

# **Intercultural Education: Primary Challenges in Dublin 15**

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Education and Science**

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**Enda McGorman  
Ciaran Sugrue**

## MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

<b>Dr. Ciaran Sugrue,</b>	Education Department, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
<b>Mr. Ignatius Byrne,</b>	Chairperson Dublin 15 Principals' Network, Principal, St. Francis Xavier N.S., Roselawn
<b>Mr. Enda McGorman,</b>	Principal, Mary, Mother of Hope National School, Littlepace
<b>Ms. Anne McNicholas</b>	Principal, Scoil Thomais, Laurel Lodge
<b>Ms. Mary Healy,</b>	Principal, Castaheany Educate Together National School, Ongar
<b>Mr. John Lynch,</b>	Principal, Scoil an Chroí ró-Naofa, Huntstown
<b>Ms. Frances Cooke</b>	Principal, St. Philip's National School, Mountview
<b>Ms. Deirdre Kirwin</b>	Principal, Scoil Bhríde Girls' National School, Blanchardstown

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As always, with undertakings of this nature, it is partners and children who make the most significant sacrifices. Consequently, we reserve a final word of gratitude for our respective partners and families. Many thanks for your unfailing loyalty and support throughout, with apologies for long absences. Finally, we acknowledge that the imperfections in the completed report are our responsibility, while we sincerely hope that we have honoured the trust expressed in our capacity to undertake the task.

Enda McGorman & Ciaran Sugrue

October 2007



## FOREWORD

October 2007

Earlier this year my colleague, Mary Hanafin TD Minister for Education & Science announced the allocation of 200 additional language support teachers for newcomer children in primary schools. The additional 200 teaching posts brought the total number of teachers who were dealing with newcomer children to 1,450 in the last academic year.

Due to the large number of newcomer families settling in West Dublin, I believed a substantial allocation of the posts would take place in the area. When the allocation of the additional posts was made it was established that one third of the national allocation was made to schools in Dublin 15.

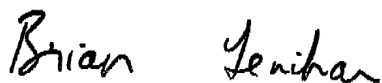
For some time Enda McGorman and Ciaran Sugrue had discussed with me a proposal for an in-depth analysis of the changing face of primary education in West Dublin. As Dublin 15 has a large number of newcomer families, and as a local TD and Minister I was glad to identify funding for the study in this report within the Department of Education & Science.

What Enda and Ciaran have produced here is a detailed account of how primary education has evolved in Dublin 15 in recent years.

The Government has appointed a Minister of State for Integration Policy with responsibilities across the Departments of Education, Community Affairs and Justice and this will assist in the overall co-ordination of policy and delivery on the ground.

Some of the recommendations require additional resources and will have to be approved by the Government.

I want to congratulate Enda and Ciaran on a focused, detailed and imaginative report.



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Brian Lenihan TD  
Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This report documents in considerable detail the major demographic shifts that have occurred in recent years in Dublin 15, and their manifold impact on primary schools in the area. The initiative for this report came from primary principals who work in the Dublin 15 area. The area is bounded on the east by the Phoenix Park, and by the borders of County Meath to the west, while the rivers Liffey and Tolka largely form this postal district's boundaries to the north and south. From being a series of small rural hamlets only three decades ago, the greater Blanchardstown area today is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the country as a whole. The area is also 'home' to a major proportion of recent immigrants, a percentage that is well above the national average. Consequently, Dublin 15 represents a unique case. This was the starting point for the report. The principals were angry and frustrated by an apparent lack of appreciation of the extent to which things had 'changed utterly' on the ground. Consequently, they sought funding to document the scale and extent of the challenges they faced with a view to impressing on politicians and policy-makers that long established routines of staffing and resources were no longer either adequate or appropriate to the rapidly changing multi-cultural environments in which these schools are situated and expected to function.

Mr Brian Lenihan TD, in his capacity as Minister for Children in the previous administration, was immediately impressed by the merits of the proposed study and, after an initial meeting, committed funding from the Children At Risk, Social Inclusion Unit, within the Department of Education and Science to undertake the work. The funding was allocated to St. Patrick's College Drumcondra, and it was intended from the outset to use these resources to second a principal from the area who would undertake the fieldwork for the study. Fieldwork commenced informally in January 2007, and intensified when secondment was secured in March 2007.

A steering committee, representative of school patronage and social contexts, was created to lend direction and authority to the work. The intention from the outset was to provide a comprehensive picture of current 'realities' as encountered in the daily lives of principals and teachers. However, the research design (mixed methods) also made provision to include the voices of children and parents and more informally to include in the study various services in the area. In the first instance, however, the task was to provide as much factual information as possible regarding demographic change, ethnic and cultural diversity as a means of situating

more focused and in-depth analysis of the impact on these changed and changing realities on school life in all its complexity and variety.

### **What the evidence says**

Dublin 15 is indeed a unique case. The statistical evidence presented in chapters three and four makes this case overwhelmingly while indicating also that these recent and dramatic demographic shifts have had equally dramatic impact on school enrolment, provision of school places, as well as a plethora of knock-on implications for teaching and learning, their quality and delivery. When the voices of teachers, parents, principals, children and community activists are added to this 'hard' evidence, the full scale of the multi-cultural challenge is immediately apparent. It is evident also that there are considerable tensions around enrolment, distribution of resources within schools, the inadequacy of these resources in light of these major changes. The evidence also points clearly to the necessity for appropriate legislative and policy responses if social fragmentation, and ghettoisation, exacerbated by 'white flight,' are not to become established and entrenched. Consequently, these dramatic demographic shifts are not merely a responsibility for schools. Rather, they have major implications also for local authorities and central Government, to plan for and provide appropriate leadership to build systematically and imaginatively a 'new' multi-cultural, plural and diverse Ireland.

Similarly, established and traditional centralised policies regarding school staffing, deployment of staff within schools and allocation of resources to schools need to be altered with much more autonomy being devolved to principals, teachers and their respective Boards of Management. In the absence of such policy initiatives, it will be difficult if not impossible to promote quality teaching and learning as well as foster appropriate attitudes, values and behaviours that contribute to the development of multi-cultural, well integrated school communities that contribute also towards building diverse, yet, coherent and cosmopolitan communities.

### **Recommendations**

In the first instance, there needs to be a sustained national conversation concerning this 'new' Ireland. Leadership at all levels of society is vital, and care must be taken as part of building the future to avoid language and terminology that either deliberately or unwittingly serves to be divisive and exclusionary. An important element of paving the way to the future is to find an appropriate language where individually and collectively we can construct this 'new' Ireland. However, other actions beyond conversation are also a vital necessity.

Chapter ten of the report details thirteen recommendations, and succinct discussion is also provided as a means of indicating why, on the basis of the evidence provided in the preceding chapters, particular courses of action being recommended. Each of the recommendations has been bolded for easy identification. Consequently, it was thought superfluous to reproduce them here. Rather, they can be very quickly perused by turning the appropriate pages. However, two comments are deemed appropriate. First, given the complex nature of schooling, and the manner in which many of its tensions and dilemmas in Dublin 15 in particular are intimately connected to wider social issues regarding housing policy, rental support, and the necessity to plan community development rather than allow it to be unduly influenced by market forces, and the property market in particular, the recommendations, be they about the local or the national, cannot be easily separated. Rather, they must be acted on as a package of measures intimately connected with one another. Two, in order to prevent this report from gathering dust, the key recommendation is that a Task Force be created to bring the package of measures to fruition. In this way, Dublin 15 will not only be a unique case, but a test case in the creation of the 'new' Ireland, and an example for other communities to follow. The evidence is now indisputable. Action is not an option. Rather, it is an urgent necessity.



## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this report is primary schooling in Dublin 15, in all its increasing complexity and variety. The purpose of the report is to document in detail the scale and extent of the challenges to primary teachers and principals by the rapidly increasing immigrant population in this particular part of the greater Dublin Area. By documenting as comprehensive a picture as possible of the current 'realities' in the twenty-five primary schools in the area, it will be possible to make recommendations regarding reforms intended to alleviate some of the current burdens, to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the schools, while contributing also to community building through more adequate and coherent planning of support service, infrastructure and community associations, voluntary and otherwise.

This study arose out of the ongoing and intensifying frustration and anger of primary principals at what they perceived as a lack of responsiveness to the changing demographic realities in their schools. This situation was exacerbated still further by the difficulties created by a rapidly increasing young population in Dublin 15, with attendant enrolment concerns that have received wide media coverage. As the evidence presented in chapters three and four of the report clearly demonstrate, there is a shortage of school places that requires immediate and sustained attention. However, the challenges are not merely issues of access to schooling. The principals determined to seek financial assistance to undertake the necessary research, and from the outset, Mr Brian Lenihan, TD, was positive and supportive in his then capacity as Minister for children. The funding for the research was provided by the 'Children at Risk Fund' of the Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Education and Science.

The report is structured into ten chapters. While each chapter deals with a discrete element of this elaborate jigsaw, their intended impact is cumulative: to paint as comprehensive a picture as possible of current realities as the empirical base for a series of recommendations. Chapter one deals with 'big picture' issues concerning our recent history of emigration and immigration, our past and how these experiences have shaped our thinking in relation to 'others'. It provides both a backdrop to the detailed investigation and is also a lens through which to interpret and analyse the detailed evidence provided in subsequent chapters.

Chapter two provides a succinct account of the research design of the study. It is a mixed-methods design, intended, as far as possible within time and resource constraints, to provide a comprehensive account of the situations on the ground. From the outset, it was intended to give 'voice', not only to teachers and principals, but to parents and children also, while consulting more widely with various local bodies, social and community services.

Chapter three details the dramatic demographic shifts that have occurred in the Dublin 15 area in a very short period of time. The evidence clearly points to a population explosion that is ethnically and culturally diverse, thus demonstrating that in many respects Dublin 15 represents a unique case. Consequently, there is a pressing need for appropriate responses that are timely, proactive and context sensitive.

Chapter four provides detailed descriptive statistics on the impact of the major demographic changes on several aspects of the daily realities of primary school provision—enrolment, language support, resource teaching, discipline and punishment, home-school, parent/teacher relationships and the major issue of communication. One of the issues that emerges in this chapter is a significant amount of ‘student migration’ during the school year, something that has a seriously disruptive impact on all aspects of school life, with considerable evidence also of ‘white flight’ and tensions around resource allocation.

Chapter five provides a thematic analysis of teachers’ perspectives on these new realities. Both teachers and principals, from the outset, were concerned to indicate that they welcome the diversity of cultures and languages into their schools and classrooms, and regard this new and exciting reality as potentially offering an extremely rich learning and teaching environment. However, there are major challenges identified also that require immediate attention if their professionalism, good will, morale and expertise are not to be depleted in the absence of more appropriate professional support, resource allocation and staffing.

Chapter six, provides a thematic analysis of principals’ perspectives, and while differing in emphasis from the views expressed by teachers, their evidence complements, strengthens and extends the evidence provided by their teaching colleagues, thus reinforcing the necessity for urgent action.

Chapter seven gives ‘voice’ to children’s perspectives on being in a multi-cultural learning environment, and their experiences of friendships in and out of school. Their views are very positive, but there are issues concerning racism, and involvement in clubs and sporting organisation that need to be more systematically planned so that integration is not left to schools only. The challenge is a major one for all members of communities.

Chapter eight provides seven case studies of parents and their family’s experiences of being an immigrant, living as a member of a minority in an Irish suburb, with a primary focus on their experiences of enrolling their children in school as a central focus. Their testimony indicates the crucial significance of fluency in the English language as a key means of accessing local services, and becoming an active participant in school and community

related activities. This chapter also focuses on the necessity for coherent and comprehensive community planning and delivery of a range of support services so that integration is not merely left to chance, thus potentially marginalizing the most vulnerable who do not possess the necessary social and cultural capital necessary for school and community involvement and participation.

Chapter nine is devoted entirely to enrolment policies, their legislative framework, the criteria used in drawing up school policies, and, crucially, their impact on the ethnic composition of school populations. This issue emerged as a major concern, thus the entire chapter is devoted to elaborating on the challenges faced and suggests that it may be necessary to alter existing legislation in the interest of a more equitable system, and argues that all of the patron bodies are part of the current dilemmas, while politicians and policy-makers need to demonstrate proactive leadership rather than defensive positions if necessary and appropriate progress are to be made.

Chapter ten concludes the report. It provides a series of thirteen recommendations. Some of these are systemic, requiring changes to current national policies, while others can be acted on more locally. However, the argument presented indicates that these recommendations are connected in many tangible and intangible ways. Consequently, they need to be acted on in a coherent and comprehensive manner. Towards this end, it is recommended that a task force for Dublin 15 be created immediately, so that these recommendations are pursued immediately with sustained commitment and appropriate resources.



## CHAPTER I

### SCHOOLING THE NATION'S CHILDREN: LEGACIES, REALITIES & POSSIBILITIES

#### Introduction

The immediate context of this study is Dublin 15. However, while the demographic shifts clearly evident there may be unique in terms of scale, they are no longer unusual, nor are they confined to the Greater Dublin area. Consequently, it is necessary to situate these demographic shifts within perspectives on the Irish experience of emigration and more recent immigration since how we understand ourselves, and how we choose to educate our children are intimately connected with and shaped by these socio-cultural legacies, both recent and remote. Our revolutionary forebears signed up to the aspiration of cherishing all the children of the nation equally. It is appropriate to ask therefore, how we have fared and what our chances of making this aspiration a reality in the 'new' Ireland.

The chapter is in three parts. First, in broad-brush strokes, the Irish experience of emigration is lightly drawn, primarily to indicate its conditioning effect on language, thought, attitude and behaviour. Second, the realities of this historical legacy in confluence with more recent demographic shifts and social reforms have led to the creation of a legislative framework that currently governs educational provision. The impact of both legacies are outlined as they pertain to education—their enabling and disabling effect while signalling their framing of the study also. Third, a brief concluding section, based on the foregoing analysis and argument, frames a series of research questions that become part of the backdrop and the interpretive lens of the study. Throughout, attention is drawn to language/ terminology, and its potential to shape and circumscribe both thought and action; to do our thinking for us.

#### Legacies: emigration/ immigration & identity politics

It is generally accepted that Irish society has changed rapidly and radically during the past decade in particular. For some, it is quite difficult to comprehend that in the late 1980s approximately 50,000 Irish born people emigrated annually such were the economic realities of unemployment and general economic dysfunction. Through a confluence of circumstances that need not detain us here, the 'Celtic Tiger' (economy) exploded onto the Irish landscape, and things were '*Changed Utterly*' (O' Connell, 2001). Other titles too, such as *Collision Culture* (Keohane, 2004) attest to the radical nature of economic change (see also (Corcoran, 2002; Peillon & Corcoran, 2004; Peillon & Slater, 1998). This dramatic transformation in little more than a decade is given concrete reality in recent census figures that proclaim to the nation and the world that 10% of those currently resident in Ireland were born outside it, while some commentators suggest that these figures are an under-reporting

of the 'real' figures. This is an incredible reversal of Ireland's demographic trajectory that since the great famine of mid-nineteenth century, one of the most persistent continuities has been the haemorrhage of people. From being the 'sick man' of Europe, Ireland became the success story of the EU and something of a tourist Mecca for young entrepreneurs, civil servants, policy-makers and postgraduate students from Eastern Europe's accession countries and elsewhere in search of the 'holy grail', the Midas miracle to transform donkey economies into turbo thoroughbreds, preferably overnight!

While the 'new' Ireland was being feted at home and abroad, the unintended consequences of economic progress were coming home to roost. Since the long established and dominant pattern for more than a century had been emigration, the country was poorly equipped from a legislative, policy, and social realities perspective to deal with a reversal of this dominant and pervasive pattern. The reality of emigration, of dislocation and consequent loss of identity, are captured appropriately by Greenslade:

But here they were in exile in England, not just far from home, but far from what they might perhaps have expected from life in Ireland. For all their culture and intelligence, for all their dignity and self-respect, in England they were just more Paddy work-horses come to do the jobs that the natives refused. Every day spent in England was a reminder of that. (Greenslade, 1997, p. 38)

But, of course, emigration, its history, trajectory and impact on those who go, stay or return, is not simple and linear. Rather, the very reality of emigration as a dominant social presence shapes identity in several respects:

... in Ireland young people have been socialised in a climate which devalues the sense of national belonging by presenting emigration as a positive choice for the young and enterprising. (walter, 2001, )

It needs to be acknowledged also that the impact of emigration on males and females is often quite different and this distinction needs to be borne in mind as we grapple with the 'new' Irish; there is a gendered dimension to both emigration and immigration that suggests more heterogenous rather than unidimensional understandings that deny complexity, and hybridity. Similarly, it is necessary to acknowledge that emigration/ immigration is not simply an event. Rather, it is an ongoing story that is inter-generational, fixed with particular (pejorative) resonance with terms such as 'narrow backs' in North America and 'plastic Paddy' in the English context. As Dunne (2003, p. 233) suggests rather poignantly regarding—identity, belonging and home—the recurring questions remain long after the event of emigration:

As an Irish immigrant of some fifty years' standing, do you now belong in Ireland or England? How do you decide? Are your children Irish, even though they were born in London boroughs, attended London schools and speak with a London accent? How do they respond to the loaded term 'Plastic Paddy'?

This recent Irish history, its impact on individual psyche and identity continues to be played out in daily life, but in the new Ireland a collective amnesia can very quickly develop. Consequently, it is frequently remarked in contemporary conversations that those under the age of thirty have not known that 'other' Ireland. Rather, they have grown up in a time of unprecedented wealth, opportunity and optimism, notwithstanding the fact that such experiences are not universally shared. In those circumstances, it is very easy as well as most convenient to forget family history, who we are as we engage with a diversity of 'new' Irish. As we shake off some of the remnants of our post-colonial mindsets, we continue to rhyme off such vignettes from a relatively recent history—'no Blacks, no Irish' or 'no dogs, no Irish' or some such slogan with a kind of bemusement rather than inferiority, but such scars on the national psyche are not healed so simply. McCarthy captures the divided loyalties and identities of the Irish Diaspora more affectionately when he states:

Until I was fifteen, I spent every summer of my life there [Ireland] and although it is statistically impossible in a country as moist as Ireland, I'm certain that the sun always shone. Now when I return I feel as if I've come home—or am I just a sentimental fool, my judgement fuddled by nostalgia, Guinness, and the romance of the diaspora? (McCarthy, 2000, p.61)

However, for the most part, it was those who left rather than those who remained that encountered these experiences. In a general sense, they are used as collective cover for a national disclaimer—'how could we be racist (or exclusionary) when, more than any other race, we were 'taken in' all around the globe'. Despite this general assertion, our discomfort, lack of awareness, and amnesia are immediately apparent as we struggle with an appropriate language by which to label 'others'.

#### *From legacies to new realities: changing demographics and language*

While we cannot be certain precisely when and with whom the term 'non-national' originated, it persists in the vernacular language as a label for those who have recently immigrated to Ireland and who are not members of the Irish Diaspora. Although, in a globalised, increasingly interdependent world, nationalism may not be all that was once claimed in its name, denying a nationality to recent immigrants is in many respects a denial of an identity, a stripping away of shaping influences—country, culture, language, religion, tribe, gender and class etc., whereby everyone that is not born Irish has no nationality! Is it possible to be more exclusive and exclusionary than this?

*The legacy of language: in- and ex-clusive*

On reflection, the manner in which successive indigenous generations have used language has partly pre-programmed individuals to accept a kind of internal 'alien' status. For example, the words we use to categorise 'gaeltacht' (Irish language speaking) areas, the Bantustans of the Irish landscape, and the remainder of the country as 'galltacht', create a kind of indigenous apartheid.<sup>1</sup> The word 'gall' literally means 'foreigner' so the vast majority of the population, living in Ireland, are 'foreigners' in their own country! The 'real' Irish are those who live in geographically remote areas and speak the Irish language. From a schooling perspective, in post-independent Ireland, the project of cultural nationalism became a major element of the primary school curriculum, expressed by MacMahon in the following terms:

It was enjoined upon us by the state to undertake the revival of Irish as a spoken language, ... and it was enjoined upon us by the Catholic Church, which, to put it at its mildest, was powerful at the time, to transfer from one generation to the next the corpus of catholic belief. (MacMahon, 1992, p. 93)

Until more recent times, this religious and secular agenda was, for the most part, taken for-granted. Alternatively, dissent was silenced, censored into mute passivity, or encouraged to leave, quietly. If there were immigrants, they most likely were students in the College of Surgeons, or members of the medical profession working in the local hospital; sufficiently middle-class to 'fit in' and belonging to a tiny minority that did not disturb the status quo. All of this has been swept away—'changed utterly'.

Census 2006 was conducted on the night of April 23<sup>rd</sup> last year and found that almost 10 per cent of the State's residents were non-Irish nationals. (Healy, 2007)

Apart from revealing the extent of recent immigration, it is notable also that the earlier term 'non-national' has been amended to 'non-Irish national' but this too has an exclusionary connotation that continues to categorise all those resident in the country but born outside it as not being Irish. Many recent immigrants have had children born in Ireland, who are Irish citizens, while some of their parents have sought and have been granted Irish citizenship. The term non-Irish national also has the effect of categorising all immigrants as 'non-Irish national' as if there were some off-shore labour pool to be fed to the voracious 'Celtic tiger' on demand or as projected by the ESRI as part of its annual labour force forecasts. As indicated above, the pattern was the reverse remarkably recently. In this regard, and in an attempt to indicate that emigration and immigration are dynamic forces with potential simultaneously to create certainty and security as well as instability and insecurity. As Mac Laughlin remarks about Irish emigration:

... it would be wrong to suggest that Irish young adults were passively raised alongside established emigrant trails that linked rural Ireland to the established labour markets of Britain and North America. They forged new trails to the expanding frontiers of the world economy, and their going literally drained youth from many Irish rural communities. This contributed to political stability at home by channelling young adults abroad just as they came of political age. It marked the onset of a senilisation of Irish politics and contributed to the consolidation of patriarchal values in urban and rural Ireland. (1997, p. 5)

More recently, however, the 'illegals' in the US became economic migrants in the 1980s in response to hyper-unemployment at home and now find themselves marooned in a less welcoming US political context.

Mac Laughlin continues:

Migrants from Ireland not only resolved regional deficits in the supply of labour in Britain, North America and Australia at crucial periods in the development of global capitalism, but they also provided families at home with cash. (Mac Laughlin, 1997, p. 8)

Similarly, in the global market of neo-liberal capitalism that defines contemporary international economic activity, migrants to Ireland are fuelling the appetite of the Celtic Tiger, while simultaneously supporting immediate or extended family at home, and/ or saving money in order to return and create a better future 'at home'. Consequently, terms such as asylum seekers, economic migrants, immigrants, as well as those terms used above, have become part of a linguistic repertoire that struggles to make sense of a rapidly changing demographic topography. While there is little agreement regarding an appropriate language that recognises difference and diversity in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner, there is a growing realisation that more needs to be done, that initial responses by 'official' Ireland have been inadequate and fragmented. As a recent Department of Justice official remarked:

We would accept there is a need for major change. We can see every day the problems which arise for people as a result of all the different departments involved in single issues—getting a work permit sorted out, for example. (Holland, 2007, p. 3)

In an effort to move beyond the 'non-national' label, more recently others have made use of other terms such as 'new Irish', but this too has assimilationist overtones. It assumes that, on arrival, my Polish, Latvian, or Nigerian identity has been left at the port of entry, and I am on an appropriate 'path' to become a 'fully fledged' Irish citizen; tensions here are remarkably similar to the contrast often made between the US and its nearest neighbour- where the former is categorised as the 'melting pot' (assimilation) rather than the 'cultural mosaic' in Canada, where official rhetoric at least, speaks a language of mutuality where diverse cultures are valued and contribute to the maple leaf mosaic.

Suffice to say, there is not a once and for all answer to this complex issue. Rather, the point of this discussion is to draw attention to the significance of language and how it contributes to shaping attitudes and discourses that may have positive and/ or negative consequences for those who have chosen to make something of a future for themselves and their children in this country, regardless of how short or long-term that future might be. Though not satisfactory, we have opted to use the terms immigrant and 'newcomer students' or children throughout this report, while readily recognising that they too are far too inadequate to capture the complex issues that are at play in the daily lives of immigrants and indigenous people as they go about their daily lives. The latter term ('newcomer students') is used by the Intercultural Guidelines provided by the NCCA/DES (2005). However, such a term does not cater for the significant number of children born in Ireland of immigrant parents and in many instances for whom English is not the language of the home.<sup>2</sup> Throughout, therefore, we are at pains to point out and draw attention to the diversity and heterogeneity of immigrants and seek consistently to argue against a homogenisation of policy, practice and provision. Nowhere is this more of a necessity than in the field of education. However, before turning attention specifically to education, a brief acquaintance with recent census figures will illustrate the issue of heterogeneity, with a distinct regional dimension also to the changing demographics; evidence of the extent to which Ireland, *de facto*, has become a multi-cultural society.

#### *Changing demographics: from legacies to new realities*

Although there is a concentration of immigrants in Dublin, such concentrations are not confined to the metropolis only. For example, "some 40 per cent of the residents of Gort, Co. Galway, are now non-Irish nationals" while the "large Brazilian population accounts for more than 83 per cent of its 1,065 immigrants". By contrast, "36 per cent of Ballyhaunis residents are non-Irish with most coming from eastern Europe". Nevertheless, "Dublin is the county with the highest proportion of non-Irish nationals at 13 per cent or 150,000 people" though along with the two Mayo towns of Ballinrobe and Ballyhaunis, "Ballyjamesduff in Cavan are the towns with the greatest percentage of non-Irish nationals" (Healy, 2007, p. 3). Additionally, as will be evident when a more detailed analysis is provided later, both in terms of concentration and diversity, Dublin 15 represents a unique portion of the national picture that warrants particular attention. However, before getting into this level of detail (chapter three), it is necessary to indicate education policy and legislative frameworks, while subsequently making an initial assessment of the extent to which these provisions are equal to the challenge represented by significantly altered demographic realities.

## **Framing education provision: legislation and policy**

### *Introduction*

First, it is important to acknowledge that much formative and generative discussion regarding 'inclusion' in the Irish context emerged from contested provision regarding children with special needs and their entitlement to an appropriate education, the Travelling Community, and those identified as 'disadvantaged'. Consequently, the term 'inclusion,' from its use in these contexts, took on particular meaning—'maximising participation in mainstream schooling'. Persistence on the part of various activists and agencies has resulted in significant legislative reform and the creation, for example, of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE, 2003).<sup>3</sup> However, these reforms are not our primary concern here, while it is important to acknowledge their influence on other legislative provision. Additionally, inclusion as it was used in these contexts was primarily concerned with Irish citizens, about moving certain categories of citizens from the margins to mainstream participation in education, employment and civic engagement. Consequently, when inclusion is used in an increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic context, it becomes problematic if interpreted as merely 'mainstreaming' cultural minorities, since this smacks of cooption, and leaves little space for the development of mutual regard etc.

To a significant extent, vernacular language is already peppered with terms to distinguish 'us' from 'other(s)'—gael or gall, country cábóg, BIFFO, or Dublin Jackeen, even the term 'foreigner', 'Yank' or 'West Brit', in one way or another seek to separate and create difference, but difference in a hierarchical rather than diverse manner. Significantly, the Fáinne, the Pioneer Pin, either now or in the past have also been displayed as identifiers, while, as indicated above, in more stable, stagnant and predictable times, school curricula too were imbued with an often singular essentialist notion of identity—'fíor ghael'. Hidden within and between such terms is often a hierarchical relationship, one of '*subordinate privilege*', learned by successive Irish generations through a combination of being part of British cultural imperialism, missionary work as in 'pennies for the black babies' or being treated as second class citizens in the new world as part of the Irish diasporal experience (Ignatiev, 1995; Lentin & McVeigh, 2002). While racism is not the focus of attention here, due to recent rapid increase in immigration, many taken for granted aspects of 'Irishness' have been challenged. Consequently, it is important to recognise and acknowledge that: "historical legacy and contemporary location create a specific dialectic that begins to explain contemporary Irish racism" (McVeigh & Lentin, 2002, p. 18).

These historical and recent realities present particular challenges to an educational system whose structures were determined in a very different Ireland; the long shadows of history

continue to have a very real presence in school provision, and thus become important shaping influences that mediate more recent legislative reforms. For example, the OECD visiting committee recorded its observations in 1991 in the following terms:

To understand contemporary Ireland, it is necessary to recognise how much its remote as well as more recent history still affects public values and attitudes and offers a key to understanding its institutions, not least its system of education. (OECD, 1991, p. 11)

Similarly, in a much more recent publication, the following observations regarding the Irish education system were recorded. Lodge and Lynch assert:

Irish schools have traditionally been characterised by homogeneity of student intake. There is a long tradition of segregation of students by belief, by different abilities, by racial affiliation as well as by class and gender. Maintenance of separate educational (and subsequently social) worlds is an often unquestioned institutionalised practice. (Lynch & Lodge, 2002, p. 132)

As a consequence of these institutionalised practices, these authors go on to argue that:

The way schools in Ireland have traditionally managed diversity ... has been through segregation, and in the case of sexual orientation, denial and silence. While there is now a move away from these traditions, in terms of formal policy, practices of segregation, division and silence are still very visible in schools (Lynch & Lodge, 2002, p. 134).

In the context of rapidly changing demographics, therefore, it is vital, not only to provide appropriate legislation to move beyond exclusivity, and institutionalised silences around issues of equality, and to espouse policies with the specific intention of promoting equality in a proactive and sustained manner, but to seek simultaneously to alter thinking and routines of practice. It is necessary, therefore, as a means of framing this study, to indicate significant elements of recent legislation— education and equality.

### *Framing Legislation*

In section six of the Education Act (1998) concerned with its 'objects' the following are explicitly stated:

- (a) to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education;
- (b) to provide that as far as practicable and having regard to the resources available, there is made available to people resident in the State a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of those people;

- (c) to promote equality of access to and participation in education and to promote the means whereby students may benefit from education (p. 10)

While the act lists several other 'objects' in this section, those quoted above seem most pertinent to the focus of this investigation. However, the following should be noted. The Irish constitution (1937) indicates that a child is entitled to a 'certain minimum education' while section (b) above indicates that provision is circumscribed by 'having regard to the resources available'. When these caveats are added to the fact that, as Stone (Stone, 2002) correctly indicates, equality has many competing and conflicting interpretations, it is reasonable to conclude that equality is contested terrain, and in a generally more competitive climate, gaining advantage rather than 'meeting the needs and abilities' of all individuals tends to be privileged over more egalitarian and/ or communitarian interpretations of the term equality. When traditions of schooling in the Irish context are entered into the equation, part of the deep structures mentioned above, then vigilance is necessary if more expansive rather than restrictive interpretations of equality are to become the norm.

Consistent with international rhetorics, section six of the Education Act also recognises "the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice" while circumscribing this 'right' by protecting other interests, namely "having regard to the right of patrons" (Catholic Bishops for the most part) and "the effective and efficient use of resources" which protects the interests of the Minister of the day, as well as conferring significant advantage on those with considerable resources for personal disposal in the context of exercising parental rights. These policy rhetorics strongly suggest that, in the Irish context, we are much closer to what Lawton described in England as 'the privatizers' and 'the minimalists' rather than something that resonates more with 'pluralists' or 'comprehensive planners' (Lawton, 1992, pp.17-19). His description of minimalists resonates closely with the terms of the education act as well as established norms of schooling. He describes them as those who believe in —

... a mixed economy in education. They accept that the state should provide basic schooling (as cheaply as possible), but parents must have the right and privilege of buying additional extras or of opting out of the state system altogether. (Lawton, 1992, p. 18)

However, since in the Irish context, boundaries are blurred between public and private education and the state funds both sectors, albeit somewhat differently, this permeability of boundaries enables parents to exercise choice in an almost seamless manner, something that is 'natural' rather than a deep systemic fissure with major consequences for equality as well as quality education for all. However, when these institutionalised practices are coupled with rapid urbanisation, and social segregation brought about by the absence of integrated

social policy in the housing market, increasing segregation around schooling has become an important contributory factor to social fragmentation. This is well documented in the secondary sector (Smyth, McCoy, & Darmody, 2004), though largely ignored in the primary sector. However, this trend was readily detectable on the ground prior to the challenge presented by immigration, while the latter certainly exacerbates 'choice' of school with potentially major long-term consequences for equality and social cohesion.

### *Equality legislation (2000)*

In a publication entitled '*Diversity at School*', Lodge, Lynch (2004) and colleagues have sought to lay bare the implications of recent equality legislation for educational provision at all levels of the education system. In a more restricted manner, the DES too has sought to indicate the implications of equality legislation for schools. It is these implications, and exemptions that are the primary focus here. There are nine grounds on which the Equal Status Act (2000) prohibits discrimination.<sup>4</sup> While educational establishments "shall not discriminate in relation to the admission or the terms or conditions of admission" discrimination is allowed where:

Primary and post primary schools ... have the objective of providing education in an environment which promotes certain religious value, may admit persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others and may refuse to admit a student who is not of that denomination if it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school (Equality Authority, 2000, p. 10).

In a system that is predominantly denominational, and with a major demographic shift in population due to significant immigration, this exception has become very problematic regarding enrolment policies in schools. As Lodge and Lynch assert: "the religious control of schools in a predominantly state-funded system presents serious challenges to the pursuit of equality to particular minorities in education" (2004, p. 3). Despite the changing socio-cultural landscape therefore, the deep structures and traditions of education in many respects may be regarded as inimical to equality concerns.

