with other schools
- Travel to school (e.g. shared bus)
- School trips
- Other **(Please specify)**

Thank you for completing this questionnaire