As multiculturalism has become more of a reality, if anything a more restricted interpretation of the exceptions has been invoked to the point where current practice is promoting segregation that is absolutely inimical to inclusion and social cohesion. Consequently, and due also to lack of planning in the housing sector that is driven by developers rather than local authorities or centralised planning for school provision by the DES, there is the perception if not the reality that enrolment policies, while hiding behind the Education and Equality Acts, are actually discriminatory, thus giving rise to rather sensational front page headlines such as 'Fears of schools turning all-black'. A very prominent national figure in education is quoted in the same article where he says: "what is happening in Dublin is very

likely to happen throughout the country, unless planning is put in place. The basic problem is that education structures and systems developed in the 1800s are being used in a 21st century Ireland" (quoted in Flynn, 2007, p. 1). This is evidence, if it were needed, that existing structures have enormous consequences for concerns about equality and may or may not be inimical to them. However, mindsets too are powerful barriers or conduits for reform; when the mote in our own eye is ignored in this regard, equality suffers. For these and other reasons, Murphy argues that a change of mindset is long overdue, for existing practices are on borrowed time. He says:

... in the rapidly changing Irish society ... we need to separate faith—all faiths—from fatherland, now more than ever. The business of a secular constitution should be to guarantee religious freedom, and no more. (Murphy, 2007, p. 23)

Arguably, in a state funded education system, this too is what the state should guarantee, but this is an unlikely scenario in the immediate future for historical reasons unless those in leadership positions, on all sides of this 'equality' concern, begin to take more proactive rather than defensive positions. From a day-to-day perspective, as some of the Equality Authority publications point out, there are different, more subtle, forms of discrimination—direct, indirect, by association. Lodge and Lynch point out that:

Planning for equality in education must be based on accurate information. However, there is a lack of substantive, accurate data about the educational experiences of those who experience inequality under several of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation. There is a need to actively address this information deficit (2004, p. 113).

It was frustration regarding this lack of evidence, and lack of coordination and synthesis of evidence that drove primary principals in Dublin 15 to move beyond individual representation regarding the challenges they encountered to provide a more comprehensive and coherent picture of the extent of the challenges, the problems and possibilities.

At a rhetorical and policy level, therefore, it may be argued that concern regarding equality is at least more on the agenda than heretofore. It is necessary to turn attention to the manner in which educational and equality legislation have been 'translated' into policy statements around the growing reality of inclusion.

#### *Policy: Intercultural education in primary schools*

In response to changing demographics in the Irish context, the NCCA prepared a set of guidelines on 'Intercultural Education in the Primary School' (NCCA, 2005). These guidelines indicate two major 'focal points' for the present task:

- It is education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us.
- It is education, which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built. (NCCA, 2005, p. 3)

These guidelines were distributed to every primary school teacher in the country. Clearly, policy-makers attached importance to their content to distribute the documentation so widely, when, by contrast, many other reports frequently are distributed by sending one copy to each school. However, many principals and teachers comment that distribution of the guidelines without any professional support, particularly at a time when a major initiative on curriculum reform was being provided by Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and School Development Planning Support (SDPS), meant that in practice, many practitioners did not attach adequate attention or priority to intercultural concerns in a very crowded, if not overloaded, professional renewal, school improvement agenda. Many in the field of education continue to suggest that this was a missed opportunity, to facilitate debate and discussion among teachers regarding issues such as identity, citizenship, conceptual understandings of interculturalism, and how to give such understandings practical embodiment within and beyond school communities.

Drawing on the work of the Rampton Report in the UK, the guidelines argue that:

A 'good' education cannot be based on one culture only, and ... where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of the population, we do not believe that education should seek to iron out the differences between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture (quoted in NCCA, 2005, p. 21)

The underlying value position being espoused in the guidelines advocates that:

All children have a culture and ethnicity. Learning to value their own culture and ethnicity is central to their self-esteem and sense of identity. Intercultural education facilitates all children coming to value their own heritage and the heritage of others. (p. 21)

Such an approach presupposes a degree of knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of cultures and ethnic identities on the part of teachers, a major challenge in a system that was almost entirely mono-cultural until very recently. Additionally, in the globalised interdependent world we now inhabit, Barber argues that:

... we need culture and religion to assure solidarity, and social cohesion—and a sense of human spirit. But most of all, we need democratic institutions capable of preserving our liberty even in parochial communities; and capable of maintaining our

equality and our precious differences even in capitalist markets (Barber, 1996) (p. 300)

We are not merely consumers, but citizens, and preparing students for meaningful participation in public life and not merely as fodder for the workforce is a major educational challenge. To begin with, it is appropriate to note that the term 'intercultural' is preferred over multi-cultural. The former implies, and values, mutual regard, respect for diversity, and not merely recognition of its existence, while it also seeks to disavow hierarchical relationships between cultures, whereby traditionally Eurocentrism positioned others' cultures as less worthy. As Said suggests, a "decolonizing of the mind" is required if we are not to continue to reassert and reaffirm traditional cultural hierarchies (Said, 1993). He elaborates on what such decolonizing would entail in the following terms:

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival ... is about the connections between things ... reality cannot be deprived of the 'other echoes [that] inhabit the garden'. It is more rewarding—and more difficult—to think concretely and systematically ... about others than only about 'us'. But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter). (1993, p. 408)

In an Irish context, we are attached to the assertion that we do not carry 'colonial baggage' when it comes to our acknowledged success in such roles as international peace keeping, and while such assertions carry some truth, they are not the whole story and deny all of the myriad subtle and less subtle ways in which inequalities are created, maintained and perpetuated. From the perspective of the legislative and policy framework in a rapidly changing and more fluid educational landscape, the following questions emerge as pertinent to the current investigation:

### **Shaping the future: questioning past and present**

- Is it possible to implement adequately an intercultural curriculum in a predominantly denominational education system?
- By what criteria would successful implementation of interculturalism be determined, that would move the agenda beyond surface and superficial acknowledgement of 'other' cultures?
- What are current challenges and successes given the extent of demographic change and how can these be used as an evidentiary base for reform of current policies and practices?

- How adequate are current legislative and policy frameworks as a means of providing equal opportunity for all in an increasingly multi-cultural schooling system and society?
- What are the wider ramifications of this investigation for planning of social services, housing etc if social cohesion and integration are to become a reality?

Within the limited timeframe and resources of this study, it is not possible to provide comprehensive answers to these questions. However, given the unique position currently occupied by primary schools in the Dublin 15 area, the investigation set about providing a comprehensive picture of current realities with a view to making appropriate recommendations based on available evidence. The literature reviewed above, and the questions to which that review gives rise, are part of the 'bigger picture' and, as such, are an important means of framing the investigation and a lens through which to interrogate the evidence, while providing recommendations that are firmly grounded in the accumulated data. Against this general backdrop, and with these concerns very much in mind, attention is focused on an appropriate research design for the study. This is the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting in this regard that a recent article in *The Irish Times* by Fitzgerald uses very similar language with regard to the legislative framework in which the education system currently operates. The title of the piece is: *New Catholic school Policy could provide unintended 'apartheid'*. *The Irish Times*, p. 14, (2007, 08/09/'07).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'newcomer students' is defined in the guidelines as follows: "Students who arrive into a classroom from a country or background that is different from that of the majority of children in the classroom" (p. 169).

<sup>3</sup> Particularly important pieces of legislation in this context have been: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (ESPEN) Act, 2004 and the Disability Act 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The nine grounds are—gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, Traveller community.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH DESIGN OF STUDY

#### **Introduction**

The immediate motivation for the conduct of this study arose from a regular meeting of a primary principals' support group in Dublin 15. At one of its regular meetings in the Spring of 2006, many of the twenty principals present voiced their increasing anger and frustration at the lack of official response to the increasing number of immigrant students in their schools, and the challenges these represented to established staffing and routines. These experiences resonate very positively with Fitzgerald's more recent assertion that "neither the religious nor the civil authorities yet appreciate the scale of the swing away from religion during the past 15 or 20 years, nor its full implications for our educational system" (Fitzgerald, 2007) (p. 14). Some were at pains to point out that, despite the time, effort and energy spent dealing with the multiplicity of challenges these learners and their parents presented, in general they wanted it known that in important ways the multi-cultural reality these changed demographics represented was both welcome and positive. Nevertheless, the frustration and anger were palpable and was primarily targeted at the perceived lack of appreciation by policy-makers and administrators of the scale of the challenge and the extent to which long established rules and routines applied to staffing and resource allocation were no longer working or appropriate. Consequently, they felt keenly that their Herculean efforts to make existing provision work as best they could, was neither fair nor sustainable.

It needs to be emphasised that this was not the first meeting that such concerns had been voiced. Rather, on this occasion there was a collective sense that it was time that the group as a whole pooled its energies, to document the scale and extent of the challenges, while feeling that, in the geographical area, when compared to other areas, there was a disproportionate number of immigrants, thus a certain uniqueness attached itself to the Dublin 15. This has been borne out by data presented later in this report. However, it was also recognised that, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the current realities in primary school in the area, funding would be an absolute necessity.

#### *Securing funding*

From the outset, once the primary focus was identified, Mr Brian Lenihan TD saw the merits of the proposal that had been submitted to him in writing, and after a meeting he readily committed to providing the funding under his remit of responsibility for children (as Junior Minister in the previous administration), particularly those who were vulnerable or at risk. Unfortunately, there was a considerable time lapse between this early commitment to provide

funding and its actual delivery at the end of December 2006.<sup>1</sup> When the funding eventually arrived, immediate action was taken to expedite the work.

### *Initiating the research*

Initial considerations included the selection of a steering committee for the study to include a small but representative group of primary principals within the Dublin 15 postal district to ensure that school type, social context, gender etc were considered as there was general awareness that, even within the confines of the postal district, there was considerable heterogeneity of experience from one school to the next, while readily recognising also that, what was happening in one particular school often had enormous consequences for schools that were most immediately adjacent. Towards this end, a meeting of all of the twenty-five principals in the postal district of Dublin 15 was convened as an initial brain-storming meeting, where there was an emphasis on seeking to paint as comprehensive a picture as possible of the current realities within the limits of time and resources. From the outset, Enda McGorman, principal of Mary, Mother of Hope National School in the western end of the 'district', indicated a willingness to undertake the fieldwork for the study, and correspondence was entered into with the DES to secure his secondment, with the approval of the larger group of principals and the steering committee. Meanwhile, the steering committee met to give further substance to the issues and concerns and to refine the research design. Before providing more detail on the design itself, a succinct indication is provided of Dublin 15.

### *Dublin 15*

This area is geographically located between the Phoenix Park, its most easterly point, and is bordered on the west by County Meath, and to a significant extent also by the rivers Tolka and Liffey. Three decades ago, the villages of Castleknock, Blanchardstown, Mulhuddart and Cloness (County Meath) and others were a series of hamlets, small settlements that began to grow into what is now a major urban sprawl on the western side of Dublin. While urbanisation is a very recent phenomenon, local history dates back to antiquity. As O' Driscoll informs the reader, the name Castleknock derives from the wife of Conn of the Hundred Battles, whose name was 'Cnucha' and the Book of Lecan records her death and burial on one of the Cairns still visible in the grounds of Castleknock College. It says:

The woman buried sorrowful it was,  
In the right centre of the hill;  
So that Cnucha from that time forth,  
Is its name till the day of judgement (O' Driscoll, 1977) (p. 7)

In a similar publication (MacPoilin & Sobolewski, 2001), a local Clonsilla resident (Shay Cullen) is quoted as follows:

*“Nothing happened for one hundred years and then everything changed overnight” (p. 3)*

However, as the authors comment: “In a period of thirty years (1970-2000) the landscape has changed dramatically from rural to urban settlement” (p. 3). In the late sixties, Tallagh, Clondalkin/ Lucan and Blanchardstown were identified as three major development areas on the western side of the city. However, the development of the Blanchardstown area has accelerated exponentially in the past decade, and changes in housing density by Fingal County Council have been a major contributing factor that makes Dublin 15 the most rapidly growing area in the entire Dublin region. And, with the amount of rental property available, as will be evident later, multi-culturalism is immediately evident in most public places. These are the most immediate factors that have made the conduct of this present study a necessity. From the outset, there was awareness of the uniqueness of the set of circumstances that pertained in the district, and while other geographical areas, as indicated in census figures in the previous chapter as well as in very recent media reports, have had to get to grips with similarly changed demographics, the scale of the enterprise in Dublin 15 makes it qualitatively different. An important consideration therefore that framed the focus and purpose of this study was that more traditional means of making policy in a centralised manner in a stable and predictable system, was no longer adequate to the rapidly changing mosaic of circumstances on the ground. In the first instance, however, it would be necessary to have more precise and comprehensive data on the scale and extent of these challenges, while subsequently using this evidence to address issues of structure, policy and practice. The twenty-five schools that participated in the study are listed in chapter three (see below). Given that the concerns were widely shared across all of the school sites, albeit to varying degrees, cooperation and active participation were almost guaranteed from the outset. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to acknowledge that without the level of cooperation in providing information, and making staff available for interviews and focus group, often at short notice, it would not have been possible to complete the fieldwork for the study within the relatively short period of time (April-June 2007). Additionally, other evidence sought at various times during this period was almost always returned with unusual alacrity. Such timely collaboration has contributed significantly to the successful completion of the work, and is greatly appreciated.

A complete list of primary schools participating in study is provided in **Table 6**, on page 43. All of the patron bodies, except ‘an Foras Patrúnachta’ (patron body for inter-denominational schools, of which there are 5 nationally), are represented within the group of 25 schools. There are 20 Catholic parish or parochial schools, one Church of Ireland, three Multi-denominational, one Scoil Lán Ghaelach, while Scoil Choilm has been the most recent addition in the area, opened in September 2007 under the temporary patronage of the

Catholic Archbishop, too recent to be included in this study. This is the immediate context in which the research was completed.

### *Research design*

Since the turn of the present century, and as the impact of the immigrant community began to register in schools, individual principals, in collaboration with their colleagues compiled data in an effort to secure additional resources from the DES. Additionally, each school is obliged to make annual returns to DES (Annual Statistical Returns). The first principle adopted therefore was that every effort would be made to maximise the use of data already accumulated, as a means of building a secure empirical base to the study. A second principle, as already indicated, was to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible. Consequently, while commencing with the empirical base, and supplementing this along the way as gaps emerged in the data, there was commitment too that, in addition to having the voices of principals 'heard' in the evidence, teachers, parents, and students would be given a voice. There was awareness also that the challenges faced by schools were part of wider socio-cultural and demographic shifts, influenced considerably by housing policy, the rental market/ rental subsidy, and collectively these had consequences for support services, both statutory and voluntary. Where possible the evidence would seek to connect these influences, while the primary focus of the study was on primary schooling and the impact of changing demographics on daily realities. As always, within the limits of time and resources, there are trade-offs between being focused and being comprehensive to ensure, as far as possible, that a 360° collage is created. While it has not proved possible to consult as widely as we would have liked, we are confident that the picture created is sufficiently comprehensive to make strong recommendations.

From a methodological perspective therefore, a mixed-methods approach was adopted as the most effective means of generating both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). Additionally, it was intended that the basis of subsequent phases of the research would be shaped significantly by the empirical evidence in two senses. First, that additional empirical data would be sought to provide a more complete picture, while qualitative data would be generated to illuminate further emergent issues and concerns that were evident either by their presence or absence in the first data set. In this regard, in terms of building the empirical data-base, personnel in the DES were more than helpful, and are duly credited for their positive cooperation. The design therefore was 'emergent', as well as including elements of 'progressive focusing' while being mindful of the need to be comprehensive, yet focused (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The design included the following phases.

### *Phases of the research design*

The phases were:

- Building a comprehensive empirical base to document the extent to which multiculturalism, in all its facets, was a reality in each school with a view to providing a comprehensive picture of current realities in Dublin 15. Where necessary and appropriate, additional information was sought from a) individual schools and/ or b) the DES to make the evidence as complete as possible.
- Focus group interviews with representative groups of teachers were organised. These groups included a teacher from each of the four segments of the school curriculum (infants, first & second, third & fourth, and fifth & sixth), resource and language support. The deliberate intention in this context was to hear the realities at the various levels within the school, while also endeavouring to document the impact on resource teaching and language support. The interview schedule for these focus groups was semi-structured. They began relatively informally, more in the tradition of life history—‘a green light and a listening ear’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001), thus enabling teachers to voice their experiences, while there were issues also that emerged from the empirical evidence that were considered important. These were categories of evidence to be included rather than key questions to be asked. Thus the flow of the contributions was used through a series of probing questions to solicit comment, but not in a directed manner (Kavale, 1996; Spradley, 1979).
- A case study approach (Stake, 1995) was adopted when it came to documenting parent’s experience of their interactions with the system of schooling, while simultaneously providing more biographical and succinct family history. Seven cases in all were completed with parents from different cultures, and ethnic groups, with differing periods of time spent living in Ireland. Due to language limitations, participants in the cases were more likely to have been here longer than other immigrants, to have reasonable command of English, and therefore also to have had more ‘social capital’ in comparison with other immigrants in gaining entry and access to education for their children. Nevertheless, these cases are an important contribution to the emerging picture, and help teachers and policy-makers to understand what it is like to be an ‘outsider’ in the system, as well as indicate that being an immigrant is not a homogenous experience, thus further suggesting that heteronomous rather than homogenous policies and flexibility is required rather than ‘one fit’ for all. In terms of their contribution to the research therefore these cases are both ‘intrinsic’ (stories worthy of telling in their own right) and ‘instrumental’ in the sense that by constructing a cross-case analysis the sum is greater than the individual parts, each case being a means to an end (Stake, 1995).

- Focus group interviews were organised also with primary pupils to hear accounts of their experiences of being in multicultural classrooms and to gain some insight into their level of engagement outside the classroom and in the community in terms of friendships and participation. These were deemed appropriate to hear the voices of children, with potential also to hear of their experiences of racism, either having encountered it directly or to have witnessed racist encounters either in the school or in the community. Unfortunately, time permitted only one such focus group interview.
- Given the particular role played by Home School Community Liaison teachers, individuals who are often the public face of the school in the community, a focus group interview was also conducted with a representative sample of them from the 25 schools, while only some of the schools represented in the study, have the services of an HSCL.
- More informal contacts were made with social services in the area and with Fingal County Council, particularly in the case of the latter to gain further information regarding housing units and number of rental properties and rental subsidies available in the area. The purpose of this information gathering was twofold. First, it was sought in an effort to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible, while continuing to focus on primary schooling. Second, as a contextualisation of the data to provide a more adequate and elaborate framework of analysis. This information therefore became part of the interpretative lens of the analysis, and helped also in strengthening the evidentiary warrants of the work.
- Frequent informal contact with individual principals was ongoing throughout the completion of the fieldwork to gather additional information or to have information already provided contextualised within the specifics of that particular school community.

All interviews were recorded, and were conducted in a classroom or staffroom setting depending on availability of space in a variety of locations. In this regard also, principals and participants were most helpful and supportive, supplying refreshments that were instrumental in lubricating the larynx of participants that contributed to a very positive atmosphere at these encounters, and a sense of professional solidarity that was worthwhile in itself, when participants realised that other colleagues too were struggling to get to grips with the growing complexity of their roles and responsibilities. All interviews were re-played immediately following recordings, and an elaborate index created to topics and issues, while selected verbatim statements were also recorded in computer files for subsequent retrieval. Elements of the 'constant comparative method' were deployed also so that emerging issues were included in schedules for subsequent interviews, or suggested that additional evidence was necessary in relation to emergent concerns (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Within the

limitations of the study, it was not feasible to transcribe all recorded material. However, the detailed indices made subsequent retrieval possible and very accessible. As indicated previously, the focus of the study was exclusively on the Dublin 15 postal area. Consequently, the study does not claim to be representative of the challenges nationally. However, it is anticipated that many of the concerns and realities that are documented here will have resonances in many other areas of the country, particularly in locations where there are similar concentrations of immigrants due to availability of certain kinds of employment and/ or rental accommodation. The overarching concern from the outset has been to indicate the uniqueness of the D15 case, and, as a consequence, to argue that national policy-making, premised on a combination of homogeneity, stability and predictability is outdated and no longer adequate to the 'liquid' and fluid community circumstance, thus necessitating a breaking of the mould of policy generation and implementation in order to be responsive to and proactive in the face of radically altered circumstances (Bauman, 2000).

#### *Ethical considerations*

Appropriate attention was paid to ethical considerations at all stages of the fieldwork and beyond. Each adult participant was requested to provide written assent to participate, and copies of these 'contracts' were provided to them, while originals were retained as part of the 'audit trail' of the work (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These documents indicated that every effort would be made to protect their privacy and anonymity, and that individuals would not be cited nor quotations attributed to individuals in the final report. Additionally, it was indicated clearly that individuals were free to withdraw from participation at any time, and, if requested, their contributions would be erased. In the case of the children who participated, parental consent was also sought and secured, as well as the assent of the children themselves, while in all cases the purpose of the study was clearly indicated.

#### ***Data analysis***

Although the first phase of data collection was almost entirely quantitative, there were elements of the 'constant comparative method' in the manner in which these data were handled (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). All data were entered into Excel files, and these figures were interrogated to document the increase in multi-cultural participation in schools, at what age level etc. etc. A series of descriptive statistics were generated, as well as graphic representations of evidence in an effort to maximise the extent to which they indicated in numerical terms the current realities. Thereafter, the constant comparative method was used to complete the picture, while there were elements of case study writing deployed also in relation to parents, while seeking also to generate some 'grounded theory' as part of the

evidentiary warrants of the case being advanced (Glaser, 1967). Collectively, these data form the empirical basis of this report, and are the foundation also on which the concluding discussion is based and recommendations are made.

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<sup>1</sup> The funding was forwarded to St. Patrick's College Drumcondra since Ciaran Sugrue had been identified as the principal investigator in the proposal. However, it was always the intention that a significant proportion of the funding would be used to second a principal in Dublin 15; someone who would already have a familiarity with the issues and concerns as well as standing and credibility with principals and their colleagues in the area.

## CHAPTER III

### CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN DUBLIN 15

#### Introduction

This chapter presents general data on population growth in Dublin 15 in recent years. It is in three sections. The first section indicates population growth within the electoral divisions, while these divisions do not 'map on' to school catchment areas, the data do indicate the manner in which population densities have grown differently even within the postal districts, with consequences for schooling, particularly enrolment. This first section also details the ethnic diversity within these changing demographics. The second section indicates the youth population and spells out the implications for school enrolment of these population trends. The third section provides a socio-economic profile of tenants in the area, those who are in receipt of rental subsidy, the ethnic groups represented and the duration of their tenancy, thus also providing some evidence of the fluid nature of the population and the challenges this represents for building stable communities, as well as for planning projected school enrolments.

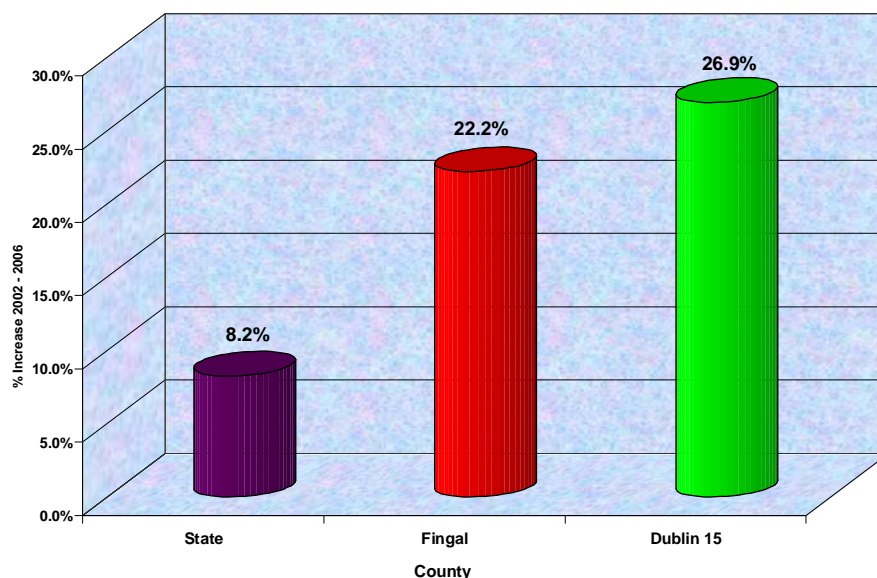
#### Population increase in Dublin 15

Located west of the Phoenix Park, stretching to the borders of County Meath, the Dublin 15 area has seen an extraordinary growth in population in recent years. Within Dublin 15, the twelve Electoral Divisions (EDs) recorded a total population of 90,974 persons in the 2006 census, compared to 71,673 in 2002. This represents an increase of 26.9% between 2002 and 2006. This compares to a national population increase of 8.2% and an increase of 22.2% in the Fingal area as a whole. These figures are set out in **Table 1** below. The percentage change in population is represented graphically in **Figure 1**.

**Table 1. Comparison of Population Growth 2002 - 2006**

	<b>Persons 2002</b>	<b>Persons 2006</b>	<b>Change 2002-2006</b>	<b>% change 2002- 2006</b>
<b>Dublin 15</b>	<b>71,673</b>	<b>90,974</b>	<b>19,301</b>	<b>26.9%</b>
<b>Fingal</b>	<b>196,413</b>	<b>239,992</b>	<b>43,579</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
<b>Nationally</b>	<b>3,917,203</b>	<b>4,239,848</b>	<b>322,645</b>	<b>8.2%</b>

**Figure 1. Comparison of Inter-Census Growth Rates, 2002-2006**



These figures indicate the dramatic increase in population in the Dublin 15 area, more than three times the national average.

#### *Breakdown of Dublin 15 population by Electoral Division (ED)..*

The total population of each ED in 2006 as compared to 2002 is shown at **Table 2** overleaf. A further breakdown of each ED into parish or estate is given at **Appendix A**. These should be studied with care as the ED title does not necessarily correspond to the more modern estate names in the area- giving rise to an amount of confusion!

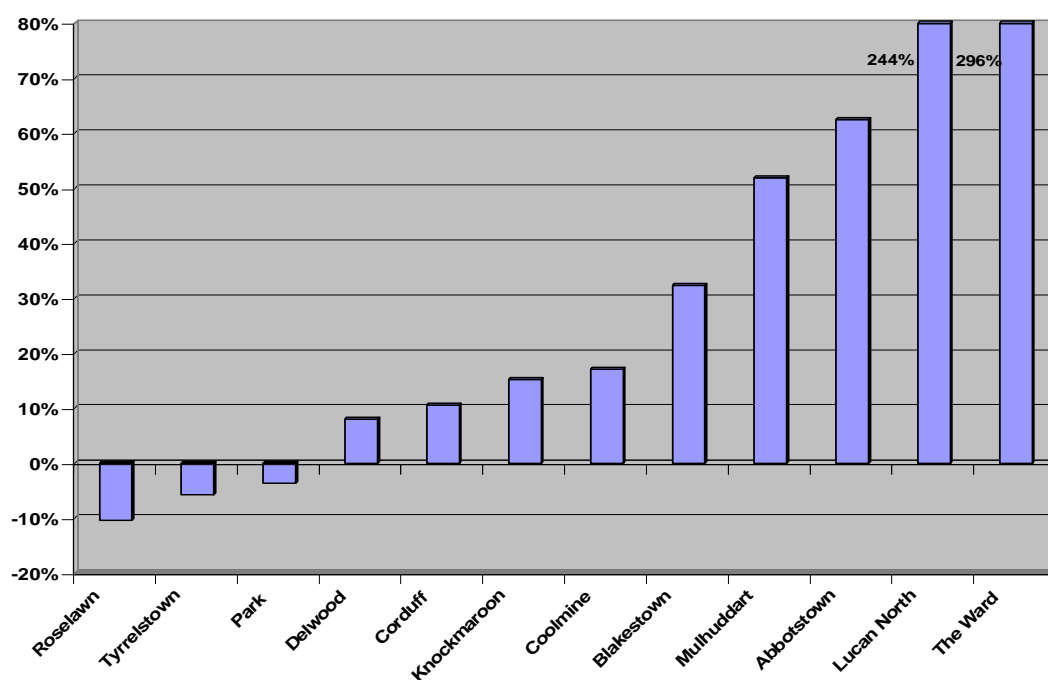
While ten of the twelve EDs fall entirely within Dublin 15, two - Lucan North and The Ward - extend beyond these boundaries to an extent. The most populous of these EDs, Blanchardstown- Blakestown, recorded the most dramatic increase in population from **24,404** to **32,288** in just four years. This was the highest increase in inter-censual population **nationally**. To put this in perspective, the population of the Blakestown ED is now in excess of the population of Co. Leitrim!

The smallest unit into which the Central Statistics Office (CSO) provides census details is the Electoral Division. Clearly the size of the Blakestown ED is much too large and incorporates too many estates across too large an area to be of any use to planners from an educational or indeed from most other perspectives. This ED should be broken into smaller units for the next census, if we are to get a more local and more detailed sense of the population changes that are occurring. The percentage increase in each ED area is shown **Figure 2** below.

Table 2. Population of Dublin 15 EDs 2002 – 2006

Population by Electoral Division	Persons 2006	Persons 2002	Change 2002-2006	% change 2002-2006
Blanchardstown-Blakestown	32,288	24,404	7,884	32%
Blanchardstown-Coolmine	10,774	9,202	1,572	17%
Blanchardstown-Corduff	4,806	4,346	460	11%
Blanchardstown-Delwood	4,955	4,589	366	8%
Blanchardstown-Mulhuddart	2,785	1,833	952	52%
Blanchardstown-Roselawn	1,831	2,043	-212	-10%
Blanchardstown-Tyrrelstown	1,559	1,653	-94	-6%
Castleknock-Knockmaroon	17,115	14,859	2,256	15%
Castleknock-Park	4,395	4,561	-166	-4%
Blanchardstown-Abbotstown	4,122	2,537	1,585	62%
Lucan North	1,163	338	825	244%
The Ward	5,181	1,308	3,873	296%
Total Population	90,974	71,673	19,301	26.9%

Figure 2. % Change in Population of Electoral Divisions, 2002-2006



Beneath the overall trend that demonstrates an increase of 26.9%, there is a further interesting trend in individual EDs. There was an actual *decrease* in population in three areas- Blanchardstown-Roselawn which registered a decrease of 10%, Tyrrelstown 6%, and Castleknock-Park which showed a decline of 4%. (It should be noted that the Tyrrelstown Electoral Division comprises the older housing developments of Tyrrelstown and not the more recent developments that are contained in Electoral Division of *The Ward*.)

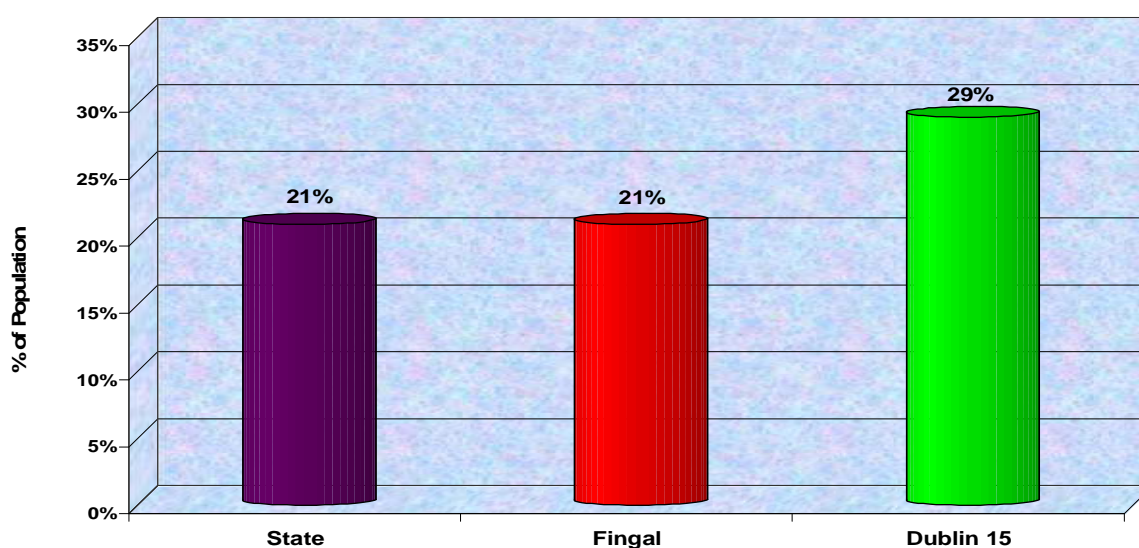
This compares to the Blanchardstown-Mulhuddart and Blanchardstown-Abbotstown EDs which each showed a phenomenal increase of over 50% in population in the four years between 2002 and 2006.

However, the stunning growth in Lucan North and The Ward, each in excess of 240%, are in a different league to demographic shifts elsewhere. Further disaggregating of these population trends is necessary as a means of indicating their impact on schools and schooling in the area.

### High youth population in Dublin 15

The census statistics for 2006 reveal that the youth population in Dublin 15 is among the highest in the country. The percentage of the population aged 18 years or younger is 21% in the State including the wider Fingal area. However, in Dublin 15, this figure is significantly higher at 29%, as shown in **Figure 3** below. This has huge implications for the provision of youth services generally, and educational services, including school places, in particular.

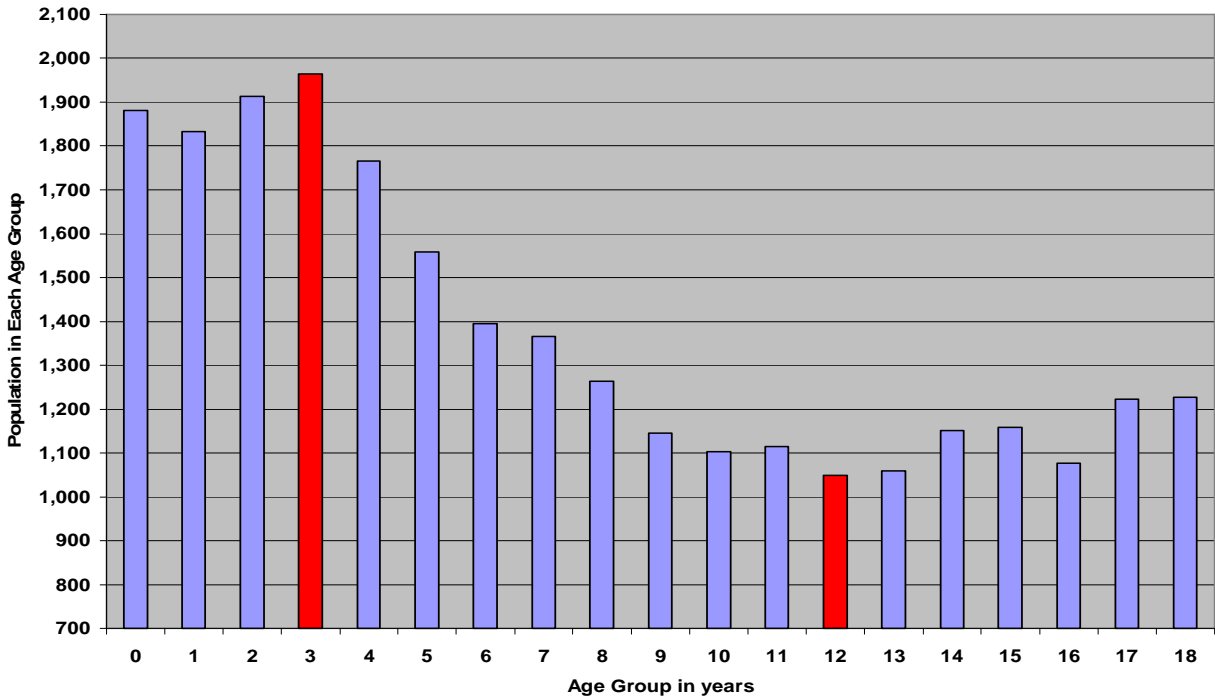
**Figure 3. Comparison of Youth Population: 2006 Census**



There is further food for thought for education and other planners when the profile of the youth population is examined in detail, as shown in **Figure 4** below. (This data is presented in tabular form at **Appendix B**.)

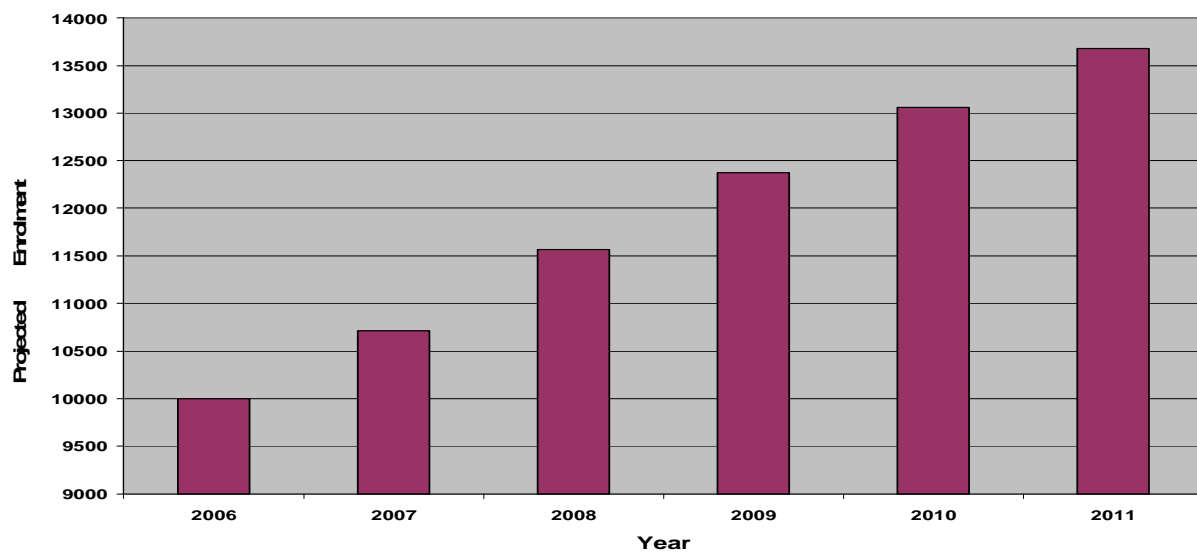
While the number of children in the 9 to 18 years age range hovers at or below 1,200, there is a sharp rise in the younger cohort, many of whom are in the pre-school years. There were 1,559 five year olds, rising to a peak of 1,964 three year olds. The most startling statistic in this data is perhaps a comparison of the number of twelve year olds with the number of three year olds, which reveals an increase of 87%.

**Figure 4. Youth population of Dublin 15 by year group**



The implications of this rate of growth for educational services is staggering. Other things being equal, these figures would create a demand for an extra 3,680 primary school places over a period of five years, as shown in **Figure 5** below. This data is based on projected numbers of children of school-going age, derived from census figures. These projections are presented in numerical format in **Appendix C**. With a notional class size of 27 pupils per class, this would create a demand for an additional 136 primary school classes over the period, with a significant knock-on requirement for additional teachers, building and other resources.

**Figure 5. Projected Increases in Primary School-Age Population: 2006 - 2011**



*Uneven distribution of population increase*

What the census data clearly indicates is that population growth is unevenly distributed; there are significant differences between the more 'mature' areas closer to the Phoenix Park and more recently developed areas in the western end of Dublin 15. Additionally, more recent decisions by Fingal County Council to increase housing densities is having a more dramatic impact on housing developments closer to the County Meath border. If further evidence were needed that, from an inclusion perspective, more coherent planning of amenities, services etc., including housing policy, is an urgent necessity, these figures are utterly convincing. However, it is not just growth in population that is significant, diversity within this 'new' population is also dramatic, thus requiring unusual and sustained attention if community integration, stability, sustainability and harmonious diversity are to be planned for appropriately.

## Ethnic diversity in Dublin 15

The 2006 census provides information in relation to the ethnic or cultural background of those enumerated. These data is broken down by each ED. The categories into which those completing this section of the census placed themselves, as well as the percentage within each category, are shown in **Table 3** below.

**Table 3. Population of Dublin 15 by ethnic or cultural background as reported in 2006 census**

Cultural or ethnic Background	Number in the category	As a % of Total
White Irish	65,383	73%
White Irish Traveller	644	1%
Other White	10,046	11%
Black or Black Irish	5,481	6%
Asian or Asian Irish	3,371	4%
Other	2,253	3%
Non-Styled	2,865	3%
Total	90,043	100%

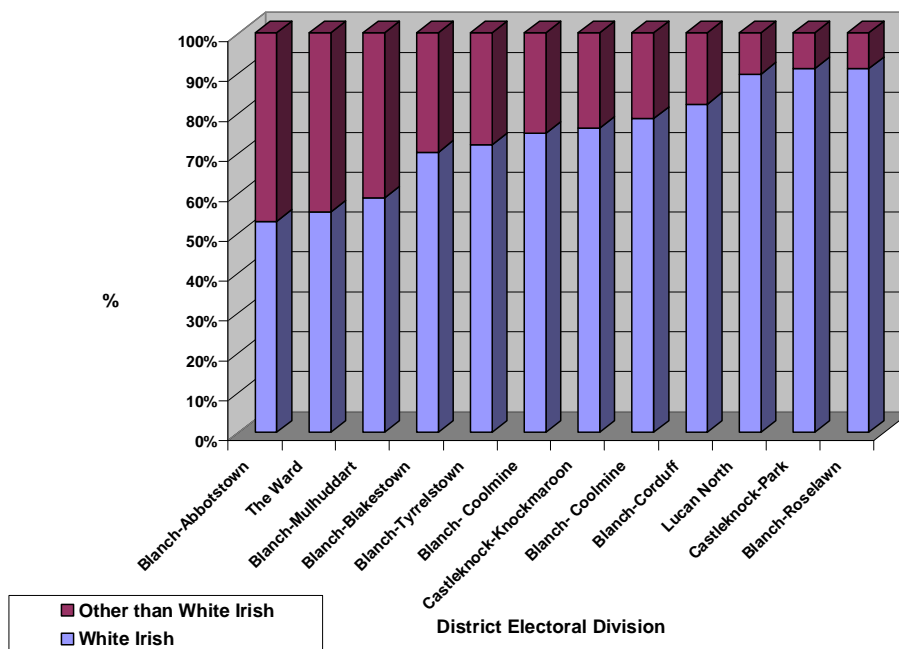
**65,383** people, or 73% of the Dublin 15 population are reported as White Irish, while **24,660** or 27% are reported in other categories, including 1% as White Irish Traveller.

A full breakdown of this data in relation to each of the EDs is contained in **Appendix D**. For each ED, a percentage of the population within each ethnic/cultural category is provided.

These data were further analysed into categories of *White Irish* and *Other than White Irish*. The number of people in each of these categories as a percentage of the total figure is given in **Figure 6** below.

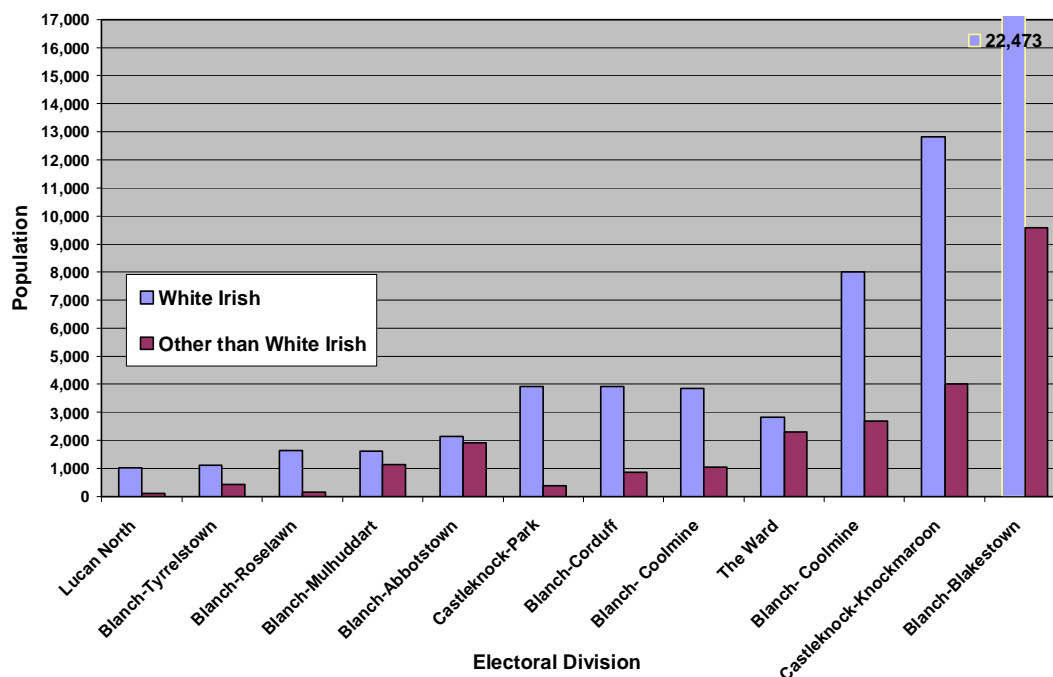
The percentage categorised as *White Irish* is lowest- at between 50% and 60% - in Abbotstown, The Ward and Mulhuddart EDs. The highest percentage of *White Irish* is reported in the EDs of Corduff, Lucan North, Park and Roselawn, which are all at levels of over 80%.

**Figure 6. Percentage of population of Dublin 15 reported as 'White Irish' or 'Other than White Irish' in 2006 Census**



The distribution of the **24,660** 'other than White Irish' population within the Dublin 15 Electoral Divisions is presented in table format in **Appendix E** and is illustrated graphically in **Figure 7** below.

**Figure 7: Population reported as 'White Irish' or 'Other than White Irish' in 2006 Census**



In numerical terms, the number of people in the *Other than White Irish* category exceeds 1,000 in seven of the twelve EDs. Four EDs recorded figures in excess of 2,000. They are The Ward, Coolmine, Knockmaroon and Blakestown EDs, details of which are given in **Table 4** below.

**Table 4: Number of *Other than White Irish* in Electoral Divisions**

<b>Electoral Division</b>	<b>No. in Other than White Irish Category</b>
<b>The Ward</b>	<b>2,301</b>
<b>Coolmine</b>	<b>2,692</b>
<b>Knockmaroon</b>	<b>4,023</b>
<b>Blakestown</b>	<b>9,578</b>

What is evident from these census returns is that from, a schooling perspective, there is a concentration of ethnic diversity in *some* areas of Dublin 15 much more than in others. It is a continuation of population growth in general, as well as its ethnic composition that has become a major challenge, cause for concern and controversy regarding enrolment and enrolment policies as well as to the spirit if not the letter of the Education Act (1998).

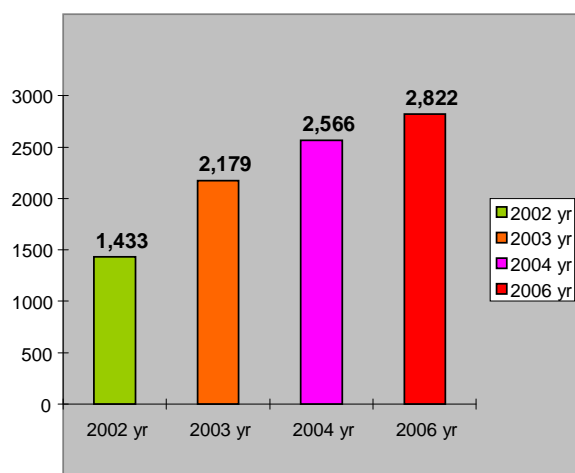
## Socio-economic profile of Dublin 15: property development and demographic shifts

It is generally accepted that Dublin 15 is the fastest growing area in the greater Dublin metropolitan conglomeration. More recent policy changes by Fingal County Council regarding housing densities, and the property boom generally has resulted in a significant proportion of new private housing development being available in the rental sector. This confluence of market forces has contributed significantly but disproportionately to the concentration of recent immigrants in Dublin 15, with considerable variation from east to west, where densities and investment properties are most concentrated in the latter.

### *Private rent supplement*

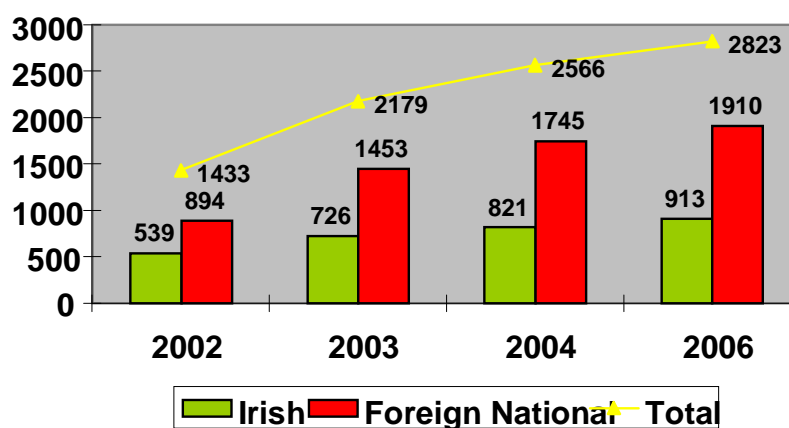
Within Dublin 15, the number of private houses that are given over to the rental sector has increased significantly in recent years. The number of tenants in these rented homes qualifying for Private Rent Supplement has also grown significantly, as **Figure 8** below demonstrates.

**Figure 8. People in receipt of private rent supplement in Dublin 15, 2002 - 2006**



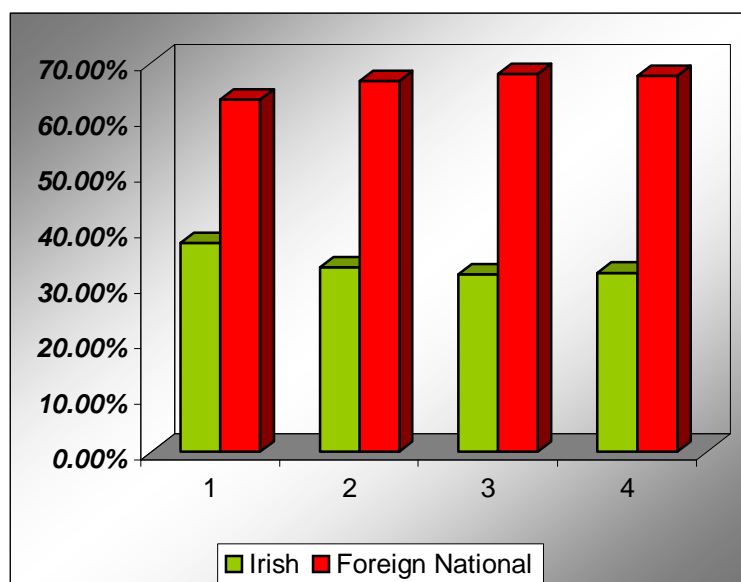
The number of people qualifying for rent relief in Dublin 15 has *almost doubled* in the four years between 2002 and 2006, from **1,433** to **2,822**. Analysis of these data, carried out by the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP),<sup>i</sup> is shown at **Figure 9** below.

**Figure 9. Irish and foreign nationals claiming rent supplement 2002 - 2006**



The highest number claiming private rent supplement was recorded in 2006; of **2,823** claimants, **1,910** were foreign nationals while **913** were Irish citizens. The ratio of foreign to Irish nationals claiming rent relief has been fairly consistent between 2002 and 2006. This is demonstrated in **Figure 10** below.

**Figure 10. Percentage of Irish and foreign nationals claiming rent supplement 2002 - 2006**



An analysis of the country of origin of the foreign nationals claiming private rent supplement in 2006 was also carried out by the BAP. It divided these tenants into geographic regions.

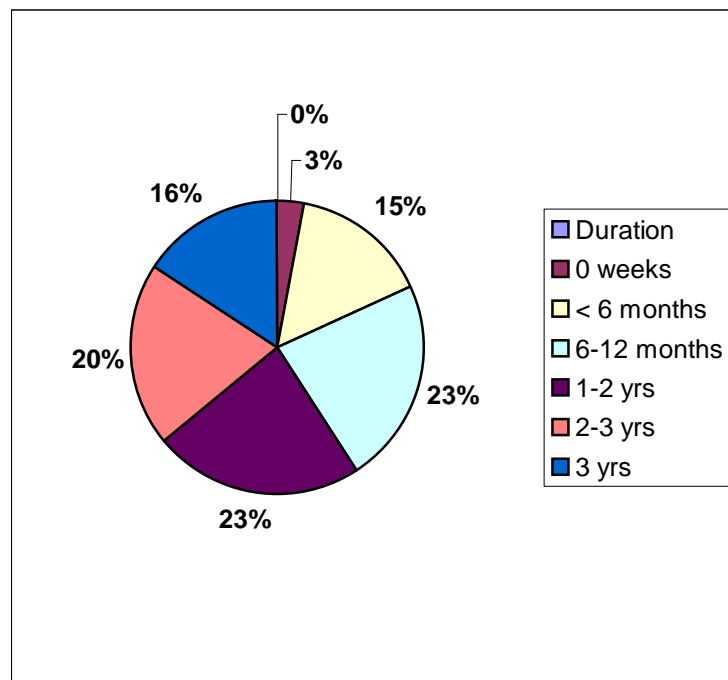
This data is presented in **Table 5** below. **1,165** of the **1,910** claimants were from Africa, representing 61% of the total number of foreign nationals claiming the supplement.

**Table 5: Foreign Nationals claiming Rent Supplement in 2006 by Geographic Region**

<b>Country/Region of origin of Tenant</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>As a % of total</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>1,165</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Russia</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>New World</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Middle East</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Far East</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>EU Accession</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>East Europe</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total Foreign-National</b>	<b>1,910</b>	

Analysis of the duration of claim for rent supplement by foreign nationals is shown in **Figure 11** below. It indicates that only 16% have been claiming rent supplement for three years, with 74% claiming for a shorter duration. However, it is unclear from this data whether these tenants remain in Dublin 15 and do not claim rent supplement or whether they move, and claim supplement, elsewhere.

**Figure 11. Duration of rent supplement claim by foreign nationals in Dublin 15**



The evidence points to internal migration, and the transitory nature of this population is inimical to community building and continuity while this is also disruptive of schooling and the educational wellbeing of the children affected. It has serious and often unquantifiable impact on teachers, principals and the stable school-going population, including parents' perceptions of the local school that, as the report indicates later, sometimes results in the migration of the more stable and 'permanent' population. This trend, if allowed to continue, will almost inevitably lead to ghettoisation with negative consequences for community integration, inclusion and diversity.

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<sup>i</sup> Data in relation to private rent supplement were provided by the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Blanchardstown area partnership.



# CHAPTER IV

## CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND PRIMARY SCHOOL REALITIES: DUBLIN 15

### Introduction

This chapter builds on the general demographic picture provided in chapter three by providing a detailed analysis of several aspects of current primary school realities, and how the more general population trends are reflected within and across school communities. In order to do this in a structured and accessible manner, chapter four is divided into seven sections. While each section provides an important piece of the complex mosaic of school realities, the intention is that their impact be cumulative. These realities are elaborated on further in subsequent chapters when the perspectives of different groups are added to the picture that emerges here.

- Section one describes the number of schools, their patronage and type
- Section two details enrolment patterns, including the ethnic composition of school communities
- Section three indicates the teacher staffing complements in each school, and the proportions of staff deployed in classrooms, learning and language support
- Section four focuses on the details of language support and how it currently operates
- Section five documents the extent of pupil attrition
- Section six develops the attrition issue in more detail by conducting an analysis of attrition over a period of four years, and suggests that a pattern of 'white flight' is emerging, and
- Section seven documents the religious identities of the pupil population.

### Diversity in primary school provision in Dublin 15

In the 2006/7 school year, there were 25 primary schools in Dublin 15. These are listed at **Table 6** below. They are interesting in their diversity; in terms of their structure, their patronage and the socio-economic profile of the families in their immediate vicinity.

There are four Junior Schools with four corresponding Senior Schools, located in Roselawn, Corduff, Mountview and Blakestown. All of these schools, with the exception of Roselawn, are designated as disadvantaged. The remaining seventeen schools are vertical in structure, accommodating children from Junior Infants to Sixth class. Within this group of schools, there

is continuing diversity. Scoil and Cheathrar Álainn, Ladyswell is also a designated disadvantaged school. Two schools have a single-sex intake- Scoil Bhríde Boys and Scoil Bhríde Girls National Schools located in Blanchardstown village.

Five of the vertical schools are developing schools. These are schools that have been more recently established and have not yet reached full capacity. They have been established in the more rapidly growing population centres of Dublin 15, generally in the western end of the area. They are: St. Patrick's N.S. Diswellstown, Tyrrellstown Educate Together N.S., Mary, Mother of Hope N.S. in Littlepace, Castaheany Educate Together N.S., Ongar, and St. Benedict's N.S., Ongar.

Three of these schools are located on the same campus in Littlepace- Mary, Mother of Hope N.S., Castaheany Educate Together N.S. and St. Benedict's N.S. Delays in the acquisition of sites, shortage of suitable land and planning difficulties have meant that these co-location arrangements have been in place for three years and will continue for a further two years.

Tyrrellstown Educate Together National School opened initially on the Mary, Mother of Hope campus in Littlepace in September 2004, moved to Tyrrellstown in 2005 and has operated on a split campus between Tyrrellstown and Blanchardstown Hospital during the 2006/'07 school year. It will occupy a single site in Tyrrellstown in the 2007/08 school year.

Twenty-one of the twenty five primary schools (84%) are under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. These include the single Gaelscoil in Dublin 15., Scoil Oilbhéir, which is located in Coolmine. Castleknock N.S. is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. There are three Educate Together National schools, two of which operate under the patronage of Educate Together patron body and one under a local patron body. A new primary school, Scoil Choilm, opened in Diswellstown in September, 2007 under the temporary patronage of the Archdiocese of Dublin. As this school was not open in the 2006/7 school year, it does not feature in the following sections of the report.

The diversity in structure of the primary schools in Dublin 15 illustrated above is matched by the diversity in size, enrolment intake and composition of these schools. This is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

Table 6. Primary schools in Dublin 15 in 2006/2007 school year

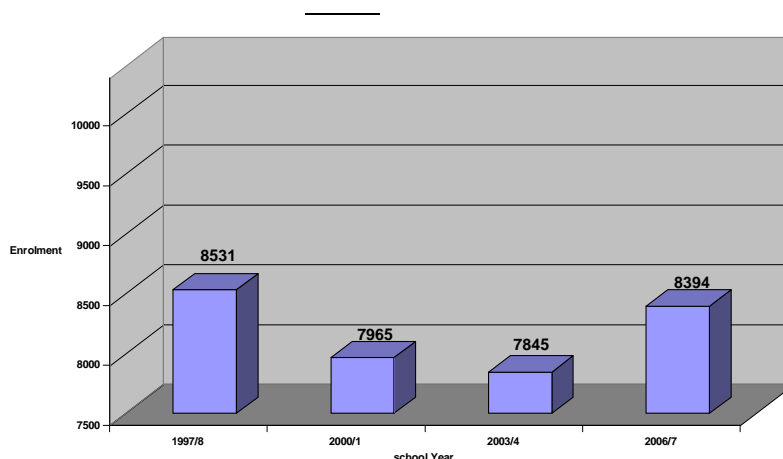
<i>School</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Patron</i>
<b><i>Junior Schools</i></b>		
St. Francis Xavier J.N.S., Roselawn		Catholic Archbishop of Dublin (CAD)
St. Philip's J.N.S., Mountview	Disadvantaged (DEIS Band One) (DEIS-1)	CAD
St. Patrick's J.N.S., Corduff	DEIS-1	CAD
Scoil Mhuire J.N.S., Blakestown	DEIS-1	CAD
<b><i>Senior Schools</i></b>		
St. Francis Xavier S.N.S., Roselawn		CAD
St. Philip's S.N.S., Mountview	DEIS-1	CAD
St. Patrick's S.N.S., Corduff	DEIS-1	CAD
Scoil Mhuire S.N.S., Blakestown	DEIS-1	CAD
<b><i>Vertical Schools</i></b>		
Scoil Thomáis, Laurel Lodge		CAD
Mulhuddart N.S.		CAD
Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa, Huntstown		CAD
Scoil Bríde Boys' N.S., Blancharsdtown		CAD
Scoil Bríde Girls' N.S., Blancharsdtown		CAD
Scoil Oilibhéir, Coolmine		CAD
St. Brigid's N.S., Castleknock		CAD
St. Ciaran's N.S., Hartstown		CAD
St. Mochta's N.S., Clonsilla		CAD
Castleknock N.S.		Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin (Col)
Castleknock Educate Together N.S.		Dublin 15 Educate Together Association
St. Patrick's N.S., Diswellstown	Developing	CAD
Mary, Mother of Hope N.S., Littlepace	Developing	CAD
St. Benedict's N.S., Ongar (located temporarily on Littlepace site)	Developing	CAD
Castaheany Educate Together N.S. (located temporarily on Littlepace site)	Developing	Educate Together (ET)
Tyrrellstown Educate Together N.S.	Developing	ET
Scoil An Cheathrar Álainn, Mulhuddart	DEIS-1	CAD

## Enrolment patterns in Dublin 15 primary schools

### *Declining enrolment in established schools: 1997 - 2003*

**Figure 12** below charts the change in enrolment in the *established* primary schools in Dublin 15 from the 1997/98 to the 2006/2007 school year. These figures *exclude* the developing primary schools that opened since 2000. Consistent with the census figures that showed a decline in population for some areas of Dublin 15, there was a *decline* of **8%** in enrolments in the period 1997 to 2003 in the more established schools. The enrolment in these schools recovered in the period 2003/4 to 2006/7, as the population of Dublin 15 rose sharply and the newer population centres struggled to cope with the demand for primary places.

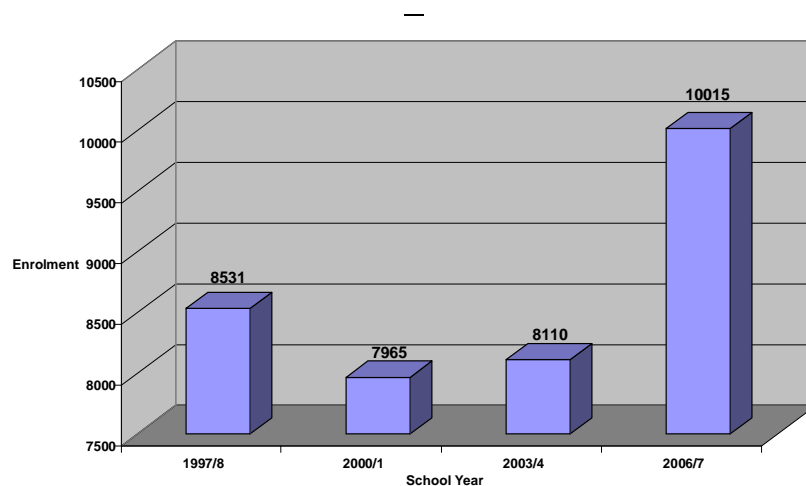
**Figure 22. Changes in enrolment in established primary schools: 1997/8 to 2006/7**



### *Surge in demand for primary places: 2003 - 2007*

The surge in demand for primary school places can be seen clearly in **Figure 13** below, which charts the increase in the primary school population across ***all*** Dublin 15 schools, including the developing schools, in the period 1997/8 to 2006/7. Again, the most noteworthy feature is a dramatic increase of **1,905** in enrolment between 2003/4 and 2006/7. This represents a 23.4% increase in pupil numbers in just three years.

**Figure 13. Changes in enrolment in all Dublin 15 primary schools 1997/8 to 2006/7**



The above representation clearly demonstrates just how dramatic the explosion has been in the school age population. Such dramatic shifts require equally dramatic responses, both from a policy and practice perspective. The sub-section immediately following indicates in a more detailed manner the impact of these massive demographic shifts on enrolments in the first instance and maps this increasing diversity as it impacts at the point of entry. Subsequent chapters document in detail their impact on the daily lives of learners, teachers, parents and communities.

#### *Enrolment of Dublin 15 schools 2006/7 school year*

*Annual Statistical Returns:* The *Annual Statistical Returns* are submitted annually by all National Schools in the state to the Department of Education and Science. In these returns, the Department requires schools to provide diverse and detailed information in relation to:

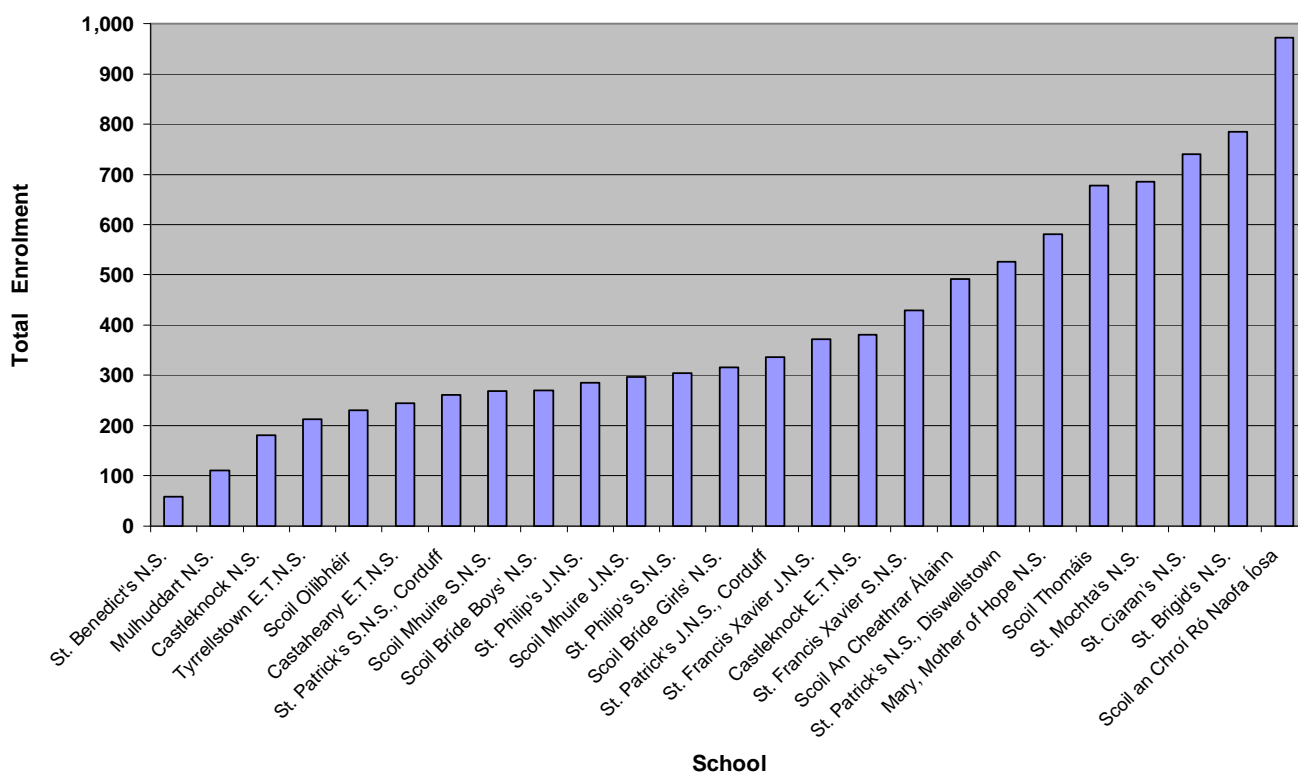
- total enrolment in the school,
- the number of pupils in each class level,
- the number of teachers in different roles in the school,
- the number of pupils entering and leaving the school in the course of one year
- the number of traveller children
- the number of children in special classes
- the number of children receiving Learning Support

All data relates to the numbers present on the last school day of September of the school year in question. This date is of the utmost importance for school principals. It is the total enrolment registered by schools on this date that determines capitation payments and teacher allocations for the following school year, amongst other things. It will be argued later that given such dramatic shifts, staffing allocation based on the previous year may be too slow a mechanism to enable schools to respond proactively to emerging needs and a more flexible allocation may be necessary. The following sub-sections are constructed by extracting data from the Annual Returns submitted by schools on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 and relate to the most recent school year – 2006/07.

#### *Total enrolment across all school*

The total enrolment across all schools is provided in **Figure 14** below. This graphic shows clearly the diversity across school sizes, with enrolments ranging from **58** to **966**.

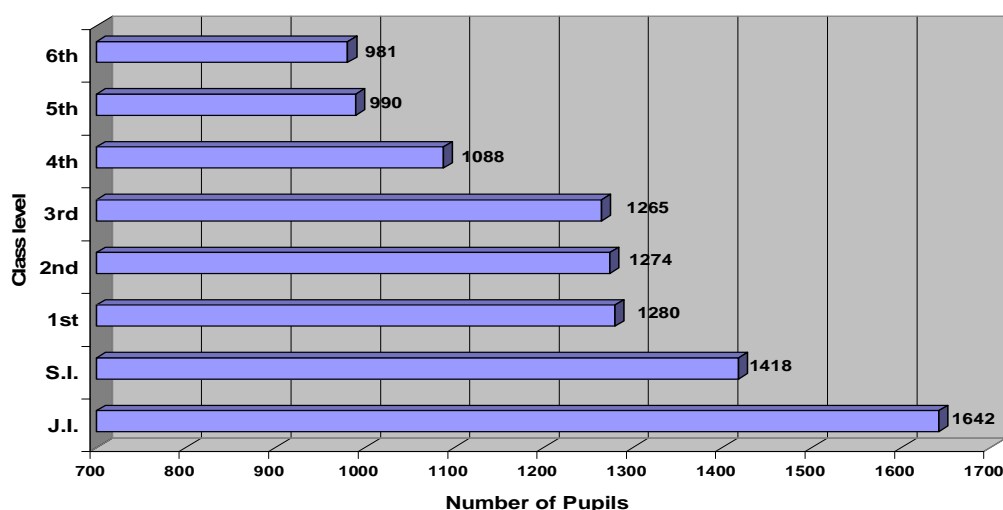
**Figure 14. Total enrolment in Dublin 15 primary schools 2006/7**



### *Total enrolment at each class level*

**Figure 15** below indicates the total enrolment at each class level for the 2006/7 school year, from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class. It shows in vivid detail the dramatic increase in pupil numbers in the Dublin 15 primary schools registered over recent years, as represented in the census figures earlier in the report. It shows that there were **981** pupils in 6<sup>th</sup> class, while the number in Junior Infants was **1,642**. This represents an increase of **67%** in the number in Junior Infants compared to that in Sixth class.

**Figure 15. Total enrolment by classgroup 2006/7**



### **Teaching staff for Dublin 15 Primary Schools**

#### *Mainstream classes*

The Department of Education and Science determined the number of class teachers assigned to a primary school by reference to the school's valid enrolment on 30 September of the previous school year. In the 2006/7 school year, the staffing schedule allowed an additional mainstream class teacher for every **28** pupils in the school on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2005. This figure is commonly referred to as the pupil-teacher ratio. In the case of developing schools, where new classes commence year on year, such schools are allocated additional teachers on the basis of the enrolment *projected* for the following school-year.

There are special staffing arrangements for designated disadvantaged schools, which are in *Band One* of the *DEIS* (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) initiative. These are schools deemed by the DES to be the 'urban/town primary schools with the highest

concentrations of disadvantage.<sup>ii</sup> In these schools, maximum class sizes may be reduced to 20:1 in all junior classes (junior infants through 2<sup>nd</sup> class) and 24:1 in all senior classes (3<sup>rd</sup> class through 6<sup>th</sup> class). There were a total of 2,245 children in disadvantaged schools in Dublin 15, as indicated in **Table 7**.

This table also shows the average class sizes in Dublin 15 primary schools in the 2006/7 school year, as documented in the October Statistical Returns, 2006. It separates the schools into disadvantaged (DEIS Band One), developing schools and all other schools. It is evident that the disadvantaged schools have an average class-size of 21 pupils, while the developing schools have 28 pupils and others 29. Overall, the average class size in all Dublin 15 primary schools is **27**.

**Table 7 Average class size in Dublin 15 primary schools**

	Class teachers	Total Enrolment	Average Class Size
Disadvantaged schools	105	2,245	21
Developing schools	58	1,621	28
Other schools	212	6,149	29
<b>Total For all Dn.15 Primary Schools</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>10015</b>	<b>27</b>

#### *Total teacher numbers*

The total number of teachers in all categories in Dublin 15 schools in September, 2006 was **580**. A breakdown of how these teachers are allocated is provided in **Appendix F**. With a total enrolment of **10,015** and **580** teachers in these schools, there is an average of one teacher per **17.3** pupils across all schools and all teaching roles.

Giving the changing nature of the school going population, the provision of language support has been an important policy response at the level of the school for learners whose mother tongue is other than English. Attention will now turn to the data in relation to English Language Support.

## ***English language support (ELS)***

### *Background*

In order to qualify for English Language Support (ELS) assistance from the DES, schools must submit a detailed application form indicating the language proficiency of the children for whom they are requesting assistance. This form, which the Department of Education and Science continues to title '*Language Proficiency of Non-National Pupils*', requests schools to give the following details in relation to each pupil:

- name, date of birth, enrolment date in the school
- country of origin, year of arrival in Ireland
- class in which now enrolled, English Language level
- length of time the pupil has received language support in this or any school in Ireland

In relation to English language proficiency, schools are asked to indicate the level of competence of each child using one of three codes:

1. Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English.
2. Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication.
3. Has competent communication skills in English.

The DES considers pupils in category 1. or 2. above as eligible for ELS and do not include category 3 children when calculating ELS entitlement of individual schools. It is interesting to note that, in the past, the DES refused ELS to pupils who were born in Ireland, regardless of their need- hence, the peculiar headings titled 'country of origin' and 'year of arrival in Ireland'. While this is no longer the practice, the headings remain in the Department's official application form.

This comment draws attention to the fact that the manner in which data are generated has enormous consequence for subsequent provision. First, the term 'non-national' is no longer acceptable. Second, by asking about country of origin only, the implicit assumption is that those born in Ireland to immigrant parents are fluent in English language, or at least are not even to be considered eligible for language support. Subsequent evidence will clearly indicate that more sensitive data gathering instruments are necessary if the complexity of realities encountered by schools are to be captured and appropriate policies and practices created to meet identified and emergent needs.

Furthermore, until now, access to ELS has been available for a maximum of two years, regardless of the English language competency of the child at the end of the two year period. This caused significant difficulty for schools- these will be considered later in the report. However, the DES has acknowledged that this situation is unsustainable and has relaxed this requirement, to an extent.

#### *English language support in Dublin 15 schools*

As part of the research undertaken to compile this report, schools were asked to provide a copy of the application for ELS support submitted for the 2006/2007 school-year. All schools complied with this request. The following sub-section has been generated through analysis of these data.. It should be noted that the data relates to those children who are within Category 1. and 2. only of language proficiency, consistent with DES guidelines.

#### *Total number of ELS pupils in Dublin 15 schools*

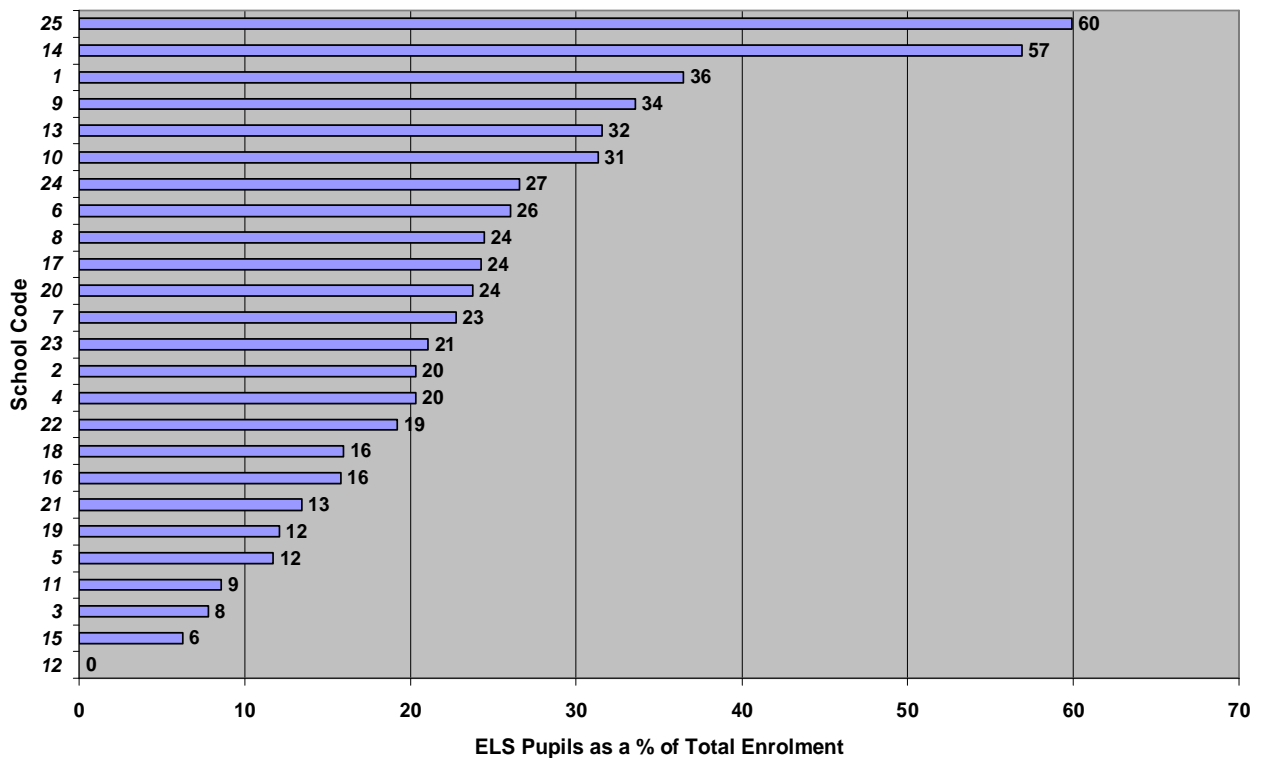
The total number of pupils from each school who fell within Category 1. and 2. for English Language Support in the Dublin 15 schools is provided in **Appendix G**. There are **2,084** pupils in the Dublin 15 primary schools who are in Category 1. and 2. and therefore are deemed to be entitled to English Language Support. This represents **21%** of the total primary school population included in the study. There are no pupils who fall into the ELS category in one school, the only Gaelscoil in Dublin 15, Scoil Olibhéir.

It is interesting to compare this figure to national statistics. The DES estimates that there are **28,000** students in the schools whose first language is neither English nor Irish. These are subdivided as **20,000** at primary and **8,000** at post-primary level. While it is not entirely clear from the DES data whether all the **20,000** pupils fall into Category 1 and Category 2, it is useful nevertheless to compare the number of ELS pupils in Dublin 15 to the total DES estimate of ELS pupils in the country:

***Statistically, it would appear that over 10% of all ELS pupils in the country are based in 24 primary schools in Dublin 15.***

The number of ELS pupils as a percentage of total enrolment is illustrated in **Figure 16** below. There are a number of interesting features arising from this data, which will now be considered.

**Figure 16. English language support pupils as a % of total enrolment**



*(This Table has been anonymized, with school name replaced by school code)*

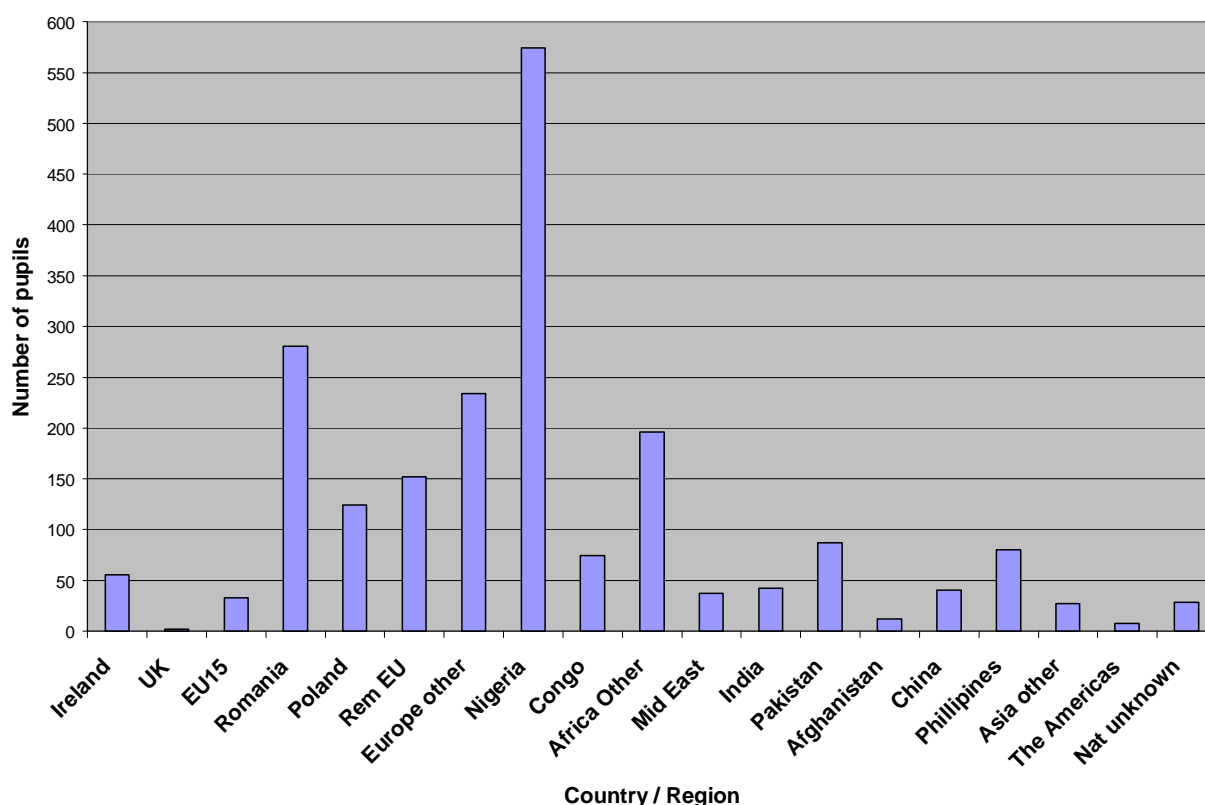
- The number of ELS pupils is below **20%** in ten schools.
- There are a further nine schools in the **20%** to **30%** range.
- In six schools, more than **30%** of the enrolment is comprised of ELS pupils, with two of these schools exceeding **50%**.

This is further evidence that, within Dublin 15, which is significantly above the national average in terms of the diversity of its primary school population, within this area, there are dramatic differences also that call for much more flexibility in policy provision than a 'one fit for all' actually allows.

#### *Country of origin of ELS pupils*

The country of origin of the 2,084 pupils in receipt of ELS support was determined from DES official forms and then collated as part of this research. The children were then grouped into country or geographical region, depending on the numbers in each category. This is shown graphically in **Figure 17** below.

**Figure 17. Country / region of origin of ELS Pupils in Dublin 15**

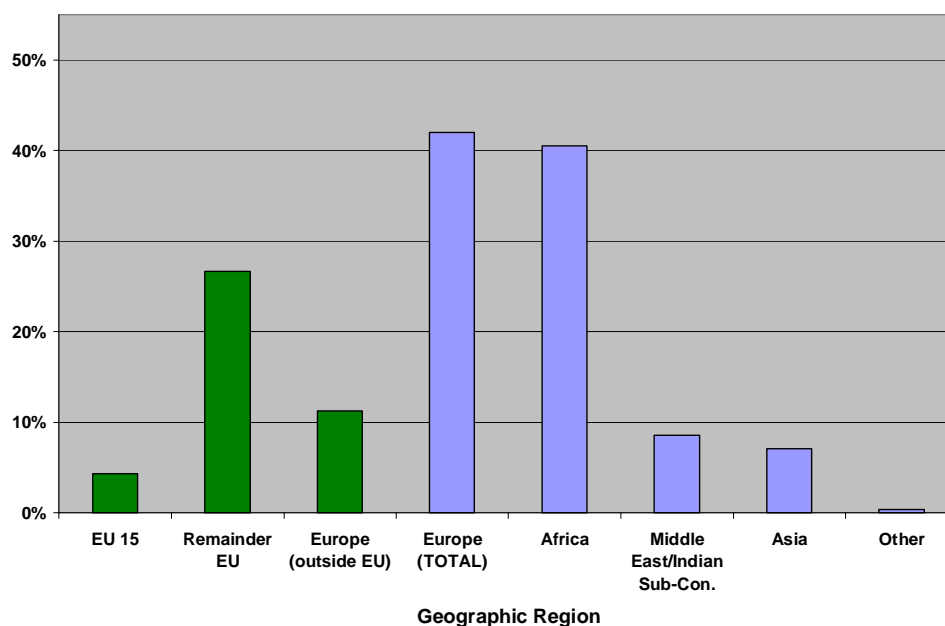


The highest representation is Nigerian nationals, who account for **574** of the **2084**, or 28% of the total. Romanians are the second largest group, with **280** or 13%. A breakdown of these figures is shown as **Appendix H**.

**Figure 18** below shows the broad geographical regions from where these pupils originate. The percentage of Europeans and Africans is almost identical, at 42% and 40% respectively. It is interesting to note that within the European cohort, **556** pupils come from the 12 accession states. This represents 27% of the total number of ELS pupils.

However, while ELS paints an important part of the primary schooling picture, a very important and significant element of the challenge of language teaching and learning is lack of continuity due to high rates of attrition. Attention is now focused on this issue.

**Figure 18. Percentage of ELS pupils from major geographical regions**



### **Pupil attrition: high volume of movement in and out of Dublin 15 schools**

A feature of many primary schools in Dublin15 is the high rate of movement of pupils in and out of schools during the school year. Traditionally, a vertical primary school would expect to enrol children at Junior Infants and maintain this cohort over the eight years of primary school, until these children leave at the end of sixth class. In this scenario, schools can predict the number of children entering and leaving the school from year to year and can plan for their educational needs accordingly. In the case of Junior schools, children were enrolled in Junior Infants, and these children moved on to a Senior school at the end of second class. In the same way, Senior schools enrolled children at third class and retained them until the end of sixth class.

In the normal course of events, one would expect some movement from year to year as families move into or out of a neighbourhood. However, there was a general expectation and pattern of stability and, from this, a sense of predictability and continuity in how schools were managed. School principals had a level of certainty in planning staffing numbers, teacher allocation and special needs requirements, among other issues. In turn, the DES built a framework of procedures around teacher and resource allocation based on these assumptions.

However, in the primary schools in the Dublin 15, there is strong evidence of a significant movement of pupils into and out of schools, year on year. This is an issue that school principals and teachers have raised on numerous occasions in the course of this research

### *Analysis of school leavers*

As part of the Annual Returns, schools are asked to complete a section detailing the number of school leavers from ordinary classes in the school in the previous school-year. This data is referred to as *Table II*. Analysis of the schools leaver data in relation to all Dublin 15 primary schools 2006/7 identified the number of pupils leaving schools between 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2005 and 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.

The data were re-configured for statistical purposes, as follows:

1. The total number of pupils leaving each school
2. The total number transferring to post-primary, i.e. leaving at 6<sup>th</sup> class

Of the remainder of school leavers, data were further divided into:

3. The total number transferring to other primary schools, i.e. leaving before 6<sup>th</sup> class
4. The total number emigrating
5. The total number of children whose destination is unknown

Junior Schools were *excluded* from this analysis, as *all* of their school leavers would fall into categories 3 to 5 and none of their leavers would transfer to post-primary. These data below relate to the twenty-one Vertical or senior schools in Dublin 15.

A summary of the total data for these twenty-one schools is shown at **Table 8** below. It indicates that, of the **1,414** pupils leaving school in the period, **518** left schools from standards lower than 6<sup>th</sup> class. This figure is equivalent to an astonishing 58% of those transferring to post-primary schools. Consequently, the primary schools in Dublin 15 are not only losing pupils at the end of 6<sup>th</sup> class, as is the norm, but are also losing more than half that number again from earlier standards in the course of one school year, with attendant disruptions, discontinuities, and frustrations for teachers and principals.

**Table 8. Destination of primary school leavers 2005/6**

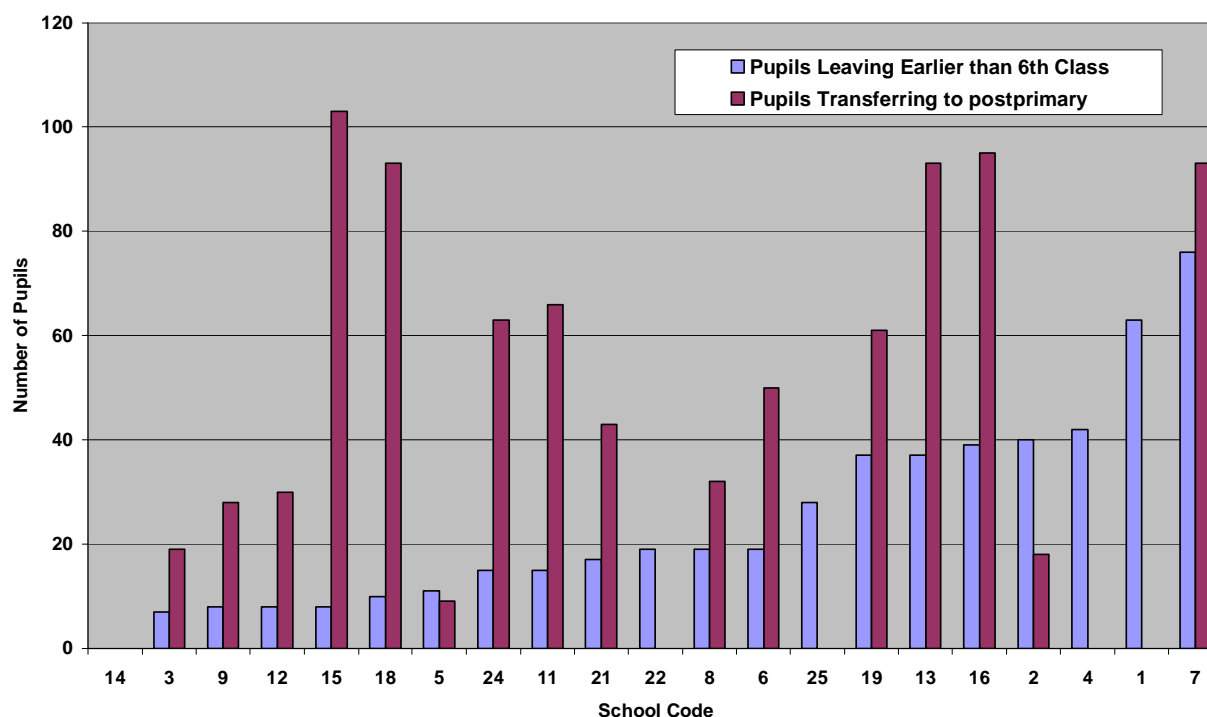
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of pupils</b>
<b>Pupils transferring to other Primary schools within the state</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>Pupils who emigrated</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Pupils whose destination is unknown</b>	<b>104</b>
<b><i>Total Pupils leaving from standards earlier than 6<sup>th</sup> class</i></b>	<b>518</b>
<b>Total transferring to Post-Primary</b>	<b>896</b>
<b>Total number of leavers</b>	<b>1,414</b>
<b><i>Number leaving from earlier standards as a % of number transferring to post-primary (518/896)</i></b>	<b>58%</b>

The graphic in **Figure 19** below compares the numbers leaving at 6<sup>th</sup> class with the numbers leaving from earlier standards for each of the 21 vertical or senior schools. It shows that in eight schools, the number of pupils leaving from standards other than sixth class was higher than 28.

***This represents a loss of more than one full class of pupils in the course of the year.*** In the case of one school, the number of pupils leaving from standards other than sixth class was 76, representing a loss equivalent to almost three class-groups. In the case of the developing schools, no pupils transferred from 6<sup>th</sup> class and yet the number of pupils leaving these schools in the course of the school year is high.

This haemorrhaging of pupils from the earlier standards has a major impact on schools, which will be given consideration later. One of the most critical issues presented to schools is the need to replace the pupils who have left with new pupils- many of whom are on waiting lists- in order to maintain class sizes and staffing levels.

**Figure 19: Pupils leaving primary school from 6th class and earlier standards**



*(This Table has been anonymized, with school name replaced by school code)*

Attention is now focused on the number of new entrants to schools, and shows some equally stark statistics in relation to pupil movement.

#### *New entrants to Dublin 15 schools*

Evidence presented here is almost a mirror image of the evidence immediately above in relation to the level at which pupils have entered the schools in Dublin 15; Junior Infants and other standards. Again, it is important to note that in the traditional, predictable school model, pupils join the school at Junior Infants and remain with the school up to sixth class for vertical schools or up to second class in junior schools. However the data for Dublin 15 schools again challenges this assumption.

In the Annual Returns, schools also submit data detailing the number of new entrants to ordinary classes in the school in the previous school-year. This data is referred to in *Table I*.

An analysis of the new entrants data in relation to all Dublin 15 primary schools 2006/7 indicates the number of pupils entering the schools between 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2005 and 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2006. These data were re-configured for the purposes of this research into the following categories:

1. The total number of new entrants to the school
2. The total number new entrants who started in Junior Infants

Of the remainder of new entrants, the data was further divided into:

3. The total number entering into Senior Infants who had **not** been to school before
4. The total number transferring from other national schools (within the state)
5. The total number of children coming to school from schools outside the state

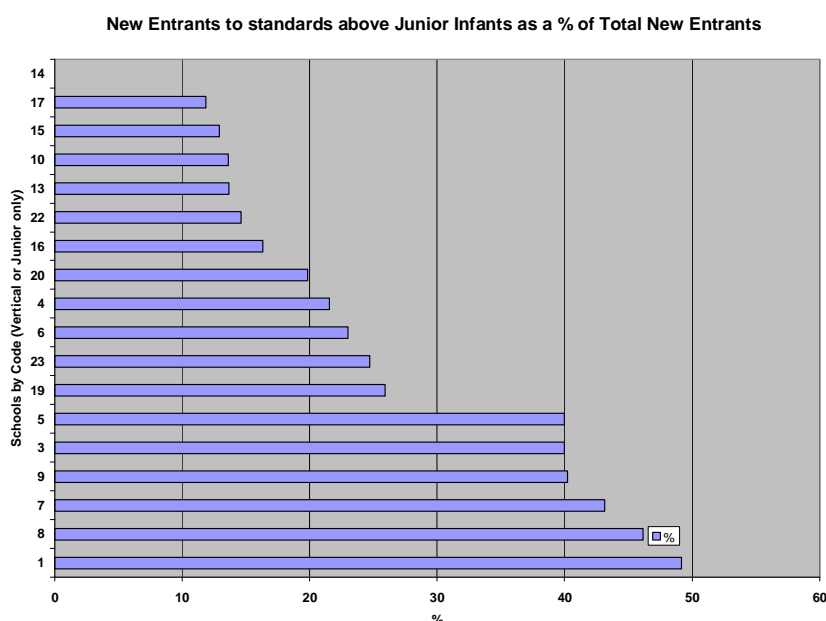
Senior Schools were *excluded* from this analysis since as all of their new entrants fall into categories 3 to 5 and none would be Junior Infants. The data below relates to the twenty-one Vertical or Junior schools in Dublin 15.

**Table 9** below provides a summary of the data for these twenty-one schools. It shows that of the **1,964** pupils entering school in the period, **491** joined standards higher than Junior Infants, i.e. from Senior Infants up to 6<sup>th</sup> class. Thus *one in four* new entrants to these schools, or 25%, started in standards higher than Junior Infants. These data are represented graphically in **Figure 20** below. They confound more traditional patterns with enormous consequence for classroom practice and the workload of principals, resource and language support teachers.

**Table 9. Analysis of new entrants to junior and vertical Schools**

Category	Pupils
Pupils transferring from other primary schools to standards higher than Junior Infants	316
Pupils transferring from primary schools outside the state to standards higher than Junior Infants	164
Senior Infants- first time to in school	11
<b>Total Pupils entering school to standards higher than Junior Infants</b>	<b>491</b>
<b>Total entering to Junior Infants</b>	<b>1 473</b>
<b>Total number of entrants</b>	<b>1 964</b>
<b>Number of new entrants to higher standards as a % of total entrants (491/1964)</b>	<b>25%</b>

**Figure 20. New entrants to standards above junior infants as a percentage of all new entrants**



*(This Table has been anonymized, with school name replaced by school code)*

Since the 'migration' of pupils in the course of the school year is a significant undesirable pattern for a variety of educational reasons, it is appropriate to investigate in more detail the impact of this transience on school communities over time.

## Tracking the movement of children in and out of Dublin 15 schools

### *Tracking exercise*

The aim was to explore the numbers of children leaving schools over a four year period, and to examine the ethnic background both of those leaving and those joining the schools. It was decided to focus on the children who were in Second class in the June, 2007. These children started school in the September 2003. Thus the tracking exercise gives the opportunity to examine the composition of these classes over a period of four years.

The data presented in **Table 10** below relate to **37** class groups across fourteen Junior and Vertical schools located in Dublin 15. These data indicate that **175** pupils left in the period between September, 2003 and June, 2007, representing a loss of **18%** of the initial enrolment. A slightly larger number of **192** pupils joined these classes in the period.

**Table 10. Number of pupils joining and leaving classes 2003- 2007**

	<b>Number of Pupils</b>
<b>Junior Infants, September 2003</b>	<b>969</b>
<b>Number of pupils who left in the period</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Number of pupils who joined in the period</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>Second Class, June, 2007</b>	<b>952</b>

In effect, this means that almost *one fifth* of the children in second class did not start school with their peers in Junior Infants, but joined at a later stage. This level of movement in and out of schools has major implications for schools. The disruption to class relationships and dynamics as well as impact on teaching and curriculum planning, delivery, coherence and continuity are immediately apparent.

*Ethnic composition of those Leaving and Joining classes*

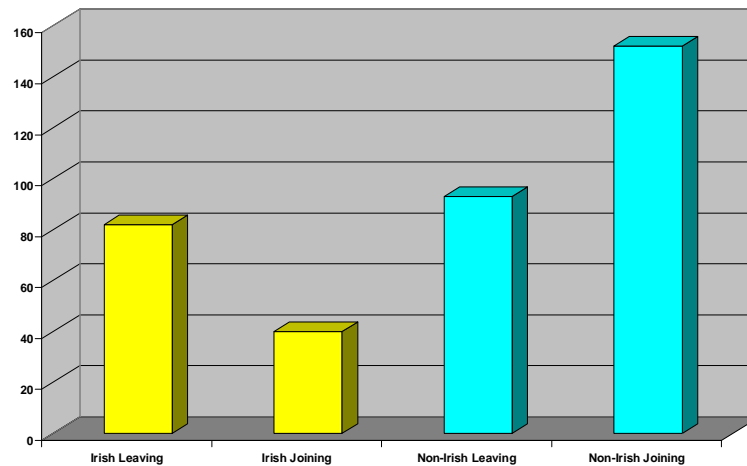
Analysis of the ethnicity of those leaving and joining these class groups indicates a significant trend—that of Irish pupils leaving the schools and immigrant pupils joining over the period, as **Table 11** below indicates.

**Table 11. Ethnic background of those joining and leaving classes 2003 - 2007**

		<b><i>Nationality of leavers</i></b>	
	<b>Number of Pupils</b>	<b>Irish</b>	<b>Non-Irish</b>
<b>Number of pupils who left in the period</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>82 (47%)</b>	<b>93 (53%)</b>
<b>Number of pupils who joined in the period</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>40 (21%)</b>	<b>152 (79%)</b>

In relation to Irish children, 82 pupils left in the period while only 40 joined these classes. This represents a movement of **2:1** out of Dublin 15 by Irish pupils. By contrast, the number of newcomer children joining these classes was 152, which represented 79% of the total cohort of new children joining. This represents a movement of 5:3 into Dublin 15 by Non-Irish pupils. **Figure 21** below provides a graphic representation of this trend.

**Figure 21. Ethnicity of pupils joining and Leaving Classes 2003-2007**



*Evidence of 'white flight'?*

It has already been shown above that there is considerable movement of children in and out of Dublin 15 schools in any one school year. This exercise tracks a total of 37 out of 375 class groups across the Dublin 15 schools. As such, it represents approximately 10% of all class groups in the area. There is no evidence that tracking different class levels would yield different results. Therefore, it may be assumed that the evidence provided indicates quite a serious and significant trend of Irish moving out and immigrants moving in. Clearly, housing policies, the property market generally and socio-economic factors contribute to such migratory trends. The evidence suggests that these patterns, if not addressed, will result in ghettoisation and social segregation that is inimical to a rhetoric of inclusion. Proactive initiatives now remain the most optimistic approach to avoid the emergence of the kind of polarisation evident elsewhere, while an adequate proactive response will necessitate a degree of strategic and coordinated planning that until now has proved unattainable. The evidence presented here indicates that, in the absence of appropriate leadership, people vote with their feet.

## Religious denomination of pupils in Dublin 15 schools

As already highlighted in this report, twenty-one of the twenty-five schools in the area are Catholic schools under the patronage of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. School ethos and the right of schools to promote religious and faith values within schools are dealt with later in this report; chapter nine is devoted to this issue since it emerged as a major concern in the qualitative data. Here, the religious composition of the primary school population of Dublin 15 is examined.

Schools were requested to detail the religious denomination of the children in their schools, where this data was available. At the time of publishing this report, eighteen schools had provided these data. A summary of is presented in **Table 12** below.

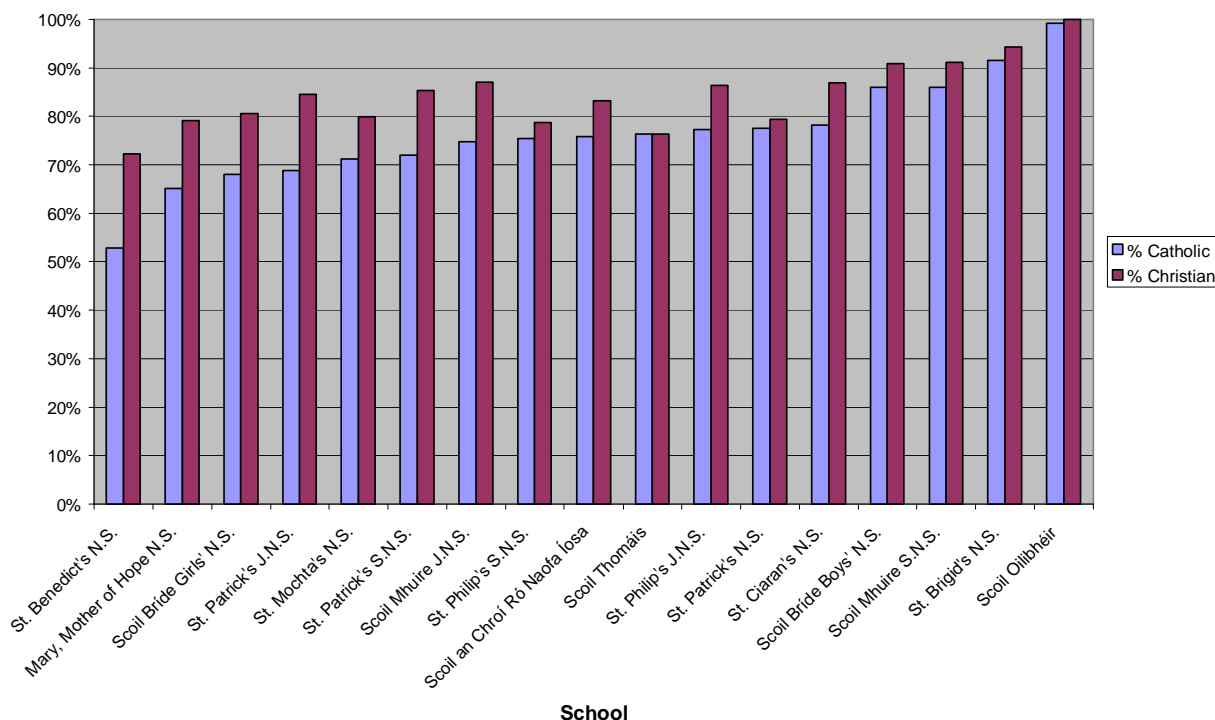
**Table 12. Religious denomination of children in Catholic schools**

<b>Religious Denomination</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	<b>5,868</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Christian (other)</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Islam</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Eastern Orthodox</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Hinduism</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Agnostic</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Buddhism</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sikhism</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Judaism</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Not Known</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,784</b>	

The dominant religion in Dublin 15 schools is Roman Catholicism, with 75% of pupils subscribing to that faith. This is followed by other Christian groupings at 8% and Islam at 5%. Christianity, therefore, accounts for 83% of the total. A further surprising feature of the data is that schools do not know the religious background of 6% of their pupils. This is perhaps indicative of the difficulties that some schools have in obtaining information in relation to the children in their care.

Given the number of Catholic Schools in Dublin 15, and given that they account for twenty-one out of twenty-two of the denominational schools in the area, further statistical analysis was carried out specifically in relation to the Catholic schools. Data were available for seventeen of these schools at the time of going to print. **Figure 22** below indicates the percentage of Catholic and Christian children- including Catholics- in these Catholic schools.

**Figure 22. Catholic and Christian pupils as a percentage of total enrolment in Catholic schools**



In thirteen of the seventeen schools, 70% or more of children are Catholic. When the number of children belonging to other Christian denominations is added to the number of Catholic children, the total is more than 70% in all schools.

These are the current realities in the twenty-five primary schools in Dublin 15 that are the focus of attention in this study. The remaining empirical chapters put flesh on these statistical bones by adding a variety of perspectives on these realities, beginning with teachers in chapter five.

<sup>i</sup> *DEIS (Delivering Equality Of Opportunity In Schools) An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, Department of Education and Science, 2005

## Chapter V

### TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

#### ***Introduction***

As indicated in chapter two, it was important from the outset in terms of the integrity of the study to ascertain multiple perspectives on the challenges and opportunities presented by the changing demographics of Dublin 15. Consequently, four focus groups with teachers were convened as broadly representative of teachers engaged with the various primary age groups as well as language support and resource teaching. All focus group 'interviews' were recorded and replayed several times to identify concerns raised. What follows is a summary of teachers' views, while in the interest of being succinct it is our words rather than the words used by teachers themselves that are recorded with occasional quotations to strengthen authenticity.

From the outset, and consistent with the views of many on the ground, we were keen to identify and document the positive aspects of increasing cultural diversity among the primary school population. There are five themes in all, documented under the following headings:

1. Positive experiences
2. Challenges: Meeting the needs of newcomer children
3. Pupil Attrition
4. Teaching, language and learning support
5. The role of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme in Inclusion?

It should be noted that the first four themes are derived from focus group interviews with teachers, while the fifth theme documents the views of HSCL co-ordinators only.

#### **Theme one: Positive experiences**

##### *Motivation of newcomer children*

Teachers highlighted the high motivation of many newcomer children, who brought with them a desire to work hard, to learn and to succeed. This has had a very positive effect in many schools. Teachers, particularly those working in schools in disadvantaged areas, highlighted this phenomenon quite strongly, where it was felt that the arrival of such motivated and high-achievers served as a good role model to Irish pupils.

Teachers did, however, highlight that this motivation was not universal across all newcomer groupings. There was a sense that children from Eastern European, Middle Eastern and

Asian backgrounds were more motivated than children from African backgrounds- although family factors were also highlighted as being significant indicators of motivation, as an ELS teacher pointed out:

*'Again it depends on the children, there is evidence that some newcomer children are doing very well- if they come well bonded, in a good family situation, they can do very well.'*

#### *Success in the primary school curriculum*

Teachers also noted that in areas of the primary curriculum, where mastery of English was not a requirement, newcomer children were highly successful, often out-performing local children. Many examples of this were given, including the Visual Arts, Music, Dance, Drama and Physical Education. There was also wide agreement that many newcomer children who already have exposure to a number of languages in the home, are experiencing considerable success in the acquisition and use of Gaeilge in schools. It was commented that in terms of 'cruinneas teanga' (accuracy) and a willingness to use the language, many newcomer children were at the top of their respective classes.

#### *Awareness of difference: cultures and nationalities*

Teachers also pointed to the increased awareness of other cultures, nationalities and traditions amongst local children, which differs hugely in comparison with the teachers' own experiences of primary school. There were many examples of how this manifested itself, varying from instances of practice in individual classes, to the whole-school approach adopted by many schools to the celebration of multi-culturalism and diversity. There was a strong sense of the level of celebration and sharing of cultural stories between children on an on-going basis in schools. As one teacher pointed out, *'this has made our school a very colourful and interesting place to work and to learn.'*

However, consequently and practically, much remains to be done to create genuine plurality and diversity rather than re-inventing post-imperial and post-colonial cultural hierarchies. This is a major challenge that requires sustained attention particularly given the fluidity of demographics, shaped significantly by enrolment policies and attendant legislation.

Another teacher pointed to a very strong sense that, as newcomer children arrived in her classroom, other children rallied around and took responsibility for integrating the child into the classroom:

*'Four children from abroad arrived in my class in the course of the school year- with limited language skills etc. It was wonderful to see other children taking responsibility for them, mentoring them; children taking on the responsibility for integrating their peers in to the classroom.'*

Another teacher cautioned, however, that even in the most accepting and open classroom, there was always a risk of, what she termed, 'patience fatigue' among children when the turn-over of children in a classroom becomes excessive. Stability and continuity become important factors if commitment of all concerned is to be sustained. Consequently, there is a major challenge at district and local authority level, and there is further evidence of the need for such sustained commitment below.

*'Integration': Encouraging extra-curricular and community participation*

There was evidence that some newcomer children are becoming involved in after-school activities and in local community and sport groups. Teachers felt that this was evidence of positive integration and were very keen to encourage their children, where possible, to become involved in these activities. The following quote, from a teacher living in the area is indicative of this sentiment:

*'There is huge potential for sports groups etc. building up links with newcomer children and helping their integration through getting to know other children but also helping their language development.'*

It was a broadly supported view that these after-school and out of school activities not only help with the integration of children into their local communities, but also contribute significantly to language development and confidence of these children with their peers. Teachers also highlighted the general shortage of such activities, particularly in the newer developing areas where groups such as the scouts and sports clubs were only in their infancy and- as with the local primary schools- are hugely over-subscribed. It was felt that there could be a greater role for the Local Authority in supporting the establishment of youth clubs and youth activities in these areas, and that a specific brief be given for the promotion of inclusion among the ethnic minorities as part of that brief.

*Schools pro-active adaptation to changing realities*

Many schools reported being pro-active in re-evaluating their needs in the changed circumstances in which they find themselves, as the profile of their schools have changed. For some schools, this change has been as dramatic as it has been swift. It has, therefore, fallen to individual schools to re-assess their needs and re-visit their School-Plan in order that it better represent the changing circumstances of the school.

*Providing professional support*

Some schools have used the support of the School Development Planning Service (SDPS) to assist in the development of policy. Others have invited speakers to the school to talk to staff on the language, learning and social needs of newcomer children. One teacher noted

that, following an input from a speaker at a staff meeting on the stages of language acquisition, there was 'an audible sigh of relief among staff that they were not alone in what they were experiencing and that there were discrete stages through which children progress as they encounter a second language.' Teachers' perceived the support that emerged as a very positive development.

#### *Collective/individual professional initiatives*

Other teachers felt that there was already evidence of specialisation of expertise amongst some staff in schools, who have either begun to study the area, or who are involved in research through post-graduate programmes. Schools and Boards of Management, it was argued, should encourage this development-

*'Teachers are developing their own expertise, and we should be loathe to deny the expertise that exists in schools. Teachers know the kids they are teaching and they know the pressure points that exist in their schools.'*

There was considerable appetite among teachers for good quality in-service to support schools in their work and most teachers felt that this need is not being met currently by the DES.

It is necessary, therefore, at this point, to provide dedicated professional support and immediate consideration needs to be given to a dedicated 'Cuiditheoir' service that systematically seeks to build teacher and school capacity on identified and emergent needs as the multi-cultural mosaic evolves and is shaped by sustained attention.

Despite the many positive features that changing demographics bring to school communities, as well as the proactive professional initiatives undertaken at individual school levels, it is possible that, depending on the scale of the challenge, there are negatives too and without adequate support, flexibility and resources, school communities maybe overwhelmed. What are these challenges?

### ***Theme two. Challenges: meeting the needs of newcomer children***

#### *Socialisation*

There was a very strong sense across all of the groups at the lack of social skills exhibited by some newcomer children when they come to school. However, this was not universally applicable across all newcomer groups. It was felt that this was particularly an issue with some African children and particularly boys. Again and again, teachers in Junior schools pointed to the fact that many of their African children in the early years did not have the

social skills to take part in class-groups of 29 children. This perceived lack of social skills, the teachers indicated, leads to considerable disruption. While teachers were somewhat reticent about 'naming' such concerns for fear of stereotyping particular ethnic groups, there was a strong sense also that remaining silent on the issue would allow it to fester below the surface, where it would be likely to become a throbbing racist sore. In surfacing these concerns, they wished to have them addressed in a positive and constructive manner.

The following comments are by no means exhaustive but are illustrative of the issues raised by teachers in this regard. Notwithstanding the cultural sensitivities involved and the much too generalised term "African children" being deployed, it is important nevertheless to record teachers' voiced concerns.

*'In our school, there has been a huge increase in behavioural problems in more recent years, particularly when there is a concentration of newcomer children'*

*'Within the newcomer children, there are a number of very strong-willed children in each Infant class causing behavioural difficulties on a daily basis- they are all newcomer children and they are drawing hugely on the resources of the school- other children are definitely suffering'*

*'Many newcomers come to school with no pre-school experience and this leads to greater socialisation difficulties for these children ... families are fragmented, kids home alone, being minded by different adults or siblings- makes life difficult for the kids, and there can be lots of emotional damage, which impacts on kids and schools.'*

*'There is a much higher number of behavioural problems with African newcomer boys in our school.'*

These are examples of the many issues raised by teachers with regard to behavioural problems that were linked to social skills development. They are connected to wider concerns about parenting within a diversity of cultures and with gender differences within cultures whereby, it appears, boys are often encouraged to be more robust and physical as integral to their gender identities. There is a clearly emerging need, therefore, to engage with these cultural differences, to provide very sensitively conceived and executed parenting courses that would also include communication regarding gender roles and school norms, while simultaneously using such opportunities for engaging with cultures, their similarities and differences in a climate of tolerance and mutual respect. This necessity becomes even more apparent immediately below.

#### *Not just a language issue*

Teachers were very keenly aware that having access to English Language Support was not sufficient for such children, as they felt that they simply could not access the learning if they did not have the basic social skills to be in school in the first place. Therefore, much of the

school year for Junior Infants was taken up with the basics of developing social skills and establishing an adequate level of discipline before the focus could move to learning. Within the current staffing limitations however, it is evident that schools exercised considerable agency to address perceived pressing needs.

In some schools, management decided to deploy ELS teachers in individual Junior Infant classrooms on an almost full-time basis, to assist the class teacher in establishing the basics of social skills and positive behaviour patterns. Infant teachers valued this support and were very positive about the effects:

*'This worked really well- even up to Christmas, and then we moved to withdrawal after Christmas.... It helped greatly to include everybody, we kept it very flexible- initially trialled for four weeks, then eight and then for first term. The in-class work focused on social skills, as well as language. If you can get the focus on socialisation sorted out, then you can start to move on.'*

Other schools reported that, following emergency assessments through their NEPS psychologist or other means, they were able to deploy a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) in the Infant classroom to assist the teacher in the socialisation process. However, schools reported that this was a hugely time-consuming process, it was rarely flexible enough to meet the immediate needs of the school and it 'ate into' the few assessments available to the school in a school year. There was general agreement, however, that where SNAs were deployed, there were considerable improvements in behaviour. Consequently, after the first year or two in school, most children had managed to make the adjustment and the SNA was no longer required.

Some teachers were of the view that an SNA should be appointed to each class where it can be demonstrated that there are higher concentrations of newcomers- one teacher felt that where there was over 50% newcomers, an SNA should be deployed.

### *Discipline*

The issue of discipline was closely linked to that of socialisation by many teachers, particularly those within the Junior classes. However, broader issues were also identified. On the whole, teachers were anxious to point out that discipline was not an issue for all newcomer children, that it was a feature with some Irish children as well but that it was also an issue for a considerable numbers of newcomer children. Again, in the course of the discussion with the focus groups, teachers pointed to cultural / geographic factors which impacted more on discipline in the schools.

Again, it was highlighted as a particular problem with some African children and it manifested

itself in different ways. As already highlighted, there were specific issues raised by Infant teachers in relation to how the lack of social skills gave rise to discipline and behavioural problems in class. However, with older children, there were repeated references to very challenging behaviour among African boys.

*‘Behaviour is not a feature across all cultures- more a problem in the African cultures, particularly Nigerian’, reported one senior class teacher.*

#### *Behaviour: A gender issue?*

Teachers referred to some children exhibiting hugely disrespectful behaviour towards female members of staff. This comment from a fifth class teacher is indicative of how teachers related these sentiments: *‘...a general lack of respect of Nigerian and African boys towards teachers- especially older children with female teachers.’*

Not only did teachers highlight at length the difficulties they encountered with behavioural problems and discipline in their classrooms, they also expressed considerable reservations around how they felt they could address issues of in-discipline with parents, as the following sub-theme on discipline indicates. Clearly, the argument advanced above regarding parenting and cultural ‘exchange’ is reinforced still further by this evidence.

#### *Punishment: Different cultural perceptions*

The single biggest issue repeated by teachers across all the focus groups was that of the cultural attitudes of parents in relation to the punishment of children who were reported for misbehaving in school. In all cases where children were misbehaving and disrupting the activities of the class over a period of time, teachers were anxious to address the issue with parents and seek their assistance in dealing with the misbehaviour. However, teachers reported very different responses to these contacts, which varied greatly depending on the cultural background of the parent. The first challenge that teachers reported in significant numbers was that some newcomer parents felt that the general culture of the school was too soft on children and that this meant that problems children’s misbehaviour in school resulted from the school’s attitude to discipline. One teacher in a senior class highlights the issue involved with reference to a recent conversation he had with a parent:

*‘A parent came in and said- “don’t be afraid to hit him- you are too soft on my child, if he doesn’t do it, you hit him. You say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to the children, that is not the way.” The cultural differences and the model of discipline we use did not have any validity in her child-rearing.’*

Another teacher in a Junior school reported:

*'Schools' methods of discipline are very out of tune with what is going on at home- parents see us as too soft on kids- "you should shout at him if he won't do what he is told" is what one mother told me.'*

An additional problem that many teachers have experienced in this matter is the recourse that many newcomer parents have to corporal punishment when disciplining their children. Teachers have reported repeatedly that in many cases they are afraid to report misbehaviour to parents for fear of the child being physically abused at home. Teachers refer to instances where children cry inconsolably when the teacher lets the child know that s/he will be seeking to talk to their parents. The children report that they will be beaten if they get in trouble, so that teachers face a dilemma as to whether or not they should report the misbehaviour. This often compounds the difficulty, as unchecked, the misbehaviour can often escalate and become even more disruptive.

There was general concern among teachers that, due to excessive use of corporal punishment, children are being physically abused in their homes. One teacher reported that a child had been missing from school for a day because his mother hit him with a shoe- the child reported to the teacher that he was regularly beaten at home. Schools, therefore, have had no choice but to invoke child protection procedures when such reports are made. This often involves Social Workers and a breakdown in trust between home and school.

There were many other examples given by teachers in relation to the issue of parental attitudes to discipline. These selected comments are indicative of the many:

*'Correcting a child- if you mention 'I will have to tell mammy'- there is an automatic response, - it's like a fear, so you try to steer clear of that'*

*' I have had children being threatened that they will be sent back to their home country- so then you try to steer away from that, and even try not bringing in the parents as much as you could, so you approach them less, when you see the consequences for the children.'*

*'A father came into me and said, "You must beat him. He does not understand this being nice so this is why he is misbehaving." I've also been told just pinch him under the table and nobody will see.'*

These comments are eerily reminiscent of Dublin working class children being threatened with 'Artane' or 'Letterfrack', or their rural equivalent—'the man with the sack', or 'the bad man'. Part of the extent of the discomfort evident here may be a need to confront our own, very recent, ghosts.

### *School responses?*

There is evidence that, after the 'initial shock' of this issue, schools are becoming more proactive in acknowledging that this is an issue and dealing with it accordingly. Some school principals speak at parent meetings and infant induction meetings on the issue of discipline and corporal punishment, highlighting that it is not acceptable in schools and challenging parents to find other ways of disciplining children in the home. Parenting courses organised in conjunction with the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, which are well attended and well supported by newcomer mothers, incorporate sessions in relation to discipline and dealing with misbehaviour. Teachers are also increasingly confident in confronting parents in relation to corporal punishment and also in suggesting alternative forms of discipline. Clearly, building positive relationships between home and school is vital in dealing with matters of discipline. This may well be an important part of HSCL's remit, but it should be the basis for cultural debate and exchange, as well as communication on cultural norms and gender differences, thus building trust and community by practising mutual respect.

### *Home/School/Community Liaison: Cultivating shared norms and values*

One difficulty described during the HSCL focus meeting was that, almost overnight, schools were dealing with a whole new cohort of parents, coming from countries all over the world, with hugely different expectations of what schools should be providing for their children. A major problem for schools was that of managing the different expectations of the partners involved. Schools had expectations of parents, including newcomer parents, which needed to be clearly communicated, while parents had expectations of school that were quite often at variance with what the school could realistically provide. This discontinuity was, it was felt, understandable given the diversity of experiences of newcomer parents who had very different experiences of the education system in their own countries. Examples cited of such expectations were that children should be able to start school from the age of two, that the school day would be much longer, or that books and uniforms would be provided free of charge.

According to one HSCL co-ordinator, the speed with which the change came about caught everyone unawares, leaving teachers unprepared, schools reacting as best they could to the changes, and everyone trying to play 'catch-up.'

While the confluence of a whole variety of cultures and expectations presents significant challenges, the rapid departure of children is a further remove from established norms and a frustration to all concerned. This is the next theme.

### Theme Three. Pupil attrition

The high turnover of children already documented in chapter four was raised repeatedly by teachers in the focus groups. They reported that in many instances children arrive 'cold' to the classroom, where there is no advance notice of their arrival and often times children have come to school with no records from their previous school. This creates additional pressures on classroom teachers, especially when pupils arrive during the school year. It adds to the workload of the Special Education Needs (SEN) team in schools, as there is almost a continuous cycle of assessment of new arrivals right throughout the school year. It also increases the scope for in-efficiencies across the sector, as assessments, carried out in one school, are repeated in a second and then a third, if, as in some cases, pupils move from school to school in a short space of time. An example of the general frustration around this issue is evident in the comment of one teacher:

*'There is a huge problem around children joining classes during the year, arriving in out of the blue, having to prop up the numbers- the rigidity of the DES staffing schedules and regulations on teacher numbers etc. mean schools have no choice but to continually re-cycle and replace children- resulting in a huge throughput of children.'*

Another added to this general sense of frustration, by stating:

*'we have a lot of short-term stays- even less than a term- where kids are parked in our school while they are waiting for a place in another school. It is so frustrating for schools putting so much work into a child and then they move on to other schools or other areas.'*

What is very evident in these and other comments is that centralised policy-making regarding staffing schedules, premised on stability, predictability, and continuity are no longer adequate to take account of much more fluid, unpredictable and less stable situations. In such circumstances, the evidence suggests, more local discretion and autonomy are warranted, with appropriate resource allocation.

#### *Impact on teaching and classroom dynamics*

Again this points to the sense of fragmentation experienced in the system. A learning support teacher picked up on this when she commented that with a class,

*'The community aspect of the class and the spirit of the class becomes very fragmented- a class reflects a community- and if the community becomes fragmented, it is not good for the class. It is very difficult for a teacher to get a centre point to teach to or for discipline or for delivering the curriculum.'*

This huge turnover of children also has an impact on schools in terms of how they deliver the Revised Primary School curriculum in their schools. Some teachers expressed this quite

forcefully by saying that it makes a mockery of the spiral nature of the revised curriculum. As one teacher asked rhetorically in exasperated tones:

*'How are we expected to return to and build on previous learning from earlier class levels, if there is such a huge turn-over of children in school, year on year, where half of them missed out on the earlier learning?'*

Once again, this highlights the tremendous difficulties experienced by teachers in some schools in coming to terms and responding to the changing realities for Dublin 15 schools. More intensive teaching with greater flexibility in staffing ratios would help to alleviate such challenges and provide greater possibility for 'equal participation' and 'equality for all'. As will be evident later, ignoring this current reality is likely to contribute to 'white flight' and thus also accelerate community segregation with long-term consequences for ghettoisation and exclusion.

#### *Impact of attrition on statutory services: Teachers' perceptions*

There was a strong feeling that, in the same way that many schools felt very stretched in meeting the challenges presented, so too many of the statutory services were equally stretched, if not more so. Most teachers felt that the Education Welfare Board, which has responsibility, amongst other things, for the monitoring of poor attendance, was simply unable to cope with the demands being placed on it. Comments such as *'it's a joke,' 'the EWB is simply not able to cope,'* and *'the EWB is not providing an effective support to schools around attendance'* are indicative of this sentiment. Teachers highlighted issues such as the lack of EWB personnel, high workloads and the large number of newcomer children missing school- for a variety of reasons- meant that the officers of the EWB seemed to have little practical impact on the ground when it came to enforcing the legislation around school attendance and promoting good attendance. In addition, many infant teachers pointed out that poor attendance patterns were developed in the early years of school, and that the inability of the EWB to address the poor attendance of children younger than six years of age meant that, often times, these poor attendance habits were well formed before the EWB became involved.

Similarly, many teachers felt that the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) was equally unprepared to meet the extra demands placed on the school psychologists working in the area. There was a concern that access to the service was too limited given the demands placed on schools. Some schools in developing areas had little or no increase in the number of assessments available to them, even though the enrolment in these schools may have tripled since their establishment. Other schools complained that they were still not

allocated a school psychologist, and had to rely on a panel of psychologists for the assessment of children. Many teachers felt strongly that they were unsupported by the NEPS psychologist, who seemed ill-prepared to assist schools with the challenging needs of newcomer children. Others pointed to the complexity of needs of newcomer children, and felt that the lack of norms for assessment of children who did not have English meant that the assessment process proved very difficult. There was also great difficulty in diagnosing the difficulties that newcomer children present with, as the difficulties with language could be masking other more serious emotional, cognitive, social or developmental difficulties.

#### *Parental attitudes to assessment / special needs*

Many teachers felt that children who needed significant additional support were not allocated any by their Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) because recognised psychologist had not completed an adequate assessment of their needs. Furthermore, in order for children to qualify for additional resource teaching hours through the DES scheme, schools had to demonstrate that these children were in receipt of ongoing therapy from a recognised service. Given the reluctance of many newcomer parents to have their children referred to such agencies, schools were left in a 'catch-twenty two' situation whereby children who need additional assistance both in-school and out of school, are left with assistance from neither. There was a strong sense that this issue needs to be re-examined by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

This is clearly another concern that, left in limbo, is likely to contribute to marginalisation of learners and their families and increased frustration and de-motivation among teachers. 'Equality of participation' is premised on the notion of differentiated needs. Consequently, more dedicated staffing of support services is necessary now as a matter of urgency before attitudes and practices become sedimented by constantly having to settle for less and 'make do' rather than provide adequate supports that facilitate sustained and proactive services.

## **Theme Four. Teaching, language and learning support**

### *Introduction*

The issue of language arose in a number of different guises between and within the focus groups, whether it was the language competencies of parents and children at home, or issues around translation services for schools, in-service for teachers in English Language Support or short-comings in relation to the English Language Support model offered by the DES. This theme documents teachers' comments on several aspects of learning in the classroom, on language and its impact on and connection with learning support.

### *English language support*

There was widespread criticism amongst teachers, especially English Language Support teachers, of the level of in-service provided by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT). The DES has given responsibility to IILT to provide in-service to ELS teachers. However, many ELS teachers complained that they only received a single day of training provided at the beginning of their appointment when they were only finding their feet and that the content of the in-service was poor. *'We only got one day in November with no follow up or anything else'*, complained one ELS teacher. Another ELS teacher reported that, although she was newly appointed in an ELS position, there were not sufficient places available on the in-service day for her to attend. She admitted to having to gatecrash the in-service on the day!

ELS teachers felt that the particular skills and strategies that need to be deployed in English as a Second Language were not being taught in colleges of education at pre-service level, and were not being provided at in-service either:

*'Teaching English as a second language requires a very different set of skills and is very different to traditional teaching. It is a totally different way of teaching and that's not being recognised.'*

Other teachers, again predominantly ELS teachers, were critical of the teaching methodologies and materials developed, particularly the language portfolios. They felt these were not particularly relevant to the needs of the school. There was also a very strong sense that the timescale for implementation of the primary school curriculum, at best, made only passing references to the inclusion of children who do not have English as a first language. Teachers felt that there should be in-service offered to all teachers around the needs of newcomer children. The following is indicative of the sentiments expressed:

*'We need good in-service for class teachers- "it is very frightening for the class teacher where there are three or four kids with no English and then others with learning difficulties... the sense is the teacher is failing them.'"*

*'Teachers are terrified that their child is not learning English because they are not producing English- but they are absorbing the language all around them'*

*'there is a huge lack of awareness of the silent period that ESOL children experience'*

It is predictable that without the kinds of professional support identified by teachers themselves, positive motivation and an appetite for making inclusion happen are unlikely to be sustained. Since the challenges are being clearly identified now, *'we were unaware of the scale and intensity'* is no longer credible nor acceptable from policy-makers.

#### *Temporary status of English language support teachers*

The temporary nature of the appointments of ELS teachers is a further cause for concern. In many cases, this has meant that schools were unaware from one year to the next how many positions they would have or how long they would hold the appointment. Furthermore, the allocation of ELS teaching positions coincided with a general shortage of qualified teachers within the system. Therefore, many of the ELS teaching positions were, of necessity, filled by unqualified teachers. This may have had the effect of under-valuing the role within schools or, given the turn over of temporary staff in schools, a loss of expertise and experience from one year to the next. One teacher raised this directly by asking:

*'How could an unqualified, newly appointed temporary teacher possibly be expected to contribute to a whole-school discussion around the issue of the language needs of children in mainstream classes.'*

This is a very valid point, which again indicates weaknesses in the current level of provision and in-service around ELS children as well as pointing to the need for continuity and predictability of staffing in order to build capacity.

#### *An oral language rich environment?*

There was a major concern among teachers that the assumptions of the revised primary school curriculum were being turned on their heads in Dublin 15. One such assumption is the provision of a language-rich environment. Teachers in infant classes have been stretched to adapt the curriculum to suit their classes, particularly in the classes where there are large numbers of newcomers. One Infant teacher highlights this issue:

*'There is a problem around the whole area of language, where Junior Infants are coming into school with little or no language- the curriculum can be irrelevant. For example, in my class, we have five children who came to school in September with no English. There were huge problems adapting the curriculum.'*

Clearly in schools with higher concentrations of newcomer children, teachers can rely less and less on the oral-language rich classroom environment to promote either language

development among native English language speakers or language acquisition among newcomer children. This is one of the biggest challenges to schools in areas of high concentration of newcomer children. When one adds to this mix the socialisation and behavioural difficulties that have already been referred to, one can see how these problems can soon seem insurmountable for some. This evidence points to the necessity for sustained commitment to capacity building at the level of the school.

#### *Language acquisition: an age related issue*

There is also a sense that the challenges for newcomer children who do not have English increase the older they are on arriving in schools in Ireland, as the achievement gap increases between them and their peers. One teacher recalls her sense of shock upon her first appointment to a school in Dublin 15:

*'I had worked in a Dublin school before and never had an issue with language, then I came to this school and I had a class of 27, where only four had English. I just couldn't believe it. I felt such pressure for those four children not to mention the ones who couldn't speak English.'*

*'It is quite frightening, I'm in fourth class- sometimes you look around your class and see one group playing ABC Bingo from Junior Infants, and another group writing their novel and another group that would be typical fourth class doing something else and you just look around and wonder how is this happening, how am I going to bring these children up to the level where they can enter First Year and not be struggling?'*

Such evidence indicates that such diversity of needs even within one classroom requires an adequate response. As suggested earlier, if the perception, if not the reality, is that a disproportionate amount of resources are being allocated to immigrant children, Irish parents will become more inclined to the view that having their children in such school surroundings will be detrimental to their education. This needs to be countered with adequate resource provision if inclusion is to become a reality rather than aspirational rhetoric.

#### *Language and learners*

One teacher highlighted the general sense of frustration felt by older children who are bright and anxious to get on, but feel frustrated and inhibited by their lack of language:

*'Some children get quite depressed and frustrated because they can't interact... it really affects them. An awful lot of heads go down, and their behaviour can deteriorate.'*

Another teacher highlights this frustration more graphically:

*'You just didn't know what day the children would turn to being "I just can't take this any more. In Poland I was able to do everything." And they would just go so angry. It would then become a discipline issue. I had no understanding at the time about the "angry phase" or the "silent phase" and I found it all so difficult.'*

These teachers are clearly articulating a very immediate need for capacity building measure in relation to second language acquisition, but there is an attendant need for pedagogical adaptation across the curriculum. But the need does not end there as the next element shows.

#### *From English language support to learning support*

There was a keen awareness amongst teachers that the two-year cap on access to English language support had a major negative effect right across the school. Many teachers complained that children could not possibly be expected to access the curriculum after just two years of support. There was considerable evidence of children, upon completion of their two years ELS, being so far behind in their language skills that they performed very badly in the standardised tests in English and therefore became candidates for learning support.

One teacher was very anxious to highlight that in recent standardised tests, newcomer children occupied the bottom positions in percentile ranking in each class level. While there were newcomer children in higher positions in these tests, there was considerable anxiety that newcomer children were failing to realise their potential. Another teacher was critical that a limited focus on oral language development came at the expense of other competencies and pointed to research from the U.K. which found that 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation children of immigrant families, while scoring well in oral language, fell down in other literacy skills such as comprehension and higher order thinking. This reinforced for her the importance of emphasising that 'literacy involves developing a group of skills not just auracy.'

#### *Impact of Language Support cap on senior schools*

The issue of the cap on ELS has also had a disproportionately negative effect on senior schools. This issue was raised by principals classroom and learning support teachers. Given that pupils who transferred from junior schools to senior schools may already have completed their two years in ELS, senior schools have greatly reduced access to ELS teachers. This can be demonstrated by examining the October Returns. These showed that the four junior schools in Dublin 15 had **11** ELS teachers in October, 2006 while the four corresponding Senior schools had only **5**. Therefore, children in senior schools, who could not access ELS and were continuing to perform poorly in standardised tests were being referred to learning support, even though they may not have had a learning difficulty. Schools which sought assistance from within the general allocation (GA) for additional learning

support provision for such children were turned down, as the GA does not give any extra support to schools which have higher levels of newcomer children. This is evidence, yet again, of the structural and procedural inflexibility in the over-centralised structure of the DES, which need to be addressed if the emerging needs of Dublin 15 schools are to be addressed. Flexibility and adaptability, hallmarks of progressive partnership agreements, need to be applied with equal insistence to policies, policy-making and policy-makers and not merely to 'front-line' professionals.

#### *Language proficiency of parents*

Teachers agreed that good communication with parents who have little or no proficiency in English is seriously hampering their work. This had a significant effect on the type of relationship the teachers felt they could develop with the children, while it had a very negative effect on practical day-to-day issues also. The sense of exasperation felt by many teachers is evident in the following quote from one teacher in a junior school:

*'You can find yourself talking to parents and they are nodding away at you, but you're not sure if they understand you in the first place, or you may be giving out notes, and some don't understand the notes, you are giving out little bits of homework to do and that's not being done, so the children loose out. Even with simple things, like when there's a day off school, parents are coming in and saying 'we didn't know about it', or like trying to get the message across about the school's Healthy Eating policy, which isn't understood, so it makes things so difficult.'*

This type of comment was repeated across all of the focus groups and was also mentioned by the HSCL co-ordinators, who said that the English language difficulties of parents was one of the biggest obstacles for them in getting to know and build relationships with parents.

#### *Language and discipline*

Teachers felt that dealing with challenging pupil behaviour was made even more difficult in instances where parents had only a limited grasp of English or no language at all. This posed huge difficulties for teachers and principals, who either had to engage the support of other parents who spoke the language, or older sibling of the child in trouble or even getting the child to report their own misbehaviour to parents. It was felt that there were huge moral difficulties with these approaches- with some teachers refusing to use any of these methods of communication. As a result, some teachers felt isolated in trying to deal with persistent serious misbehaviour.

#### *Translation services?*

Teachers felt that one possible way of dealing with these language barriers would be to have a centralised bank of translation services or translators available across Dublin 15, for

schools to access as they required. There were issues around the practicalities of this, given the number of different languages spoken by parents in the area, but it was felt that even targeting the major languages would be of assistance in responding to this need.

#### *Language support for parents*

Most teachers felt that addressing the English language deficit of newcomer parents should be a key objective of government in the years ahead. Some schools have, with the assistance of the Adult Education Department of the local VEC, established courses in English for parents. Such courses have also been organised in schools that enjoy the services of the HSCL scheme. This has had the effect of integrating these parents further into the life of the school and has also helped develop these parents' confidence in English. There was widespread agreement that this is an issue which should be further developed across all the schools in the area; further evidence that capacity is both a community as well as a school-community issue, while also being a necessary policy milestone on the road to diversity and inclusion.

Since many of the teachers in the focus groups as well as principals raised the question as to possible roles for HSCL personnel, or established role, within disadvantage schools, a focus group of HSCL was convened specifically to explore existing perceptions, practice and possible developments. This final 'theme' therefore is distinct from the other four, since the views expressed are those of HSCL personnel only and are not representative of teachers as a whole. However, we regard them as a distinct and significant 'voice' since such personnel are already playing a role in the inclusion of newcomer children and their parents.

## ***Theme Five. The role of the HSCL scheme in inclusion?***

### *Provision of course and training for parents through the HSCL scheme*

The HSCL scheme has had a long tradition of providing courses for parents on the school campus which has had the effect of providing personal development for parents, building capacity within the parent body and helping parents to be more involved in the life of the school. This is a feature of the HSCL service that newcomer parents particularly warm to, and there has been a strong uptake of these courses from newcomer parents.

The type of course provided ranged from craftwork, sewing, flower arranging and cookery, to first aid, childcare, parenting courses and English language training. These courses are usually held on the school campus, and parents are recruited to the course by the HSCL co-ordinator. All courses are free and the VEC Education Committee underwrites the tuition costs. One co-ordinator noted that:

*‘A lot of newcomer families took these courses up straight. We have found it very difficult over the years to get the local parents to do a parenting course, whereas now we had some local but more than half were foreign nationals.’*

In the parenting and childcare courses, newcomer parents had the opportunity to discuss and explore different approaches to parenting, and also had the opportunity to learn about different and appropriate methods of discipline. This has helped schools address the issue of the use of corporal punishment, which has been identified as a particular issue with some newcomer parents.

It has been noted by co-ordinators that parents are very pleased to receive qualifications at the end of their courses, and that they are highly motivated to get certification at the end of each course or module in which they participate. There is evidence that parents use these certificates and qualifications to support them in their application for leave to remain in the country, which could explain some of the motivation. However, despite the positive contribution that HSCL personnel evidently make, it is timely to review the role in light of the body of evidence presented here. They should not, in an ad hoc manner, depart from original missions and mandates, but with appropriate consultation this may be a possibility.

### *The parent room*

Another feature of the HSCL scheme is the provision of a parent room which is used to support parent activities and parental development, as well as being a drop-in centre for parents within the school campus. This is another feature of the HSCL scheme to which parents are attracted.

*'Newcomer parents love the idea of coming into the parent room. When they get there, and they are welcomed in by us and by other parents, they are trusting and they really love the idea of being there. They are comfortable and can let their guard down. It gives you the chance to sit down and to listen to what they have to say- they tell their stories and this helps us identify what they need.'*

#### *Improving language skills of parents*

An aspect of HSCL of particular importance in relation to newcomer families is improving communication between home and school. Clearly, where parents do not speak English at all, this places a barrier in the communication process for all concerned, including the HSCL co-ordinator. In these circumstances the focus for parental development lies in providing English language courses for those parents who wish to avail of it. As indicated above, HSCL co-ordinators have been successful in liaising with the VEC to provide such English language courses on campus, with crèche facilities on site. This is a very strong example of schools being provided with the resources – human, physical space and financial – they require to identify parental needs and to meet those needs in a co-ordinated and targeted manner. As one co-ordinator put it, *'it is a very tight and integrated service.'*

#### *Parental support: An equity Issue*

It was suggested that care needed to be taken in managing the expectations and sensitivities of the different groups within the parent body. There was a risk that some of the local parents could get resentful of the facilities being put in place for newcomer parents, especially where places are at a premium- either in terms of the school Early Start programmes or school places in junior Infants:

*'There is always a risk that resentment can build up if there is a shortage of places, and the concentration of newcomers in one area can place a strain on communities.'*

This view had a resonance with those of many teachers across all of the focus groups.

#### *Adapting the role of the HSCL teacher?*

There was strong agreement of the need for the HSCL service to become involved in the process of integrating newcomer parents more into the life of the school. However, there was equally strong agreement that the focus of the HSCL scheme should remain on working with the most disadvantaged and marginalised families:

*'The focus of HSCL should stay on the most disadvantaged- while there may be some overlap, the motivations of newcomers may be very different to that of locals for whom the scheme was originally set up.'*

One co-ordinator felt that the presence of a co-ordinator on staff would be of considerable assistance to schools in supporting parents to integrate not only into school life, but to facilitate communication between home and school.

*'It [the HSCL scheme] has to be of assistance, it definitely helps. You do need someone who can go and talk to the people in their own situation, at home in their own place. It also gives you an insight you can't get in any other way. It helps in breaking down those barriers and building the trust with the family. So it would definitely be a help for other schools to have access to HSCL to work with these families.'*

In conclusion, one co-ordinator commented:

*'Home School Community Liaison may not be the magic answer to everything, but it has a definite role for the most needy of families, to help them and to support them.'*

However, as indicated above, currently only designated disadvantaged schools have a HSCL Co-ordinator. Consequently, four considerations emerge:

- (a) Should the role of HSCL co-ordinators be revisited and expanded to take more responsibility for inclusion of immigrant children and their families?  
or
- (b) Should the HSCL scheme be extended to other schools with considerable immigrant populations?  
or
- (c) Should this be a separate service, possibly called – 'Cultural Liaison Officer' (CLO) with an inclusion remit?  
or
- (d) Depending on the context of the challenge, it may be appropriate to
  - (i) re-allocate an existing post of responsibility to address the need or
  - (ii) Alternatively, if warranted, an additional post (or posts) may be warranted on the basis of numbers within a school?

Along with other emergent issues, this will be discussed in the final section of the report.

A summary of the views presented on the Teachers' Perspectives presented in this chapter is provided in a Summary Grid at Appendix I.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES**

#### **Introduction**

A meeting of school principals was convened in January 2007 to establish their views in relation to the challenges facing schools in the context of the changing environment. The intention was threefold. One, to inform all principals of the purpose of the study, to indicate its timescale and to secure their active co-operation. Two, to inform and refine the research design of the study in light of their views. Three, to document their perspectives on current realities as well as their suggested improvements. The principals were asked to consider, in small groups, the major issues their schools faced as they attempt to integrate newcomer children. They also considered possible changes that would assist in the integration of newcomer families into their communities. The issues raised are grouped thematically while the concluding section indicates principals' suggestions for progress. Due to the fact that there were multiple focus groups, the evidence here is a synopsis of written reports from each group and does not include verbatim quotations. As might be anticipated, their concerns are more focused on organisational, managerial and leadership issues rather than details of classroom routines. However, as indicated earlier, their testimony compliments, reinforces and extends the perspectives of teachers in particular.

The four themes and their constituent elements documented here are:

1. Challenges: meeting the needs of newcomer children.
2. School / family interface
3. Teaching, language and learning support
4. Principals' perceptions of factors affecting Integration in Dublin 15

#### **Theme One. Challenges: meeting the needs of newcomer children**

##### *Initial assessment*

Providing appropriate assessment may be particularly difficult given the social, emotional, behavioural and language difficulties with which many newcomer children present.

##### *Placement*

Placement of children is a major concern, both in terms of ability and achievement. This is particularly difficult where children have poor or no English Language skills. In addition, parents do not always give correct information in relation to the child's previous school record or age,

which can result in inappropriate placement, adding to difficulties for the teacher and other children in the class.

#### *Special needs*

Many newcomer parents have huge issues around assessment and referrals, and are consequently reluctant to be forthcoming with information regarding their children. This means that frequently minimal or no background information is provided by parents in relation to their children.

#### *Refusal to give consent for referrals*

Parents are often very reluctant to give their consent for referrals to outside agencies, resulting in children being denied access to appropriate services, with major consequences for classroom teachers in particular. These attitudes are underpinned by strong cultural norms that frequently stigmatise those with learning difficulties. Consequently, without a more neutral forum where cultural dialogue is facilitated, these attitudes are likely to persist, to the detriment of learners, while potentially also creating mistrust between home and school.

### **Theme two. School / family interface**

#### *Language/ communication*

Integrating, communicating and managing relationships with families, where neither parents nor pupils have any fluency in English, presents a major challenge to principals and teachers due to the school realities indicated in previous chapters.

Due to the two-year ceiling on access to ELS, a major consequence has been that many children were relocated from English Language Support into Learning Support. There is still ambiguity around how / whether this ban will be lifted, and schools are operating in a vacuum, due to the fact that long-term commitment is vague and resource allocation to date perceived as being inadequate.

#### *Social capital and motivation*

Many newcomer families are highly motivated and bring a very positive dynamic to the school- especially significant in disadvantaged schools. It is important therefore to differentiate between families that arrive with significant social capital, and who integrate both within and outside of school rather quickly, and those who 'stick to their own' for all sorts of understandable reasons and face considerable challenges in establishing themselves and their families in a new country, a new community and a new social context.

### *Communicating school values and routines*

Due to significant differences in cultural values, there is a need to indicate and articulate established school and community norms to parents as they enrol children in school— issues such as timekeeping, collecting and supervision of children before and after school etc. This has obvious resonances with the contributions of teachers.

### *Abuse/ corporal punishment*

Depending on cultural background and values, corporal punishment may be very prevalent in some homes. This is creating serious dilemmas for schools in terms of reporting pupil behaviour and in terms of socialising children into school norms and values.

### *“Disappearance” of pupils*

Schools invest major time and effort in taking on the challenges of integrating newcomer learners even, in a preliminary manner, and too often are repaid by the family disappearing, often without trace. We assume that, in such circumstances, the process begins all over again in another school. This is a major source of frustration for principals and teachers, and without major efforts to build more stable communities, as argued earlier, is likely to have many negative consequences, not least on the motivation and sustained commitment of teachers and the leadership of principals.

### *Documentation*

There should be uniformity and coordination regarding documentation required of parents as they enrol their pupils in schools, e.g.—PPS, RSI details etc. A primary schools’ pupil database would be of huge assistance in both tracking pupils and also in facilitating the transfer of information and reports between schools. This is an obvious area requiring the attention of policy-makers at the highest levels; standardised enrolment forms would be a good starting point.

### *Enrolment policy*

In a predominantly denominational system, playing the denominational card in terms of prioritising children of one denomination, may result in disproportionate numbers of immigrant children being enrolled in other schools. There is a knock-on effect that needs to be examined across schools. The issue of enrolment policy emerged during the conduct of the research as such a major concern in Dublin 15 and elsewhere that it was deemed necessary to devote a chapter of the report to discussion of its implications for current legislative framework.

### **Theme Three. Teaching, language and learning support**

#### *Lack of pre-school experiences*

Frequently, many of the newcomer children are enrolled without the benefit of pre-school. Consequently, they often lack the socialisation that has already been learned by other children—turn taking, queuing, toilet training etc. —‘no routines’ as one principal described this. Behaviour, as a sub-set of this issue then becomes a major challenge. Additionally, there are frequently very different cultural values and expectations regarding the role of the teacher within newcomer families. Many newcomer children arrive without having been out of the home, without any contact with the ‘outside world’ and culture- therefore the arrival in school can be a huge shock, culturally, socially and emotionally. Generally, the younger the child, the greater the possibility of ‘integration’ and language acquisition. However, in relation to the latter, this can often be a major challenge due to social isolation, and the absence of English within the home. These views concur with those expressed by teachers.

#### *Special Needs Assistant*

The presence of a SNA in the classroom has been invaluable where it is available- extra pair of hands, assisting in the socialisation, establishment of routine, friendship building, helping to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the classroom. These views also point firmly in the direction of the need for local flexibility in staffing, and the possibility of employing classroom assistants (rather than SNAs) to contribute in such circumstances.

#### *‘Parachuting’*

Even when placement issues can be overcome, a new child in a senior infant or more senior class poses new challenges in terms of socialisation within an established group. This challenge holds true for teachers and for pupils, and the degree of challenge is influenced significantly by language fluency or its absence. In such circumstances, in order to ensure greater ‘equality of participation’ through curriculum ‘differentiation’, classroom assistants would be of considerable benefit.

#### *Differentiation of challenge*

It is important to recognise that the challenges are often very different depending on the age of the child when enrolled. Dealing with the cumulative complexity of the emergent challenges therefore suggests further the necessity for greater flexibility at school level regarding staffing and its deployment. This necessity becomes even more obvious when the evidence below is considered.

#### *Learning support*

Learning Support is often required by many newcomer children, thus adding to existing demands on service and level of provision in schools. The General Allocation (GA) Model for providing access to learning support does not give any extra resources to schools which have high numbers of newcomer pupils, thus many schools have their learning support caseload stretched beyond capacity.

#### *Outside agencies stretched*

The arrival of considerable numbers of newcomer children with social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties has placed increased pressures on outside referral agencies due to a major increase in their caseload- e.g. waiting lists for Aistear Beo and Blanchardstown Child and Family Centre, and this concurs with teachers' perspectives.

#### *Absenteeism*

Schools have a major issue around the attendance patterns of some newcomer children and around the ability of the Education Welfare Board to cope with the heavy caseload. This is currently not functioning appropriately, leaving children at risk.

#### *'Enforced' enrolment*

If a school has a 'vacancy' it is obliged to enrol a child, regardless of the capability of the learner or the existing level of support provision in the school. This is of particular relevance where there is a large turnover of children within and between schools, and further reinforces the necessity for flexibility of staffing and deployment.

#### *Professional support*

There is a serious need for adequate in-service training for whole school staffs in English Language Support issues and the challenges of integration. This is an issue that should be given an immediate priority by the DES.

### **Theme Four. Principals' perceptions of factors affecting integration in Dublin 15**

#### *Integration*

We need a much more elaborate understanding of this as an issue. *Integration* needs to be articulated more clearly, both at school and community level. In this regard, there is already evidence of the emergence of 'ghettos' where roads and cul de sacs are given over exclusively to particular ethnic groups. Consequently, as indicated previously, such perceptions call for

greater coordination of planning at local authority level to avoid the emergence of ‘Banlieux’ and to prevent ‘white flight’. Additionally, as indicated in the beginning of this report, immigration is not an event. Rather, it is a dynamic and ongoing process that, from an education perspective, requires sustained commitment to capacity building where terms such as integration, inclusion, tolerance and diversity take on substantial practical meaning and relevance beyond symbolic action and vague understanding.

#### *Perspective of Irish parents*

There is a fear among some Irish parents that their children’s education will be compromised by the large numbers of newcomer children in their classrooms. Unless such legitimate fears are addressed, as already evident, those with agency and social capital, vote with their feet to the detriment of community building.

#### *‘White flight’*

This is an emerging trend in certain parts of Dublin 15, where more rental accommodation is becoming available, and the immigrant population is increasing, hastening further flight—housing policy may be a critical contributor to this emerging pattern. There is a fear that this process may be so established already in certain areas that in the absence of immediate action, long-term negative consequences are predictable and much more difficult to reverse.

#### *Housing policy*

Housing policy in Dublin 15, where high density house-building and apartment complexes are becoming increasingly prevalent, is exacerbating the situation and is part of the wider policy context—there is a need for more coherent and coordinated planning in this area.

#### *Racism*

Racism is becoming more evident—we need appropriate in and out of school attention to curb the effects of racism. Consequently, isolation rather than integration results with consequent misunderstandings, tensions and aggression. These concerns raise legitimate questions about intercultural education, how it is understood and executed. The concerns perhaps suggest that anti-racism may require particular attention.

#### *Need for policy reform*

Resources: Schools need the basics to get on with the job, such as adequate levels of staffing, physical space, a centralised translation service to assist with communication. Reduction in class sizes is a necessity to help schools deal with the diversity of needs presented in the

classroom- possibly a three year Infant cycle to assist in socialisation and immersion in English where there are high levels of newcomer children who do not have English as a first language.

#### *Role of HSCL?*

Schools need access to HSCL services in order to assist schools in reaching the more marginalised sections of the newcomer intake; to liaise on school's behalf with the wider community, to assist in developing a more coordinated approach with wider community, including: HSE, Social Workers, Blanchardstown Area Partnership, DES, NEPS, Gardai etc.

#### *Concluding comment*

These comments and concerns reinforce the perceptions of teachers and provide further evidence of the necessity to re-think overly constrained staffing policies that inhibit and prohibit flexibility of staffing at the school level. An adequate response will necessitate a change of mindset centrally, allocation of resources to local level, with separate arrangements for evidence-based practice and accountability. There is evidence presented here also that the challenges represented by changing demographics are a major community concern that challenge established and normalised planning and practices regarding allocation of housing etc. By way of concluding the chapter on Principals' Perspectives, a summary of their views is added to the Summary Grid provided at the end of the chapter on Teachers' Perspectives. (See **Appendix J**)



## CHAPTER VII

### CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

#### Introduction

As indicated in the Research Design Chapter, multiple perspectives on the challenges and realities of inclusion were to be documented, within the time and resource limitations of the study. Towards this end, a heterogeneous focus group of children of different ages and cultures was assembled. This focus group included children from several countries- a boy from Romania, a girl from Lithuania, a boy and girl from Nigeria, a girl from China, a girl from India, a boy from Pakistan and two boys from Ireland. These children were aged between nine and eleven years of age, and were enrolled in fourth and fifth class. It was decided to include somewhat older children, while there were limitations also due to concerns with language fluency. Nevertheless, their voices illuminate the study in distinctive ways.

Initially, the conversation focused on the children's' level of awareness of geographical areas around the world. The children demonstrated a very high level of awareness of the different countries and regions that were represented by children in their classrooms. This became evident in many ways, including their ability to recall the countries from which these children originated, their ability to recount details of the languages spoken there and also some of the local customs and interesting facts about these countries. The conversation then widened to a discussion of their understanding of inter-cultural and ethnic diversity in their schools and communities. Since the data in this chapter is not as extensive as in others, it was decided that a thematic analysis was unnecessary. Rather, the views of the children and presented under a series of appropriate sub-headings, and verbatim quotations are used to authenticate their views, with interpretative comment where appropriate, to indicate resonances with earlier evidence.

#### *Awareness of 'otherness'*

One Irish child was of the opinion that having children from different areas of the world was a very good thing. He commented that-

*'it is good to socialise with children from all the different countries, because, when I was in second class, there were very few children from other countries in my class and the only real people I had as best friends were all Irish. But now I have a Nigerian best friend who is great fun'.*

Another Irish child commented that with other newcomer children in the classroom, *'you get to know about their culture and their religion. I learnt that people from Pakistan go to Mosques and one boy from Pakistan showed us how he prays.'*

While the individual child reports this in a positive light, such cultural exchanges in the classroom may be surface and superficial, a kind of 'voyeuristic gaze' at the 'other' that unintentionally reinforces cultural hierarchies rather than more securely grounded mutual understanding, respect and diversity.

A Romanian boy, who has been in Ireland for six years said that he felt good that he can *'make lots of new friends from all over the world. I have been in Ireland for six years and all my memories are here, so I can't really remember having friends anywhere else.'*

A boy of Pakistani origin, who was born in Ireland and has lived here all his life commented that it was better to have a mix of children from different countries:

*'It feels like nobody is the same, like if everybody in the place was from Ireland they would not learn anything about different countries. They would have no-one to tell them, so it's better that new people from different countries come over, and if you don't understand something about their culture, you can just go up and ask them. It's better than reading it in a book.'*

A girl of Indian origin nodded vigorously and added that she has learned *'about Rome, Lithuania, Nigeria, Lagos and lots of places. And I've made friends from lots of different countries.'*

The testimony of these children indicates that they are an important resource in the multi-cultural classroom and, providing an appropriate climate is created and fostered, they have potential to become significant architects in the construction of cultural richness and diversity. They are dependent on the adult population to provide the resources and policies that will, in turn, enable them to turn such desires into realities.

#### *Experience of racism*

The children in the group were able to recall only limited experiences of racism. An interesting feature of the conversation around racism and racist behaviour was the apparent lack of awareness among the children of what racism actually meant. Two Irish boys recalled instances where they felt others had been racist towards them- even though the other children involved were also Irish! These children were, essentially, recounting instances of bullying, but used the language of racism to describe the events. They were aware that racism was a negative and

abusive experience, but seemed to lack an awareness of racial differences between those involved in racist behaviour.

However, one boy from Romania recalled that he had frequent experiences of being teased and told to go back to his own country before moving into the house in which he now lives. He spoke of other boys from that estate wanting to fight with him because of where he came from and also because he did not speak English very well. He said that this made him feel both sad and angry. However, he adds, he has found his classmates in his new school great fun and has not had any difficulties about being from Romania in his current school, which is his fourth in Ireland. These comments, perhaps, support the view that an inter-cultural education that does not explicitly address racism and anti-racism is inadequate.

Of the wider group, however, few were able to recall instances where they were subjected to racist language or abuse. When pressed if they had ever witnessed racist behaviour being directed towards other people rather than themselves, most children were able to recall instances where other people were mistreated, through racist use of language. This appeared to happen most frequently over parking around the school and in the shopping centre. The children became quite animated when describing instances- of which there appeared to be many- where racist language was directed at people of different colour or race because of their 'poor' parking or 'bad' driving behaviour. There was no shortage of examples of the racist language used which was- in large part- quite colourful! This testimony suggests that racism, particularly racist language in the community, needs to be addressed in school and explicit policies regarding its use in school articulated.

#### *Involvement in the community*

All of the children were very enthusiastic about their friendships and shared stories of the friends with whom they played after school. There was considerable evidence of children mixing and playing with children from different countries, which seemed to apply across all groups. However, there was some disparity between the involvement of children in clubs and youth activities. While many of the children were involved in at least one club, some of the newcomer children-particularly those who were more recent arrivals to the country- were not involved in any out of school club or youth group. The children also commented that in many of their clubs, there were few children from other countries. It may be assumed from this that many newcomer children are at the earlier stages of integrating into their communities, as evidenced by their lower representation in these clubs and groups. However, it also concurs with the view expressed earlier, that proactive policies at community level are necessary to promote active

participation. Without this, clubs and groups have potential to become part of the problem rather than the solution, unless they actively pursue diversity of cultural participation; there is an obligation to reach out to immigrants. Without this, clubs etc. may become overly identified with specific ethnic groups, thus becoming the genesis of gangs and attendant anti-social behaviour. Some sporting organisations have already taken a pro-active stance and have given the 'red-card' to racist attitudes and behaviour.

#### *Awareness of language difficulties*

The children in the group showed a very keen understanding of the difficulties and challenges that children face when they do not know or have only a limited command of English when they come to school. The discussion on this topic was most interesting. The group was very aware of the issues involved- perhaps not surprisingly given that in each of their classes, up to half of their classmates are newcomer children.

One boy commented on his own difficulties in starting school with no English:

*'When you come to school first, you don't have any English, and it's very hard. People come up to you and talk to you and they don't know why you can't understand them. They say to you 'what do you want' and you can't answer them.'*

The Romanian boy recalled that, when he came to school first in Ireland, he did not speak any English at all, which was difficult for him. He recalled, however, how a girl in his class was very kind to him and helped him to learn the language:

*'She was very nice to me. She was teaching me English. It made me feel good. When I made a mistake, I didn't know how to say anything. So she'd look at what was wrong on my page and gave me a rubber to rub it out and then showed me what to do.'*

A girl of Indian origin recalled how, when she came to her current school in senior infants, she had very little English but that she and her friends used body-language to play games and have fun. She said that it felt difficult initially, being in a classroom where she understood little of what was going on:

*'It was about four years ago, but I remember that it was a bit hard to communicate with others. I used a lot of body language and gestures, but the other girls were very kind to me.'*

A Nigerian girl said that it felt hard not understanding everyone in her classroom and that she felt a little scared. The Lithuanian girl nodded in agreement. When she came to Ireland she enrolled in first class with no English and described her experience as being strange:

*'I felt strange. It was, like, freaky, because people were trying to talk to you, asking you what your name was and all you could do was- she gestures that she doesn't understand- I had to use body language. I was in first class. I remember the girls who came up to talk to me. They were really kind. They tried to get my name, and then they asked the teacher. I made friends with them, and I wanted to be here. Then I started to learn English.'*

The Romanian boy recalled how other children came to school and that they were frightened too:

*'One guy, his name was Michael. He came to our school and he didn't have any English too. And he looked scared. I was trying to talk body language to him until he learned something from me. Then we became friends and came to my house and I went to his house.'*

The newcomer children were enthusiastic in listing the number of languages that they and their parents speak at home. Each child spoke at least one other language, with many spoke or conversed with their parents in a language other than English. This was of huge interest to the Irish children, who regretted that they only spoke English at home!

This evidence also indicates that different strategies appear to be used depending on the age of the children, with a greater preference for body language among younger pupils. Nevertheless, what is most remarkable is the willingness, despite linguistic constraints, to communicate and engage with others. There needs to be policies and practices that support and enable this potential whereby 'equality of participation' becomes a reality.

#### *Positive outlook*

The children demonstrated a remarkably promising outlook in relation to the multi-cultural nature of their school and their community. They were in strong agreement that this is a positive development from which all can learn. The children spoke enthusiastically about their knowledge of other countries and cultures- be it how their Islamic classmates showed them how they pray, or the number of languages in which they can introduce themselves, or the photographs they had shared from a visit one of the children had made to their grandparents in Pakistan. There was a strong sense of how the world has 'shrunk'- at one point in the process, a Lithuanian girl was sharing her language difficulties in coming to school with no English with a child from India.

There was a very strong sense that these children are both at ease with each other and confident both in themselves and in their place in their communities. Their experience of school and community life has been one where multiculturalism is the norm, where cultural and ethnic differences are a given, and therefore, normal. It was a most positive experience to share their experiences and listen to their perspectives on the diversity of the communities in which they are growing up.

### **Concluding comment**

While this positive picture is encouraging, it should not provide an excuse to avoid more proactive policies and supports. These children, it is reasonable to assume, had both linguistic and social capital, perhaps not as widely shared among the immigrant community generally. Their perspective, therefore, lead to the more considered view that with appropriate sustained policies and practices, imaginatively and flexibly adapted and implemented at local level, children will seize the opportunities they present and represent. Through their own agency, with adequate support, they are the prospect of a new tolerant and culturally diverse Ireland. (A summary of the children's perspectives is provided at **Appendix K**).

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **PARENTS, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY**

#### **Introduction**

As indicated in chapter two, when soliciting the perspectives of parents, a less structured approach was deemed most appropriate to hearing them speak of personal and family experiences since immigrating to Ireland and their engagement with the education system in particular. Consequently, we choose to use the case study method as the most appropriate means of gaining access to and insight into the realities of being an immigrant in the 'new' Ireland. Each case is presented separately, while a summary grid is provided at the end to identify similarities and differences. It should be borne in mind also that those who participated had considerable experience of the Irish system with the result that the perspectives of more recent immigrants, possibly those with less social capital, may be under-represented here. Nevertheless, their testament is a unique and valuable contribution to the emerging picture.

There are seven cases. Two cases are of Romanian families, while the other five cases include—an Indian, Nigerian, Malaysian, Zimbabwean and an Irish family. An Irish family was included to gain perspectives on attitudes towards multicultural communities as they impact on aspects of schooling. Each case is presented separately. Names have been changed to protect the privacy and anonymity of participants. However, in a desire to retain the personal dimension of participants, we have given them 'Irish' names, without intent of cultural superiority on our part. The cases have not been structured thematically as in previous chapters, while a series of sub-headings have been inserted to lend structure to them and as a means of indicating the issues raised with reference to schooling and the challenges to minorities. In the interest of clarity and succinctness, our words are used to construct the cases, while throughout every effort has been made to stay close to the initial account, and occasional verbatim statements are included to lend both 'authenticity' and 'credibility'. In the interest of making the impact of the cases cumulative, interpretive comments are included at the end of each case. Comments connect directly to educational issues, the primary focus of this research, while seeking to situate them within the wider concern of pluralism, diversity and the challenges of social cohesion in a multi-cultural environment. The final section of this chapter deals with 'community', and community organisations and the necessity to provide more coherent and comprehensive planning across a wide range of sectors, to strengthen the fabric of provision in the process of building communities.

## Case study one

### *Family History*

Anna is a Romanian national. She is married to a Romanian man and has two children: one is in senior infants and the other is a 17 months old baby.

### *Ireland of the welcomes!*

She first came to Ireland in 2000, and lived in a small apartment in the inner city for two years. During this time her first child was born. She describes feeling isolated and very lonely in her first years- living in the Inner city was a bad experience for her.

### *Relocation: putting down roots / rebuilding community*

She moved to Diswellstown five years ago having heard about the area from some friends who lived there. Now there are many Romanian families in the area. She feels very welcome here. She has made friends with Irish families but socialises with Romanian families. She feels this area is very 'homey'. She picks her child up from school every day, speaks to other mothers each day and feels it's a great area for families- she recalls wistfully her sense of isolation in the inner city compared to the warmth and security of her present home.

### *Language: home and school*

Anna speaks only Romanian at home to her children and feels it is important for her children to know their roots, to know that their parents are Romanian. She says:

*'I think that its important for the child to know that his parents are coming from a different country and to accept that when he is older. I think that this is part of him and he should never forget it. I think he can't be one hundred per cent Irish, but he can be Romanian Irish.... I think children are very capable of enhancing both cultures.'*

Anna feels that it will help her children to grow and develop if she continues to interact with them in Romanian, and that her children will pick up the English they need to learn in school by playing in the community with other children. She feels there is no need for parents to 'push' English on their children as this will happen in school anyway.

Anna feels very strongly that it is vital that her son also learns English in order to integrate fully into society. She argues that it is *'crucial that children have English before coming to school.'* This happened with her son at first in Montessori when he mixed with other children and developed further as he played with other kids on the street.

### *School enrolment*

Anna is very happy with her school. Her son settled in very well as he had two years of pre-school. She wasn't initially aware of what parents should do to enrol children in school. She

did not have friends in the area so she had no one to ask. This, she feels, made it a little difficult for her initially. However, when she applied for a place for her son in her local school, she did not experience any difficulties in enrolling him, he got a place straight away. *Anna* adds that she is very aware how difficult it is now for parents to get places in primary schools in the area and she feels very sorry for them.

#### *Confidence, community and active citizenship*

*Anna* has become more involved in the activities of the school as her confidence has grown. The school's newsletter keeps her in touch with everything that is going on in the school and she believes that this is useful to all parents. She is now involved in an inter-cultural committee within the school, which gives her the opportunity to find out more about the school. *'We discuss cultural issues that are raised in the school and the possible solutions and alternatives to better education for families.'* She believes that this presents her with a good opportunity to tell her wider group of friends about the school and that she can share information with them. There is a strong tradition within Romania of parental involvement in schools. She says:

*'Parents have more meetings with their teachers during the year than the one meeting in Ireland. Parents speak to their teachers more than here.'*

*Anna* believes, however, that there are many opportunities for most parents to become involved in the school, if they choose to do so.

#### *Parental involvement: the school and community*

*Anna* believes the single biggest barrier to this involvement is the lack of English language among newcomer parents. There are, she says, still very few newcomer parents involved in the parent activities of the school. She suggests that language classes might help. She believes that it is not an issue that parents don't want to come to school and get involved, it is more that they are uncomfortable. This may also be due to cultural factors.

*Anna* believes strongly that parents should learn the language of the society in which they live. She expresses concern that some people do not appear to want to learn English. She refers to some women who do not engage with the outside world, do not learn the language and rely on their husbands to deal with society. She says:

*'It is difficult for me to understand how you can live in a country like this, in a civilised world, and not make an effort to learn the minimum words you need to get in contact with somebody.'*

She believes that this is one of the biggest obstacles to parents getting involved in the life of the school.

*Language support: key to children's Integration*

*Anna* believes the school is doing a very good job of integrating children into the school. She feels the language support system in the school works very well, and makes it easier for children to be part of their class and to take part in the activities of the school.

Overall, she is very happy with the manner in which her family has settled into the community. Her son has a lot of Irish friends from many different countries. He is involved in speech and drama after school and enjoys the activities as well as the language learning opportunities this affords. He is involved in a local soccer club and a swimming club.

While *Anna* recognises that there is considerable movement of people, especially newcomer families in and out of the area, she is happy to stay where she is and plans to make Ireland her home in the long-term. She would advise other people arriving in Ireland from abroad to live in the suburbs, in a housing estate with other families, rather than staying in the city centre- although the city centre is convenient for work and services, she believes strongly that it is not a place to bring up a family.

***Interpretive comment***

It may be suggested that this mother has agency, has learned to navigate the system successfully, to ensure her son's successful participation in school and community life. She has invested considerable 'emotional labour' in this enterprise, while providing clear indication also that she is anxious for her son to retain Romanian language, culture and identity, while simultaneously becoming Irish. This is a delicate balance, one chosen by her and her family, thus negotiation of a hybrid identity is potentially different for all concerned. There appears also to be phases, from feeling lonely and isolated, to finding the confidence and the 'voice' (and language) to engage more publicly.

## **Case study two**

### *Family History*

Jenny is a Nigerian mother who came to live in Ireland in 2002 with two of her children. Initially, She lived in Navan for four months, but did not like the experience. She says:

*‘... the environment I was in there, I did not like it, so we decided to look for a residence in Dublin 15. I moved and I loved the landlord, he was a nice man. So I moved down here and decided to stay.’*

Jenny says that her experience of living in Dublin 15 has been a very positive one. She knew some people who lived here before moving in, and they helped her with the move.

### *School enrolment*

She enrolled her first son into junior infants in the local Catholic school. She found this process difficult as there was not a place for him straight away and he had to wait a number of weeks before securing a place. On the day Jenny obtained a place for him in school, she said the school was very helpful, assisting her to get the uniform and books. *‘it was lovely meeting them that day, it was God-sent’*, she recalls.

### *Experience of schooling: child and parent*

Her son adjusted well to school:

*‘...he always says he has the best school in the world, especially his teachers and his principal. He is enjoying the school, and even myself I am enjoying the school.’*

Jenny goes to the school daily and sees the teachers every day in the school. She has very high praise for the work of the school- *‘all the teachers, they are tolerant, they are lovely, they don’t discriminate, in short I love them’*.

Her second child was enrolled in junior infants in 2005 and is also very happy in school and has settled in well. However, when Jenny tried to enrol her youngest daughter in the school in September 2006, she could not get a place for her, and her name was placed on a waiting list. Although she had only turned four in August of that year, Jenny was anxious to start her in school as she felt that her daughter was bright and ready for school. In addition, she adds that she could not afford to send her daughter to a crèche.

### *Enrolment policy: impact on families*

Initially she tried to enrol her daughter in a school in Finglas, but the distance proved too much. Eventually she found a place for her in Dunboyne. This created big difficulties for Jenny, as she does not drive, and her daughter has to get a bus to and from school. This,

she feels, is not the fault of the local school, as they take the oldest children first, but it makes her life very difficult. Jenny will try to transfer her daughter back to the local school if and when a place becomes available.

*Accessing educational facilities: limited economic resources*

Jenny is disappointed at the lack of affordable crèches in the area:

*'The crèches around me are too expensive. One costs €75 per week and another charges €55 for three days. Since I am not working I cannot afford this.'*

While her husband attended training in the city centre, her two daughters had access to one day in a crèche free of charge. This was some help, but she adds, it was not enough. Her husband is studying computers in the city centre, but is not yet working. She is at home full-time.

Jenny gets on very well with the other parents in the school and in her children's classes. She is very relaxed with them and talks to them every day:

*'... even after school, we stay, we greet each other, it's so lovely, you know, it makes me have more hope to stay in the area.'*

This was not the case in the other schools her eldest son had attended before moving to Dublin 15.- 'I'm so glad we moved, with this school, I am very happy, I have confidence in this school.'

*Social life: inclusion?*

Jenny socialises mostly with other Nigerian families, either at family celebrations or parties, or in her church in the city centre. She also worships in the local Catholic Church as her husband is a Catholic.

*Inclusion and employment opportunity?*

Overall, Jenny says her experience of living in Dublin 15 has been very positive. She has never felt unwanted or badly treated. She would, however, love the opportunity to work. This is the biggest problem that she and many of her friends face. She expresses her views in the following terms:

*'... those who are on Social Welfare, who live under the social, when we are working it is a problem, they stop everything for us and it's not easy. They should help those that are working...like if someone starts to work at least in some financial aspect they should help us.'*

She relates the story of her husband who tried to get a job. He was offered €450 per week. However, the house rent was over €1,000 and the family would stand to lose their housing benefit if he started working- *'if we started paying for everything, we would be left with nothing'*, she adds. This is an issue for many of her Nigerian friends; if they try to make the first steps to get work, they lose all of their benefits- *'immediately we start to work the support would be taken away from us. They would take away everything.'* She believes that getting a council house would help solve things, as they could work and pay a smaller rent to the council. They are on a waiting list, but it does not seem likely they will get a house. The other alternative, she believes, would be to go further away from Dublin to get cheaper housing and then start to work. This is not something she would like to do.

#### *Home is where 'family' resides?*

Jenny has not been home to Nigeria since she came to Ireland and misses it very much.

*'I really miss home. I used to be my Daddy's pet, you know. Leaving home for the last five years plus is not easy. Maybe when we start working we could invite our family over to visit us but right now it's not possible.'*

In the longer-term, she would prefer to stay in Ireland:

*'I want to stay here because it is a good place for me. I have peace here and peace amongst everybody around me, my neighbours at home, the school my children go to; that is the most important thing. I have peace with them. So everything around me, I love it.'*

#### *Experience of racism?*

At times, she sees evidence of racism:

*'in the wider environment, for example in town, or on the bus, when people shout: 'go to your country, go to your country', that makes me feel sad.... In Nigeria, there are many whites who do good work there, and we don't care that they are there. So I don't see why they should tell me to go to my own country.'*

If her children witness this, she explains that not everyone is like this, and that they just don't understand. Her son likes to play Gaelic football and is also a member of the local soccer club. The coaches are very friendly and very supportive, she says. Her children also attend speech and language classes in the local school.

#### *My future: Dublin 15*

Overall, Jenny is very pleased with her life. She has a strong faith and thanks God for the many gifts he has given her. She finishes the interview by stating that:

'Everywhere I go I think that I meet good Irish people. God sent them to me ... all the teachers, they smile, they show love to my family. Coming to this area I have not regretted it. I thank God for it!'

### **Interpretive comment**

The challenges of navigating the education system are more evident in this case, and these become more significant depending on the social capital of the actors involved. There are similar resonances with the first case, where loneliness does not go away, but if things are working out, then the pain becomes tolerable, part of the delicate balancing act that emigrants and immigrants have always had to juggle with, as part of an ongoing internal dialogue as well as a more public engagement. There is evidence also, as in the previous case, of the importance of social networks, of socialising both 'within' and 'beyond' your ethnic community, while there may be some evidence also that African immigrants are more likely to be subjected to racist comments than eastern European minorities.

### **Case study three**

#### *Family History*

David is an Indian doctor who lives in Dublin 15. His wife is also a doctor. They have two children, both of whom are in primary school in the area. They both completed their initial training in India and came to Ireland to gain further professional experience and qualifications. He came to Ireland in 1997 and studied for his fellowship in Ireland and England. Upon completion of their training, the couple elected to stay in Ireland and came to Dublin 15 in 2003.

#### *Dublin 15: 2003*

They came to Dublin 15, he explains, for a number of reasons, including the fact that rents used to be more reasonable, the houses were located close to the hospitals and a number of their friends had already settled in the area. They initially rented a house and then bought a house in the area. Their eldest daughter was born in India- a choice the family made for their first child.

After the birth of their eldest daughter in India, the mother and daughter returned to Ireland to be with the child's father. They initially enrolled their daughter in a Catholic school in Drogheda, to fit in with her mother's work commitments, but then moved their daughter to their local primary school in Dublin 15.

#### *Changing community: unplanned?*

David is very aware of the dramatic increase in the population of Dublin 15- he recalls that of 90,000 new houses built in the country in 2006, some 15% were in Dublin 15. He also provides the statistic that in James Connolly Memorial Hospital, which is the regional hospital for Dublin 15, the number of people attending A & E between 2004 and 2006 has increased by some 40,000. This has happened, he says, in the absence of strategic planning for the area- unlike Adamstown which, David points out, is an example of pioneering infrastructural planning.

#### *Experience of schooling*

Both parents are very happy with their local school. David says that although the school has had problems accommodating all applicants for places, he has, nevertheless:

*'... seen how the school has worked with the parents and with the community and how the school has received tremendous support from the community, which is a compliment to the team and staff of the school.'*

He sees the lack of infrastructure in education in Dublin 15 as mirroring the infrastructural shortcomings in healthcare, whether primary health care, A & E or access to specialist services.

#### *Increasing diversity: internal migration*

David has seen an increase in the number of newcomer children in the school- something that was not the case when he initially enrolled his daughter in junior infants. Again, he sees this reflected in his professional work. He adds that there is considerable transience in the immigrant population, which means that appointments are missed, people arrive and leave without giving due notice. He also speculated that this must be as big an issue for schools as for the health service.

#### *Work, family and continuity*

David has experience of this transience himself personally as a junior Doctor. The nature of the one-year contract that terminates on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July each year means that junior doctors may have to relocate one year after the other. He sees colleagues who may have had a number of rotations in the Dublin area left with no choice but to relocate to another part of the country. They are left with the dilemma of either uprooting their family in its entirety, facing an impossible commute, or splitting the family across two homes in two locations. This is a peril of the job that shows no sign of changing. In fact David regrets that either he or his wife may have to give up their specialist work, if they are unable to maintain positions in the Dublin region and opt for practice in general medicine. This, he regrets, is '*a huge sacrifice to have to make, to come from a specialist to a general practice.*' He likens it to an astronaut being asked to drive busses! However, the family are very happy with the area in which they live and with the school where the children are attending, so they are prepared to make the sacrifice if it becomes absolutely necessary.

#### *School ethos: Inclusion?*

David has no issues with his children attending a Catholic school. He feels that he wants his children to get the best from their education, including exposure to other faiths, including the Catholic faith. He therefore has no issues with his children being involved in religious instruction in the school. In fact he believes that it should be a condition of children being enrolled in a Catholic school that they take part in the religious life of the school. He accepts that this may be problematic for some families coming from other cultures and other faith groups. He maintains, however, that schools should retain the right to uphold their own particular ethos in the face of this change.

**Interpretive comment**

Clearly, social and cultural capital are significant influences on how immigration is experienced, and expectations too are critical, while the language register used by the interviewee sits comfortably in more abstract general terminology, while quite definite views are expressed regarding school ethos and denominational schooling. This case also indicates that for this family immigration is a very different experience when compared with the previous accounts, thus reinforcing the view that there is a very definite diversity of needs within the various minority communities, and this too needs to be reflected in differentiated provision within the education system, as well as in various supports at local level, particularly in relation to language and public participation.

## Case study four

### *Family History*

Larry is a Romanian national who arrived in Ireland with his wife in 1996. Initially he had planned to live in England. However, when he arrived there, friends told him that if he wanted to stay in England, he could make money but that Ireland would be a better prospect for the long-term:

*'... they told me if I wanted a long-term prospect, papers and education and so on, go to Ireland. Because my wife was pregnant, you know with that legislation, with the Irish-born baby, we came to Ireland and thank God we kept everything together here.'*

In Romania he had worked with a telecommunications company from 1992 to 1995, but prospects and money there were poor.

### *Ireland: initial experience / inclusion*

Initially he and his wife had to stay in bed and breakfast accommodation, which was paid for by the Department of Social Welfare. Their first child was born in 1996 and the second was born in 1998. As a result of having an Irish child, Larry and his wife *'got residency and the right to work and the right to stay in Ireland and so on- legal status.'* Larry says that getting legal status changed his life- inside he felt more safe and confident and more secure as an individual. He got work and study and this was very important for him. From the outside, he felt protected, that he was somebody and that he could take his place in society, personally and professionally.

### *Split family: the 'price' of belonging*

His first-born son was raised back in Romania from the age of two to five years of age, as was their first daughter from the age one to four. While this was a burden, it was ultimately a financial decision. He and his wife worked all the hours they could get, and saw little of each other during the period. As Larry recalls:

*'Our plan, our goal was to bring back the kids and have their own playground in the back garden, with a little bit of grass.'*

These times were quite demanding:

*'We were living in a block of flats. It was full of emigrants, Romanians, Africans, Russians and so on. We managed all together at the time because we were all together against the Irish.'* [Larry laughs heartily at the thought!] .... No offence, that was how we felt at the time. But there was no problem between us.'

He explained that the Irish were hostile to immigrants, as they felt they were coming here *'taking their jobs and such.'* He feels that this is probably an understandable reaction.

#### *Becoming Irish: cultural conjuncture / disjuncture?*

He adopted an Irish name, which is similar in pronunciation to his native Romanian name. Most of his friends also adapted their names. He did not feel that this was a loss of his identity but more a way of paying respect to Irish people and *'making myself more easily adaptable and integrated into Irish society.'*

#### *Economic security: family reunion*

In 2000 Larry and his wife bought a house in Dublin 15. They did not get to visit their children in Romania, but trusted their parents to bring them up on their behalf. They brought their eldest boy to Ireland the year before he was due to start primary school. Larry was somewhat troubled by his behaviour at first: *'He was like a clown. He was interacting with other children, but making no sounds, no voice, no expression and no communication at all'.* This was very worrying for Larry: *'he seemed to have an inner world but little interaction with the outside world.'*

It took both children a number of months to get to know their parents when they came to Ireland. Larry recalls that their daughter, when she came back, called him 'Mister' for a month or two. *'She didn't realise I was her dad and that this was her mum.'*

#### *Experience of schooling: identity?*

In the children's school environment, Larry feels that his children have settled in and adapted very well. At home, his children are beginning to pose some searching questions in relation to their identity, and their sense of Irishness, which Larry says, is a big issue for all his Romanian friends who have children. Questions raised by their children include:

*'why do Irish children have an Irish God and Romanian children have a Romanian God?', 'do we belong to the Irish culture or the Romanian culture?'*

Larry says he tends to push the Irish culture more than the Romanian, because longer-term, he expects to stay in Ireland. Five years ago, his plan would have been to return to Romania, but because the economy is not looking good there, he plans to stay in Ireland. However, he adds, that if the economy does go bad in Ireland, he always has Romania as 'a fall-back'.

### *Language, culture and inclusion*

Language is a huge issue for Larry and his friends. His friends agree that the first language should be Romanian as it is '*their mother language*', so it should be spoken in the home. This is how they operate, by speaking Romanian in the home and English in wider society.

However, Larry speaks English at home to his children, his wife speaks Romanian and the children respond to *both* in English, '*so the kids are slowly, slowly losing the Romanian language even if I'm not happy to say that.*' He would like to keep the two languages going but finds it very difficult, for example he explains: '*if I want to explain about Romanian history and I do it in English they understand, but if I do it in Romanian they won't understand one bloody thing!*'

Ultimately he realises that he is living in Ireland and this is a choice he has made. He explains that he would ultimately be happy for his children to know their Romanian history as well as their Irish history through English.

### *Language support: a major contribution / cultural discontinuity*

Larry is very grateful for the English language support provided in his children's school.

*'I'm very, very much obliged, to be honest with you, for the help for the support of the school .... I saw it myself as a great big improvement, I mean I was able to speak with my son in English. That was a big, big achievement!'*

Larry also speaks of tension in his home between the two cultures:

*'..At the moment, the biggest conflict in the house is, do they belong to the Irish culture or to the Romanian culture, to the Irish God or the Romanian God, are they Irish or are they Romanian? That's the biggest dilemma in the house now.'*

Larry explains the frustration of his children around their identity:

*'if I tell my kids they are Romanian, they will be frustrated, they will have a kind of a step-back in relation to Irish kids. If I tell them they are Irish, they will have another, better relationship with the Irish kids- I find that very tricky.'*

Larry likens this to the experience of the first generation of Irish and how they might have felt when they emigrated to America. He believes that it may take a generation before this is resolved.

#### *Community: exclusion / inclusion*

On the street where Larry lives, there are people from many different countries, including Ireland. He has observed that the Irish children play less with foreign kids, while kids from other countries play very well together. This, he believes, reflects more on the level of exposure of the parents and on how comfortable they are with difference than it reflects on the children. He says that the reasons for this can be very complex and he is reluctant to generalise as to why this happens.

#### *Career trajectory: securing a future*

Larry works in IT and is also studying to gain more qualifications. He is happy to stay here while the money is good. He is content that his children are happy here and feels that he would only leave Ireland out of economic necessity. However, he would only emigrate to a country where English is spoken, as his children speak and think through English. This would be a major consideration for him. For now, he says, *'the future looks bright, Thank God!'*

#### **Interpretive comment**

Larry's 'story' provides an insightful and illuminating picture of the significance of language and culture in the shaping of identity and a sense of belonging, and the role played by both school and community in this regard. His case raises fundamental questions regarding minority rights and mother tongue, or heritage language learning, while there is some suggestion also that, where immigrants are concentrated in particular areas, due to rental property and lack of regulation in this sector of the market, minorities are more likely to socialise among themselves, with long-term consequences for social cohesion.

## **Case study five**

### *Family History*

Ciara is a Malaysian national, who lives in Dublin 15. She is married and has three children, two children in school and one at pre-school. Her husband came to Ireland in 1992 to study in the Royal College of Surgeons and graduated in 1998. *Ciara* came to Ireland in 1995. She studied Montessori and Special Needs care. Their first son was born in 2000. During her second pregnancy, in 2002, the family bought a house in Dublin 15, as her husband had a job in the hospital in Blanchardstown. They have visited their home in Malaysia twice in the last six years. Ciara's husband got his first job in Letterkenny. All jobs since that first placement have been in Dublin. Initially, they lived in Kinsealy as a family.

### *Language and Identity*

At home, the family speaks English and Mandarin. They encourage the children to speak Mandarin more at home. It is a concern of *Ciara's*, and of other immigrant parents she knows, that their children should be fluent in their mother tongue. So Ciara gives extra tuition at home in reading and speaking Mandarin. She does not see this as a tension or a conflict- she believes that it is inevitable that children would learn the local language from the environment but would also wish to ensure that they develop fluency in their mother tongue.

'We try our best to get our children to speak our own mother tongue, we do not want them to forget our own mother tongue.'

The mother and father try not to speak any English to their baby, in an effort to help him concentrate on Mandarin. In addition, their baby is picking up English from the environment, television, and from listening to his sister and brother, who speak English to each other all the time. Ciara's family have friends from Malaysia and Irish friends also.

### *School enrolment: mixed experience*

Their first son was enrolled in the local Catholic primary school, and the family did not experience any difficulties in securing a place for him. He adjusted well to school- he was able to read before he started Junior Infants, much to the surprise of his teacher!

When the time came to start their second child in school in 2006, she was unsuccessful in securing a place and was placed on a waiting list. As a result the parents decided to enrol him in the 'Educate Together' school. Although a place finally became available in late Summer in the original school, the family had made commitments to the Educate Together school and decided to send their daughter there.

Ciara found that experience difficult. The children are now in two different schools, with different starting times, different school closures, in-service days, staff meetings etc. This makes planning quite difficult for families, she says.

Her son's school has grown very quickly. When he enrolled in junior infants, there were only 180 children in the school, whereas now there are over 580 pupils. This, she believes, has changed the school, as it has become more difficult to manage the school, from a health and safety point of view. The Educate Together school is smaller, and her daughter loves going there.

#### *School, family, community*

Ciara says that she gets on very well with both sets of parents in each school. Her children's friends and their parents visit their home, and they also socialise with them. This is a very positive experience for the family: *'they mix rather well and they integrate into this society and we have no problems.'*

Ciara has seen a difference in Ireland now compared to when she came here ten years ago.

*'We were a minority group in Ireland. I remember if I went to the city centre and saw a Chinese person, I was so excited, as there were so few. Now it is so different as there are so many nationalities.'*

#### *Parental involvement: the language divide*

Ciara is very active in the parent activities of her schools. She would see language problems as one of the biggest difficulties facing newcomer families. This, she believes, has created difficulties for parents in understanding how, for example, to enrol children in school, in understanding notes that go home etc. It also presents, she argues, cultural difficulties for parents:

*'... as parents from other countries don't really understand the culture or the policy of the schools in Ireland ... so they still think they can enrol their children in school when the children are two. It means, actually, that they don't really understand the policies or the rules of the education system here.'*

She believes, however, that in more recent years, people are adapting better, finding out more and settling in better.

#### *Responsive school communities: more resources*

She believes schools have done a lot to help parents and to involve them in the life of the school. She believes that some parents coming from other countries tend to stand back from these activities, because of language difficulties, and tend not to get involved. She feels that

the availability of translation services might help parents to understand more and maybe get more involved in the life of the school.

Compared to Malaysia, Ciara believes that there is a lot of help from Social Workers, Education, Citizens Information centres etc. to help parents to integrate and to become part of society. She feels that: *'generally, if you want to get information, if you want to get help, if you want to integrate into the society, it is so easy in Ireland.'* The barriers to integration, she adds, depends on the individual, on whether they actually want to integrate- *'for some, they do not want to, they live in their own society in their own group. These groups of people, we cannot help.'*

#### *Valuing education: formal and informal*

Ciara values the education system in Ireland and would wish their children to benefit from it. She feels that the education system is much better than in Malaysia. She feels that it is less pressured in Ireland, that children have freedom to learn, freedom to speak and develop their imagination. She feels that at home in Malaysia, the education system is more formalised and puts greater pressure on children. There are frequent examinations in Malaysia, with a major examination at the end of primary school. This determines the post-primary school they will attend. Thus children are under greater pressure, and the family does not wish to put their children through this. While Ciara would not like to see such exams in Ireland, she would like more formal assessment of children in school and more feedback in relation to how her children are performing relative to other children.

In the longer term, the family is content to stay in Ireland and are very happy remain in Dublin 15.

#### **Interpretive comment**

Ciara's case, and that of her family, indicates the dynamic nature of being an immigrant, while patterns change significantly depending on the size and extent of minority groups, while there is evidence also that with social and cultural capital, participation is easier, yet she recognises that language and confidence are major barriers to participation. It is reasonable to ask whether or not participation is entirely a matter for individuals and their families rather than raising awareness of entire communities and creating a policy climate that encourages and fosters such cultural exchange and mutual respect. This and other cases support the view that the process of public participation is, as indicated in chapter one, inter-generational rather than a singular event.

## **Case Study Six**

### *Family History*

Lucy is a married woman from Zimbabwe. Her husband is a computer engineer. He received a secondment to come and work in Ireland in 2001. He brought his wife, Lucy and their two-year old son with them. She had been studying in Zimbabwe at the time.

### *Settling in difficulties*

They initially settled in Rathgar for one year, before moving to Knocklyon where they lived for a further two years. Initially Lucy found Ireland 'boring and lonely.' She explains that there were very few Africans in Ireland at that time. She notes that there still are relatively few Africans in South Dublin and that there are more in West Dublin. They bought their home in Dublin 15 in 2005. Her family returns to Zimbabwe every Christmas for one month.

### *School enrolment*

Her first child started school in Knocklyon when he was four. Lucy had no difficulties in placing her child in school there and describes the process as very easy, unlike the experience in Dublin 15. She was unable to secure a place in her local primary school, or any primary school in Dublin 15. In fact the family had to continue bringing him to Knocklyon for four months. It involved his Dad bringing him over and back in his car, or his mother getting two busses in each direction to bring him to school. Lucy describes this experience as stressful and terrible.

### *Movement between schools*

She finally secured a place for him in another Catholic school in Dublin 15, not her local school, for the start of senior infants. Similarly, she was unable to find a primary school for her four-year old boy in Junior Infants in September 2005. She waited a further year and started him in her local primary school in September 2006. Lucy recalls the stress and the difficulties of getting two children to two different schools for the same starting time. This caused her huge upset and difficulty and was very trying for all her family.

In April 2006, a place finally became available in second class for her older son in her local school, much to her relief. She adds, regretfully, that he should have been in this school since mid-way through junior infants, but has only now managed to transfer.

Her quest for school places did not, however, end there. In April 2006, Lucy and her husband brought her younger brother to Ireland from Zimbabwe. He needed a place in fifth class. After just under four weeks of waiting, Lucy finally secured a place for him with the other boys in the local school. Lucy was overjoyed at this. She said that it was easier to get a place for the

older boy as the waiting list is not as long for senior classes. Now, all three boys attend the same school and are very happy there.

Lucy said that when she bought her house in Dublin 15, she had no idea that there was such a shortage of school places. While she likes living in Dublin 15 and is very happy with the neighbourhood, she seriously considered moving out because of the stress of getting her boys to school. She adds, with a smile, *'all that is over now, thank God!'*

#### *Family, friendship and community*

There are very few Zimbabweans in Dublin 15, but Lucy has made friends with one Zimbabwean family in the area. She has few Irish friends. She recalls that in Knocklyon, Irish mothers who had cars would bring her son to school and were very friendly. In Dublin 15 people are less friendly or less willing to make contact. She wonders if this is because the people in Knocklyon were 'more mature.'

#### *Integrating newcomers*

Lucy is very happy with her local school. She thinks the school is trying hard to integrate all the children from different countries but regrets that there are not more classrooms and schools available for the many children who, like her children, could not get a school place. She feels that the government should give newcomers more information. In relation to her own experience, she says: *'when I came here first, I had no information on where parents should go, how they should look for school places.'* This is information that should be given to all newcomer parents. She feels that her children have integrated well in Ireland. She adds:

*'I think they think they are Irish. They forget about Zimbabwe, it is like a foreign thing to them.'*

She feels proud that her children feel Irish and feel at home: *'I feel proud. They feel at home. I would not want them to feel out of place.'*

#### *Language: home and school*

Lucy and her husband speak several languages, including Shona, their national language. The boys spoke Shona very fluently at home before they started school. However, since school, they have completely forgotten this language, which has surprised her, even though Lucy and her husband continue to speak to each other in Shona, the boys only understand English. At mealtime, the family now speak English together, as it is the one language they all understand. Lucy and her husband converse in another language, while Lucy and her brother converse in yet another. This makes for a very interesting house, she adds.

More interestingly, and more surprising to Lucy, she spoke Shone to her baby, up to the age of two. However, he did not respond to her and made very few sounds or attempts to speak. She noticed, however, that he was responding to the older boys as they spoke English. Lucy then changed to conversing with him in English and he started talking English almost straight away.

#### *Experiences of Racism?*

Lucy finds Ireland 'a complicated' place to live. She recognises that she is not a refugee or asylum seeker, that she has come to Ireland legally and that she and her husband have worked for everything they have. On the whole, people do not treat her differently around her home or school. However, she has experienced racism in the workplace. She works at weekends in the airport and has been treated quite badly at times by her work colleagues. She says this is a characteristic of older colleagues, rather than younger ones. They may call her black, or make funny comments about her. She finds this upsetting, but says it is difficult to highlight these issues or to complain about them. While her company has procedures for dealing with racism, she says that the racism is often hidden:

*'If people do not do it in the open, there is no evidence so it is difficult to report, so they hide it. Like, someone can do favours for a white person, but when it comes to me they feel like I'm the slave and I have to do more. So you can't go and say this person is doing this, you are treated differently. It is not other foreign workers doing this, it is Irish, mostly, I am sorry to say, older Irish. I think they are not used to us. I feel like they think they fought for this country, to get where it is and then we just came in took their riches or something, that's how they feel. But the younger generation they are ok.'*

Lucy says her husband, as a professional, does not encounter this type of racism, nor does her family in the neighbourhood.

#### *Long-term commitment to Ireland*

Lucy is anxious for her children to join in clubs and to take part in local activities. While she feels her children are somewhat young, she would still like them to become involved. She is also looking for clubs for her brother to join, so that he can make friends and keep busy. Lucy feels that sport and clubs are a great way for children to mix and get to know each other. In the longer term, Lucy and her husband are very happy to be in Ireland and intend to settle here. Overall, she would describe her experience in the country as positive. The only major problem, she adds is the shortage of school places, but that has been sorted for her too.

**Interpretive comment**

Even for those individuals and families with social and cultural capital, becoming 'established' in a new social context is a major challenge, and the ambiguity of putting down roots while seeking simultaneously to retain mother tongue and culture is a major dilemma that families resolve differently. Those with resources find various means of circumventing enrolment challenges, while this and other cases also suggest that Dublin 15 may be more challenging than other contexts, with other unique features in terms of social dynamics given the concentration of immigrant communities. Consciously, or otherwise, the 'new' Ireland is already in gestation, the ongoing fresh ferment within families and communities generating a rainbow of hybrid identities.

## **Case study seven**

### *Family history*

Bernie is an Irish mother, married to an Irish man and has lived in Dublin 15 all her life. She has two children who are in third class and junior infants in her local Catholic primary school. Bernie is Catholic.

### *New school development*

She recalls that when she enrolled her eldest child in school, she had some misgivings about where she should send him. This would be a new school, starting in temporary accommodation on another site. Although she could have started her first son when he was four, she decided to wait until he was five, by which time the school had been up and running for one year. The school grew in temporary accommodation at a rapid rate, which meant that there were difficulties with securing accommodation. However, she was happy with the development of the school and the way her first child settled in:

*'Nobody really wanted it to grow faster than they could see the actual physical building potentially being available, but in any case you kind of weigh in with the fact that there are good people there and the kids are happy and there's a nice atmosphere and so on.'*

### *Enrolment difficulties for second child: school enrolment policy*

When she came to enrol her daughter in the same school for September 2006, Bernie encountered significant difficulties. Her child turned four in March of that year. The school was hugely oversubscribed, and her child was not offered a place but was placed on a waiting list. Bernie recalls that she felt bad at the time; the school did not have a siblings policy which would have guaranteed her second child a place (see chapter nine for further details). She felt that she had stuck with the school and was now losing out as a result of the policy.

Bernie remarks that since last year, the school has changed its enrolment policy, which has resulted in Catholic children and siblings being prioritised for school places.

*'The school this year has attached itself to the Diocesan policy of accepting Catholic children first. Ironically, last year- we are a Catholic family - and we ended up going to a church of Ireland school yet there were probably a high percentage of non Catholics who were offered places.'*

### *Movement between schools*

Bernie felt that she wanted to start her daughter in school regardless, as she had already completed two years in Montessori, so she sought to enrol her daughter elsewhere. She was offered a place in two alternative schools, and finally opted for a place in the Church of

Ireland school. However, in February 2007, her child was offered a transfer back to the local school, as a place had become available in Junior Infants. Bernie decided to transfer her child, in order to have her two children in the same school. She says that her child is still adapting to the disruption of the change, having found the initial process difficult.

#### *Shortage of primary school places*

Bernie is aware that enrolment difficulties continue for parents in the area and that there is a continuing shortage of primary school places. Bernie feels that this should not be the case.

*'It is something that you really should be able to take for granted that you should be able to start your child in school without all the hassle that is associated nowadays. We never saw that we would have something that would take up so much time and energy when we were just trying to do the right thing.'*

She feels that there is considerable frustration amongst families in relation to the lack of school places in this developing area. She comments:

*'When there is planning permission for so many houses in an area it should be foreseen that the demand is going to be there for school places.'*

Bernie feels that the shortage of school places can give rise to tensions.

*'I suppose from my own experience I'd love to see a fairness come in to, first of all, the enrolment policies. In a perfect world, we wouldn't have the problems, and if every child had a place in school when it should have a place.'*

She points to situations where families who have just moved into the area with an older child can get a school place ahead of someone who has lived in the area all of their life, but have a younger child. *'There would be a sprinkling of experiences like that where people would see, you know, that I've lived here a long time and that's not actually counting for anything.'*

Regardless of all of this, Bernie makes the very clear point that it is the shortage of school places that is creating the greatest difficulties for families in the area: *'In the short-term, the answer has to be more school places, unfortunately, I think its going to get worse before it gets better.'*

#### *Parent association activities*

Bernie is involved in the school's parent association and has enjoyed the experience. She feels that this is a way of helping her children in school and contributing to its development. She also has an involvement in the school's intercultural committee that was recently

established to help support the school in integrating newcomer families in the life of the school.

At the moment, Bernie says, the focus of the intercultural committee is on very practical issues such as seeking to improve communication between school and home. One concern that has been identified is that of newcomer children not being collected from school-children not being collected on time, children not being collected on days when there is a staff meeting or children coming to school on days where the school is closed for in-service. Bernie identifies this as a very practical example of trying to understand what the barriers to communication are and how these might be addressed, by talking to others on the intercultural committee and listening to their views.

#### *Low representation of newcomer families in parents' association*

Bernie says that the Parents' Association and the school would like to see more newcomer families getting involved in activities, but have not had great success in meeting this objective. *'We have tried, but have found it very hard to specify, how you encourage and recruit specifically a certain group.'* She feels that barriers to the involvement of newcomer parents may be knowledge of the Irish education system, being new to a country, with parents *'having enough going on to be getting on with in their everyday lives.'* However, she adds, this may be less an issue for more established families who are living in the area for longer periods of time. Nevertheless, she wishes to see greater parental involvement from the newcomer families:

*'I would be afraid that we [the parents' association] would be perceived as very one-sided, .... and it certainly doesn't represent the school population.'*

#### *Perspective of Irish parents: bias in favour of newcomer children?*

Bernie also discussed the need to address the possibility that Irish parents may, rightly or wrongly, perceive a bias in favour of newcomer families within the school. This is something for the intercultural committee and school management to be aware of. She says:

*'You are going to have Irish families perceiving a bias in the opposite direction ... do you know, where if they say "look we're here, doing our best to be here at the exact time for our kids' collection" or there would be different situations arising where people are going to perceive a bias one way or another and that will cause friction I think, be it right or wrong.'*

#### *Who gets what resources?*

She lists, as possible examples of this, the provision of English Language Support classes for newcomer children.

*'Anecdotally you hear things from people, because there is language support classes, that in itself is seen [as a bias.] ..... I think a lot of people perceive – and I'm not saying it's my personal view, it's not- but a lot of people perceive that as their money [is] being spent on children other than theirs, I suppose, and money could be spent in different ways. I don't think it would help not giving help to children who need help, ... but I think perceived bias causes friction.'*

The shortage of school places, she adds, exacerbates that perception.

#### *The dynamics of majority-minority?*

Bernie has also heard fears from Irish parents that because the percentage of newcomers in classes is increasing, the quality of education may be decreasing.

*'I suppose the percentages are going up in the school, you would hear people saying "well I hope this is not going to impact on the education." We have talked about this on the intercultural committee about how the aspirations, how ... Irish families would, say, be aiming for a certain level for their kids and they perceive that the African families would be happy enough with a, you know, a slightly lower standard or an average standard of education, where the Irish families I think are trying to aim for a higher standard and they want the other families to support them in trying to get the school, to facilitate the school, to be in a position to give that, either through fund-raising or support helping, maybe, the atmosphere in the school.'*

#### *Behaviour of newcomer children an issue?*

In relation to the behaviour of children, Bernie reports cultural differences in what is perceived by parents to be acceptable behaviour. She has considerable sympathy for teachers in schools dealing with this:

*'I think the teachers have a harder job now, than they would have had, trying to, em, impose- for a better word- an acceptable standard of behaviour amongst the children, and I'd say a lot of, from my experience, a lot of their time is preoccupied with establishing the behaviour in the class and balancing it out because there would be so many different cultures.'*

She fears, however, that many Irish parents perceive that newcomer parents often leave the disciplining of children to the teacher and would see it as the teacher's job to discipline the child, which Irish parents would normally see as their job.

*'I suppose Irish families would rather that there weren't so called interferences like that going on in the classroom, that the education would progress probably at a better pace if it didn't happen. I think these are short-term problems we will have that maybe won't be resolved in my children's schooling time.'*

The views expressed above are rather dissonant from those of teachers in chapter five, where concerns regarding physical abuse and corporal punishment were an inhibiting constraint on mediating schools values to children and their families.

### *Multi-cultural future?*

Bernie feels that many Irish families would prefer to know that newcomer families were here to settle in and to integrate to the area for the long term. However, in reality, it seems that for many families, their stay here is for a much shorter period, which makes integration harder: *'I think some people are afraid to invest in integrating and supporting because they see it as a very short-term thing.'*

Bernie is very happy with how her children are handling the multi-cultural context in which they are growing up. Her son has many friends from many different cultures, as he has grown up in a very different context to his mother.

*'His generation will be a different cross-section to what I grew up with ... he knows there are differences in families and in cultures, but no more than they are a different family they are not the same as our family, which is great. I think, and we don't dwell on it. ... and he's learning as he goes along and I think its the best way- its probably an ideal way if you could have a choice, just to have your friends there and learn from your own experiences and not to give them pre-conceptions. Thankfully, for him it has been positive.'*

### **Interpretive comment**

Bernie's case, provides an important window into Irish perceptions of increasing cultural diversity as it impacts on schools and communities. Her testimony points to shortage of places, and, when this occurs, and schools are faced with 'selection', the potential for racial prejudice and disharmony increases considerably. While a school intercultural committee seems like a very positive initiative, it may be much more appropriate as a forum for intercultural dialogue rather than as an enforcement arm of school management for imposition of its norms and values on minority groups. This case also highlights the dynamic and shifting realities of an increasingly multicultural context where there is obvious need for proactive attention to all members of the community, to avoid the cultivation of perceptions of bias in any particular direction.

### **Family and community**

Language as a barrier to participation is a persistent ‘theme’ in the testimony provided in the seven cases above. Additionally, there is considerable evidence of the important role played by sporting organisations and clubs as conduits for friendships, cultural dialogue and in a manner that enhances self-esteem, mutual regard and respect while fostering tolerance of diversity through mutual enrichment. The evidence also suggests that those with social and cultural capital have the necessary tools to participate. However, given the scale of the challenges documented throughout the various chapters, it is not sufficient to leave all of these matters to chance, including the provision of public facilities. Such an approach is a recipe for marginalisation and exclusion.

Within the limitations of this study, it was outside its focus to trawl widely beyond primary schooling. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that creating a more diverse yet coherent community is not just an educational issue; it is very much a civic and political challenge also. In this regard, it is worth bringing to public attention the work of the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP). It was established in 1995 to address issues of disadvantage. In more recent years, however, it took initiative regarding the immigrant community, and created the ‘Meitheal’ project. This project aimed to facilitate integration, to increase participation, while enabling immigrants to retain “his or her own cultural identity” (see Appendix K). Space does not permit a comprehensive treatment of the goals and aims of this significant initiative. Suffice to say that it serves as a model of local agency, and demonstrates in an exemplary manner the importance of the local and regional. However, if anything, such initiatives need to be scaled up and adequately resourced if the kind of coordinated and coherent planning that is evidently necessary are to be completed and as many members of the public as possible made aware of their role and responsibility in creating the ‘new’ Ireland.

### **Summary/ conclusions**

It is important to acknowledge and reiterate that these cases may not be entirely representative, and that, for reasons already articulated, they represent individuals and families that have been in Ireland for some time, individuals and families that have social and cultural capital, who are more likely to be established and to remain. Despite these caveats, they indicate very clearly the dynamics of emigration/ immigration, and the Irish case illuminates an important element of this process as the perceptions of the indigenous community are shaped by their experiences. From an immediate, Dublin 15 perspective, they indicate considerable turbulence regarding school enrolment, that, more recently, due to a veritable population explosion, as clearly indicated in chapter three, has become quite fraught. These cases clearly demonstrate that when there is a shortage of school places,

such tensions increase, and impose considerable hardship on parents and children, while they appear also to impact negatively on community relations.

As indicated in earlier chapters also, language support emerges as significant, but there are suggestions too that Irish families pay particular attention to the manner in which resources are allocated, and are highly sensitive to perceptions of bias. Additionally, there are suggestions that the behaviour of minority children, particularly when minorities increase in size, concerns regarding education standards are heightened. Careful, sustained and sensitive attention to all aspects of this dynamic interplay is called for if stable, diverse and harmonious communities are to be built, both inside and outside schools. There is much evidence from the testimony presented in this chapter to suggest that while schools have an important part to play, the process is far too complex and fluid to be left to principals and teachers only.

All of these matters provide considerable food for thought; they inform and shape the discussion and recommendations in chapter ten. Without wishing to diminish their significance, their subtle and many shaded meanings, a summary grid of key issues to emerge is provided in **Appendix L**, and, along with the evidence from other chapters, inform the agenda to be addressed as part of the process of providing a roadmap for the future of primary education in Dublin 15, with considerable expectation also that these recommendations, or appropriate adaptations of them, will be timely and relevant in other areas also.



## CHAPTER IX

### SCHOOL ENROLMENT POLICY

#### *Introduction*

As the changing demographics of Dublin 15 have altered in recent years and the number of school age children has increased dramatically, school enrolment policies have become sites and sources of conflict. It is important, therefore, to establish precisely the national policy as text, how this is translated into school policy, and, from a family perspective, how such policy texts are practised. It is necessary also, as part of policy analysis work here generally, to pay attention to the unintended consequences of policy-making and its attendant practices. Since this study began, the 'crisis' in school enrolment and school patronage has been given much more media attention nationally, while Dublin 15 and north County Dublin have been at the centre of this firestorm. Many of the principals in Dublin 15 feel compromised by current legislative requirement and have privately indicated that they wished the matter to be discussed but, for various reasons, including the fact that the vast majority are principals of denominational schools, they are reluctant to go on the record. They also indicate that they are in an invidious position- remaining faithful to enrolment policies appeases and pleases their various patron bodies while they are acutely aware of the consequences of enrolment policy implementation for (a) diversity within their own schools, (b) the knock-on effect this policy has on adjacent schools and (c) a sense of guilt that enactment of current legislation is inimical to a policy of equality and the spirit of an inclusive school that provides equal participation for all. This chapter, therefore, has three purposes.

1. The appropriate sections of education and equality legislation are reproduced in order to indicate precisely responsibilities of school Boards of Management within existing legislative frameworks.
2. The impact of this set of legal requirements on actual practice is analysed and its consequences, intended or otherwise, indicated in a social context where the multiplicity of cultures and religions is increasing.
3. The third purpose is to identify alternatives as a means of reform and the provision of a more equitable education system.

#### *The legal framework: the Education Act (1998), the Equal Status Act (2000)*

Section 9 of the Education Act sets out the function of recognised schools, including functions relating to admission to the school. This requires Boards of Management to:

...establish and maintain an admissions policy which provides for maximum accessibility to the school. (Section 9. (m), 1998 Education Act )

This finds further expression in Section 15 (2) (d) of the Act, which states:

(2) A board shall perform the functions conferred on it and on a school by this Act and in carrying out its functions the board shall—

(d) publish, in such manner as the board with the agreement of the patron considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students and admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs,

This subsection requires schools to ensure that the admissions policy respects ‘policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice ...having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned,’

There is also a requirement on schools to uphold and be accountable to the patron for upholding what is broadly termed the *ethos* of the school. This finds expression in Section 15. (2) (b) of the Act, where Boards of Management are required to:

uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

The sections referred to above set out the legal requirement on primary schools to develop and publish the school’s admissions policy, commonly called the *school’s enrolment policy*. This document sets out the procedures by which children will be admitted to the school. It also sets out the procedures which schools must follow where the number of applications for admission to the school exceeds the number of places available.

The school’s admission policy is also subject to the scrutiny of a rigorous appeals procedure, set out in accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act. This section provides a mechanism whereby parents may appeal the decision of a Board of Management to the

Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science on three grounds, which are-

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**29.—(1)** Where a board or a person acting on behalf of the board—

- (a) permanently excludes a student from a school, or
- (b) suspends a student from attendance at a school for a period to be prescribed for the purpose of this paragraph, or
- (c) refuses to enroll a student in a school,

Section (d) provides the possibility for other decisions of the Board of Management to be appealed to the Secretary General at a future date. (The full text of Section 29 of the Education Act is at Appendix M). Thus the Education Act is a very tight legal framework within which schools must operate with regard to admission of pupils to primary schools. However, another piece of legislation has had a significant impact on the development of enrolment policies in school. This legislation is the Equal Status Act, 2000.

### **Equal Status Act, 2000**

Section 7 (2) of the Equal Status Act states that an educational establishment, including a primary school, shall not discriminate in relation to:

- (a) the admission or the terms or conditions of admission of a person as a student to the establishment,
- (b) the access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided by the establishment,
- (c) any other term or condition of participation in the establishment by a student, or
- (d) the expulsion of a student from the establishment or any other sanction against the student.

However, subsection (3) (c) further clarifies that, under certain conditions, schools may in fact discriminate in relation to the admission of pupils. The relevant section makes interesting reading:

An educational establishment does not discriminate under subsection (2) by reason only that-

- (c) where the establishment is a school providing primary or post-primary education to students and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a

refusal, *it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school* (emphasis added).

This section confers on schools with a particular religious ethos the right to admit children of that denomination in preference to children of other or no denominations, while acting within the provisions of the Equal Status Act.

It may be suggested, therefore, that the policy text regarding school enrolment is enshrined in two separate legal statutes- the Education Act, 1998, and the Equality Act, 2000. However, as will be evident in the next section, these legal requirements are not implemented in a consistent manner when school enrolment policies are constructed and implemented.

#### *Impact of legal framework on practice*

A reasonable interpretation of the Equality Act, 2000 suggests that it is permissible, when framing a school enrolment policy, to give priority to children and families who subscribe to the faith and ethos of the school, which in the vast majority of cases is Catholic. In a general sense, therefore, in a much more multi-cultural context, where the number of children seeking enrolment exceeds the number of places available, school enrolment policies have the potential to become divisive and perceived as exclusionary rather than facilitating and inclusive.

While the caveat that it is necessary to demonstrate that refusal of enrolment would be inimical “to maintaining the ethos of the school” is potentially an important constraint on discrimination, in practice it has not proved sufficiently robust to ensure enrolment of non-Catholic children. Thus, the Education Act in particular, is understood by some as divisive and exclusionary, discriminating against minorities, while maintaining the status quo.

In Chapter four, (see figure 22), the evidence indicated that when the entire school population was taken into consideration, more than 70% of children belong to a Christian denomination, almost all of whom were Catholic. These data strongly suggest that there is no overwhelming threat to school ethos. Even in schools where chronological age is the criteria used to determine enrolment, the figure continues to be greater than 70%. These data suggest that giving priority to Catholics ‘first’ for enrolment purposes does not materially alter the religious affiliation of pupils and their families.

There are two caveats to this argument. One, this may alter as current enrolment progresses through schools. Two, there is some evidence that parents, who are not themselves Catholics, have their child baptised as a strategic approach to guarantee enrolment in a Catholic school. However, this needs to be balanced against a more general view as to what

constitutes being 'Catholic', since church attendance has declined considerably in recent years. In this regard, it is noted that there appears to be little agreement on this matter even among local clergy- all the more reason therefore that privileging the criterion 'Catholic first', along with other criteria, needs to be systematically reviewed. One means of seeking redress against current enrolment practices is to appeal.

### **'Section 29' appeals**

An additional aspect of enrolment that is increasingly being invoked by parents who fail to secure a place in their local schools for a child is the appeals procedure, under Section 29 of the Education Act. When this procedure was practiced initially, principals were led to believe that 'equality' was being privileged over 'ethos'. Consequently, many were informed, the only criterion that mattered was chronological age. However, many more recent appeals appear to be reversing this pattern, thus vindicating the clause in the Education Act (1998) that it is permissible to discriminate in order to promote a particular denominational ethos. However, at the time of writing, the Equality Authority seems to be suggesting that current enrolment practice may be offensive to equality legislation. At a minimum, therefore, there appears to be inconsistency, even within the appeals procedure as to how competing interests of the Education and Equality Acts are being applied to enrolment. While a systematic analysis of approximately 1,000 *Section 29* appeals is nearing completion, in its absence principals and teachers become pawns in a much larger political game; a kind of 'stand-off' between conserving and secularising tendencies. To avoid much time wasting, work, and anxiety, they would welcome a systematic review of the Equality and Education Acts as part of a more systematic review of enrolment.

### *Shortage of primary school places*

In the course of conducting this research, a constant issue raised by those being interviewed and consulted was the issue of a lack of primary school places- this applied equally to parents, teachers, school principals and those in the wider community. There was a palpable sense of the frustration felt by all the stakeholders when it came to this issue. An analysis of the headlines in the local and national media since the Spring of 2007, which often spilled over into the national media, would show clearly that this topic was often the centre of much heated debate and anguish for parents in Dublin 15. Within Dublin 15, there is a sense that the 'struggle for school places' has become an annual event.

As the number of new housing developments has increased in the last decade, and the population of these new estates has risen exponentially, so too has the demand for school places. Educational and local authority planners struggled to cope with the demand for school places. Planning delays and difficulties in acquiring appropriate school sites meant that the rolling out of new schools was delayed even further.

Added to this general shortage of school places in Dublin 15 has been the dramatic increase of newcomer families, as already documented. In many cases, these are 'ready-made' families with children ranging in age from pre-school to post-primary school age. These families had very immediate needs for school places at primary and post-primary level. However, there was a lack of local infrastructure to meet these needs.

In the more traditional model of community development, first-time buyers acquired houses in developing estates. After a few years establishing themselves, these couples would have their first child and then perhaps a second. Primary schools were rolled out in accordance with this evolving need.<sup>1</sup> However, the rules of the traditional model of community development no longer applied with the arrival of large numbers of ready-made families. Planners in the education sector would argue that they could not have anticipated such a development in their planning of the educational infrastructure of Dublin 15. However, this was the reality that schools now faced. However, this 'reality' reinforces the perspective emerging in earlier chapters of this report that more flexible resource allocation rather than one size fits all centralised planning is vital if schools are to be proactive in their response to rapidly changing and fluid needs.

An interesting example of this lies in the Littlepace/Castahanay/Ongar area. It has three primary schools, the oldest of which was established in 2001. In 2006/7 there were **883** pupils in these schools in **31** classes. However, as these are developing schools which started as infant schools, there were *no* sixth classes and only one fifth class in any of the three schools- and there will only be one sixth class in 2007/8. Families moving into the area, requiring school places at the upper primary school level were, therefore, left with little choice but to send their children outside the area, thus contributing to further fragmentation. This demonstrates quite graphically how the traditional model of school provision does not serve the emerging needs of new communities.

It is little surprise, therefore, that many schools were grossly over-subscribed for places. In one Dublin 15 school, there were 201 applications for 108 places in four Junior Infant classes for September 2007. In another there were 210 applications for 81 places in three junior infant classes. These resulted in significant numbers of children being refused enrolment in the school of their choice, with consequent pressure on parents to seek places in other schools either in the area, or indeed outside of Dublin 15.

It has already been shown that there is huge mobility within the school going population of Dublin 15. It seems certain that the shortage of school places has contributed, at least in

part, to this phenomenon. There is strong evidence that many have been forced to drive out of their locality to find a place for their child in schools outside the local catchment area, with particular difficulties at infant level. There is also evidence of a transfer of children back to the local school, as places become available. This contributes to an almost perpetual state of motion within the primary school system and has a serious effect on the continuity and stability of the schools involved.

#### *Enrolment policy in Dublin 15*

As already mentioned (chapter 4), three patrons are represented in the Dublin 15 primary schools- Church of Ireland, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and Educate Together. Each of the patron bodies advocates an enrolment policy in accordance with its own particular ethos and perspective. Schools, in turn, devise their own enrolment policies, in accordance with the Education Act and mindful of the provisions of the Equal Status Act.

In more recent years, schools have had the added pressure that all decisions in relation to admission of pupils are subject to the Section 29 Appeals procedure referred to earlier. The drafting of a school enrolment policy has, in the words of one school principal, 'become a nightmare.' It has involved 'endless hours of drafting, re-drafting negotiation and clarification at Board of Management, patron and Department levels.' However, as another principal has stated, 'the school enrolment policy only becomes an issue or a problem for schools when you have to turn pupils away.' Given the dramatic increase in population in recent years, with the shortage of primary school places, increasing numbers of schools are forced to do exactly that – turn pupils away.

#### *How schools in Dublin 15 prioritise the admission of pupils*

Clearly, when schools are grossly over-subscribed, not all pupils will be offered a place. There are winners, those who are successful in securing a place, and there are losers, those who do not get a place. Schools argue that no matter how they attempt to cut the cake, someone will lose out. However, it is the decisions that schools make in relation to *how* they cut this cake that is the subject of considerable controversy. There is evidence that Dublin 15 primary schools operate quite different approaches to the admission of pupils. Where a school is over-subscribed, the school's enrolment policy sets out the criteria that determine which applicants are granted places and which are not. The following details the four broad strategies employed by different schools in the allocation of places:

1. First come first served- whereby places are allocated to those who applied first
2. Chronological age - whereby places are allocated to the oldest children in the cohort

3. Priority given to members of a religious denomination- whereby applicants who subscribe to the religious ethos espoused by the school are prioritised for admission
4. Language-based competencies of the parents are taken into consideration for access to the Gaelscoil.

Within these broad categories there may be some variation between policies with regard to catchment area, the position of siblings etc.

The priority attached to each of the above criteria becomes hugely significant at operational level. In the interest of clarity, each of these criteria is discussed separately and its impact critically scrutinised. Thereafter, the knock-on effect or unintended consequences are detailed succinctly. Given that the greatest pressure for school places comes when parents attempt to enrol their children at junior infant level, consideration will be focused on how enrolment policies impact at that level.

*Admission policies: impact within and between schools*

There is already a considerable amount of inter-dependence between schools in Dublin 15. This is evident when one considers that there are shared campus arrangements between junior and senior schools, or where there are multiple schools on a single campus, as in Littlepace. A further example of this will be the campus arrangement for Ongar, where both the Castaheany Educate Together National School and St. Benedict's National School will be located on a single campus.

However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that decisions made in relation to the admissions policy of one school can have a significant knock-on effect on other schools in the area. In the interest of more coherent planning therefore, a more co-ordinated approach to enrolment seems necessary. At a minimum, schools need to be more aware of the consequences of enrolment policy and practice beyond the confines of their own school, if more social fragmentation and ghettoisation are to be avoided.

It has already been shown that the enrolment in primary schools in the more established areas began to decline between 1997 and 2000 (see Figure 12, chapter 4). This was a consequence of the maturing population in these areas. Thus, school accommodation was available in these schools, and there were vacancies at some levels. This was accompanied by a population explosion in the newer developing areas, with a consequent shortage of primary school places. Therefore, parents in these new developing areas, who were unable

to enrol their children in their local school, were forced to seek places in the adjacent schools, where there were spaces.

Thus, in the web of interactions between schools a new consideration comes into play, which relates directly to the admissions policy of schools. The question now becomes who is turned away, why, and where do they go? Since answers to these questions have major implications for inclusion and equality legislative and policy responsibilities, it is important to interrogate current enrolment criteria through a legislative lens.

Each enrolment criterion, therefore, is scrutinised from the perspective of inclusion and how each approach impacts on families and communities from an equality/inclusion perspective.

#### 1. First come, first served

##### *Sentiment*

When priority is given to this criterion, parents pre-enrol their child from an early age, by putting the child's name on the school's pre-enrolment list - often as early as birth.

##### *Advantages*

This approach confers an advantage on those people who moved into the area first over more recent arrivals. In cases where such schools are over-subscribed and there are more applications than places, people living in an area for a longer period of time *and* who had the foresight to put their child's name on the school's enrolment list at an early age are much more likely to get the child a place in school. This criterion also favours those with the 'knowledge' of how the system works, and how to navigate it for family advantage. From a social inclusion perspective, this approach appears to be egalitarian, in that it does not treat children differently because of religious or ethnic background, as all parents have, potentially, the right to enrol their children in the school.

##### *Disadvantages*

In general, the newer arrivals into a community, especially in the developing areas of Dublin 15, are newcomer families. They are at a disadvantage in relation to more established families given that they register their children for school later and are less likely to get a school place if the school is over-subscribed. A further difficulty with this approach is that immigrant families are less likely to be aware of the requirement to pre-enrol their children in advance, thus losing out on a school place, even if they have been living in the area for a considerable period. Furthermore, due to the large amount of movement in the area, the school's pre-enrolment list is frequently out of date by the time it comes to offering school places. At a minimum, this can make the offering of places quite time consuming. When

applying this criterion some schools do not operate a defined physical catchment area. In the context of scarcity of pupil places in Dublin 15, potentially, therefore, children living outside of the local community could be enrolled in these schools and take up places with the result that more local children may be denied admission. In the new and emerging urban sprawl, the tradition of using the parish boundary to define school catchment areas appears increasingly anachronistic and outdated, and, yet, there is need for some order.

## 2. Chronological age

### *Sentiment*

When priority is given to chronological age, parents apply for a place in the school during the previous school-year. All applications from within the catchment area are treated equally; siblings of children already in the school, first time family members applying for a place, members of all religious denominations or none. Applications are then collated and places are offered to the oldest children on the list. A waiting list is established to allocate further places, should they become available, as children drop-off the list, having moved out of the area.

### *Advantages*

In practical terms, this approach means that the older the child, the more likely he/she will be allocated a place. There are features of this approach that are also egalitarian, in that applicants are not treated differently because of their religious background. Thus, from an inclusion perspective, this priority offers everyone living in the catchment area an equal possibility of securing a place in the school, based on age.

### *Disadvantages*

One difficulty with this approach, when it is operated in a school established under a particular religious patronage is that children from that religious denomination are not guaranteed a place in that school, as an older child from a different denomination could secure a place ahead of that child. A further difficulty with this approach is that siblings of children already in the school are not given preferential consideration when it comes to the allocation of places. Consequently, younger siblings are unsuccessful in securing a place while older children of 'new' families are successful. This is an argument that is difficult to balance. For parents who already have children enrolled in the school, they regard reliance exclusively on this criterion as unfair.

A further problem is that there is no recognition given to people who are living in the area for a longer period of time. Given that applications are only accepted in the previous school year, there is the possibility that an older child in a family that has only moved into an area

will secure a school place ahead of a younger child whose family has been living in the area for years. Needless to say, if this older child is also the child of an immigrant then the possibility of racial tension being increased around enrolment policies becomes a significant possibility.

Of course, the operation of this criterion is complicated significantly due to the fact that the legal age of entry to primary school is 6. Consequently, there is not a legal obligation on the State to provide places for all 4 – 6 year olds. Bowing to pressure in Dublin North and West very recently, therefore indicates the politically sensitive nature of the issue, while this is exacerbated by the long established tradition of sending children to school at the age of four, and the absence of universal state-funded pre-school facilities. A review of enrolment concerns therefore would have to take account of these wider concerns.

### 3. Membership of a religious denomination

#### *Sentiment*

When priority is accorded to religious denomination, schools of a particular denomination accept applications from within the school catchment area or parish boundary. When it comes to the allocation of school places, preferential treatment is afforded to some categories of children.

#### *Advantages*

In practice this means that, where schools are over-subscribed, places are offered in the first instance to all siblings, regardless of their age and to all members of the faith denomination of the school, regardless of their age, before members of other religious denominations living in the area are considered.

#### *Disadvantages*

Where there is an acute shortage of school places, the enrolment policy of these schools may result in only siblings and members of that denomination securing places, with all other categories being unsuccessful. While some members of other denominations may secure places as they have siblings already in the school, this policy could, over time, have the effect that *only* members of a particular denomination would be successful in securing a place in the school, to the exclusion of members of all other denominations.

This has important consequences for schools and communities from a social inclusion perspective. Given that twenty-one of the twenty five schools in Dublin 15 operate under the

patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, a policy that prioritises children with a Catholic Birth Certificate over those who do not, could have significant consequences for the development of those communities. These consequences will be considered later.

4. language-based competencies of the parents are taken into consideration for access to the Gaelscoil

#### *Sentiment*

In the case of the Gaelscoil, which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, parents are expected to demonstrate a commitment to the Irish language. This is either in the form of the linguistic competency of the parents of children enrolling in the school or a demonstration by the parents of a commitment to the language.

#### *Advantages*

Siblings of children already in the school would be prioritised for placement in junior infants, as would those attending a 'Naoinra' for pre-school. Since there is only one stream at each class level, there is considerable competition for places, which are allocated to the oldest qualifying children.

#### *Disadvantages*

In terms of social inclusion, commitment to the Irish language and the language competencies of the parents makes it more difficult for a newcomer family to satisfy these criteria than an established Irish family. However, there are instances where mixed-race families with Irish and non-Irish parents, have committed to the language and have successfully enrolled their children in the school. Many of these children are multi-lingual and find adaptation to an all-Irish teaching medium easier than Irish born children. However, more generally, evidence from Dublin 15 at least, suggests that the enrolment criterion around language acts as an exclusionary filter for the immigrant community. As part of a wider policy reform agenda, all schools, regardless of primary 'vision' may be called on to attend to matters of inclusion.

It is clearly evident from the above that the school enrolment policies in operation in Dublin 15 employ quite different methods of offering places to pupils. However, as suggested above, criteria usually become contentious when school becomes over-subscribed. In such circumstances, while it may be argued that enrolment criteria were intended traditionally to determine who to include, minorities were so small that they were eventually included. However, two difficulties emerge from this analysis. All criteria, particularly in contexts where

places are over-subscribed, have the effect that they are perceived as **exclusionary** rather than **inclusive**. Where the vast majority of primary schools are under Catholic patronage, and there is a very weak, almost non-existent state school sector at primary level, it is inadequate of both political and religious leaders simply to assert that they are favourably disposed towards additional and more diverse patronage. Principals and teachers will continue to be pawns in this larger political game until such time as key leaders move from defensive positions to occupy more neutral territory whereby there is open dialogue that is no longer a 'blame game.' Of course, it is necessary in this regard to assert that ultimate responsibility for provision of school places resides with the State. Part of the legacy that has contributed to current shortages is the fact that traditionally the State acquiesced to Church authorities, thus sites for schools were purchased by Diocesan funds as new parishes were created. The advent of Educate Together in particular and the decline in religious vocations as well as increasing secularisation, has left the DES somewhat exposed. The evidence is now overwhelming that the challenge of inclusion is here to stay and since, as this report argues, immigration is a process and not an event, more sustained engagement and commitment to creating a more inclusive future requires urgent attention. What are the possibilities?

*The way ahead: Balancing 'Acts'- Education / Equality / Access*

What is evident from the foregoing discussion is that depending on the criterion that is privileged by a particular enrolment policy, a significantly different set of families and children is either included, or excluded, advantaged or disadvantaged. While it is important to recognise this reality and to state it publicly, clearly it is exacerbated significantly in a planning context where the provision of places is insufficient to meet demand. Additionally, it needs to be recognised that those with most social and economic capital, good language skills, mobility through car ownership etc., often accompanied by confidence and commitment to education, congruent with the dominant values of the school system, are most likely to create and find alternatives for their children. Consequently those with least resources, often the families most at risk, are at a severe disadvantage in the enrolment lottery. These circumstances are inimical to inclusion, social integration and community cohesion. Allowed to go unchecked, over time, they are likely to have serious negative consequences that become much more difficult to address.

*Patronage*

In a recent attempt by school authorities in Dublin 15 to address the problem, it became apparent that the Education Act (1998) does not appear to allow schools to create a quota system whereby the multi-cultural challenge could be more evenly distributed between

schools. Such a system would be illegal under the Act. The intention on the part of principals was to avoid the accusation in specific schools of excluding children (and families) who are not Catholic. Current legislative frameworks, therefore, in the changed demographic mix is increasingly being perceived as part of the problem.

There has been considerable attention given, in recent months, to patronage and the need for more school patrons. There has been a particular focus on the creation of a new type of primary school model- the 'Community National School'. It would appear that the policy makers who are currently investigating the possibility of introducing this model of primary school patronage- possibly under the patronage of Vocational Education Committees,- that would be sensitive to the demands of parents for a school that would ensure:

- Equality of access for children of all faiths and none
- Offer religious instruction to children of the different faiths represented within the school population, and
- Offer this religious instruction as part of the school day, rather than outside the school day

The rationale asserted is that this model works at post-primary level, so surely a version of this would work equally well at primary level. But is it as simple as that?

Looking at the Community School Model through the lens of equality, this would establish, within the primary sector, a school which would ensure equality of access to all children, regardless of religious affiliation, and which would offer religious instruction to children of different faiths, should they request it. The attractions seem obvious. However, how would these schools operate alongside existing schools and how would they interface with schools of different patronage? There is a distinct possibility that such a development could lead to *increased* division and separation in communities with even greater ethnic and cultural division, reinventing hierarchies of privilege and exclusion.

Already there is recognition that in attempting to find an acceptable solution to current dilemmas, it is important to avoid the creation of a two-tiered system. If this model is introduced, without any changes in the practice of denominational schools - the vast majority of them Catholic- prioritising children of their denomination, it is a strong possibility that these schools will become even more exclusive, more homogenous and less representative of the communities in which they are established. This, in turn, would have the effect of concentrating 'others' – be they children of different religious denomination or none- in the

other school models, thereby creating the 'Irish' school and the 'immigrant school'- with, potential for even greater social division and a two-tier educational structure.

Since the beginning of the current calendar year, it has been most interesting, pre and post the general election to observe how politicians and others have sought to position themselves within this wider debate. From a practitioner and policy-making perspectives, and from the evidence and arguments advanced here, as well as experience on the ground, the cumulative evidence makes it abundantly clear that:

- There is now an overwhelming and immediate need to review current legislation in light of changed and changing demographic patterns
- The DES needs to be much more proactive than heretofore in making provision of school places
- Existing and emergent patrons and their respective representatives have a collective responsibility to the 'public good' and school enrolment needs to reflect this public interest, while readily acknowledging that
- The DES is the ultimate authority in educational provision

As indicated earlier, public pronouncements in many instances recently have been partial and defensive, while some spokespersons have sought to apportion blame. Principals and teachers, and it is fair to assume, many parents also, feel frustrated, let down, and abandoned when there is a distinct lack of leadership. One of the more impartial commentators argues:

Church and State should now immediately review the ethnic division that they have together inadvertently managed to create..... But more generally, the future development of our whole primary education system clearly requires a thorough review at national level-- at the State/ church forum which the Taoiseach has recently established. (Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 14)

Fitzgerald's argument is entirely resonant with the evidence presented in this report. However, the evidence he presents provides additional grounds for systematic review of current provision. He states: ".... neither the religious nor the civil authorities yet appreciate the scale of the swing away from religion during the past 15 or 20 years." Consequently, there is now a considerable disjuncture "between the rapidly changing religious character of Irish society and the confessional character of our educational system." For example, he indicates "the proportion of couples choosing civil rather than religious ceremonies ... has increased six-fold in the past 14 years, to 22.5 percent in 2005 ... within about seven years one-third of all marriages will involve civil ceremonies. That stage has in fact been reached in all our cities: in Limerick two years ago it was already 38 percent."

### **Irish legislation: international perspectives**

In recent times, the United Nations (UN) has been critical of the legislative framework around educational provision in Ireland. Additionally, as members of the European Community, there is an international dimension to the manner in which we conduct our national affairs. While earlier in the report it was suggested that perhaps the equality legislation is not sufficiently robust to prevent Section 29 of the Education Act (1998) being used as an exclusionary strategy, it may be the case that the European Council Directive (June 2000) on 'implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin', will have a telling impact on interpretations of current Irish legislation. It is strongly suggested by some legal expert opinion that the 'discrimination' element of both Education and Equality Acts on ground of Ethos are unconstitutional since it would be impossible to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that either enrolling or refusing entry to a school would either enhance or be injurious to a school's ethos. Invoking Article 9 of the Council Directive therefore has significance in the context of ongoing discussions regarding legislation and its impact on enrolment. Article 9 of the Directive states:

Member States shall introduce into their national systems such measures as are necessary to protect individuals from any adverse treatment or adverse consequences as a reaction to a complaint or to proceedings aimed at enforcing compliance with the principle of equal treatment (L 180/25)

A reasonable interpretation of this article suggests that if the consequences of Section 29 were exclusion of a student, this would be discriminatory. In the context of wider debate therefore in the Irish context, cognizance of international influences are likely to become an important element of deliberations.

### *Conclusions*

Clearly, there are several competing interests that are shaped and circumscribed by existing legislation and its consequences for enrolment policies. Challenges presented to schools in a more pluralist and multi-cultural Ireland are as much if not more a consequence of socio-cultural change among the Irish rather than exclusively a consequent of an increasing immigrant presence. However, the latter certainly contributes to the richness and diversity, as well as highlighting the increasing anachronism of a predominantly denominational educational system. However, the kind of forum envisaged by the Taoiseach and apparently endorsed by Fitzgerald, would need to operate on the principle of 'partnership' rather than a bipartisan dialogue between politicians and religious. Additionally, much closer attention will need to be focused on the implications, intended and otherwise, to frame more appropriate legislation that is more equal in its treatment of all citizens where education is concerned, and there is a wider international dimension to this concern that will be increasingly difficult to

ignore. However, consultation on matters of considerable significance to powerful vested interest, either religious or lay, are often exclusive rather than broad-based and participative. It is hoped that the voices represented in this report would also be given a hearing in a round-table dialogue. This emerges as an urgent requirement along with other recommendations that are the focus of discussion in the concluding chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> However, it should be noted that many well established principals have pointed out that delays in planning and providing new primary schools is nothing new, and many recount tales of 'temporary' accommodation is most unsuitable premises. Consequently, some argue, the most significant change that has occurred over a period of two decades or more is increased expectations on the part of parents. These 'war stories' reinforce the necessity for much more rigorous strategic planning at national and regional level than heretofore.



## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEGISLATION, POLICY AND PRACTICE

#### Introduction

It is invariably a challenge to transform the weight of evidence accumulated in a report of this nature into a set of recommendations that are at once, warranted by that evidence, ambitious, yet realistic. This is what is attempted here, while readily recognising that not everyone who reads it will necessarily agree with the importance attached to particular evidence, and the recommendations that are made. It is acknowledged therefore that value judgements are made on the basis of the content of the foregoing chapters that prioritise some issues and concerns as being more significant than others. However, the evidence also suggests that the issue of increasing pluralism, diversity and multi-culturalism in Irish society (however these terms are defined and contested) represents a major challenge to an education system that has been, and continues to be, almost entirely denominational. It is also a major challenge to a society that until very recently has been very homogenous. Consequently, increased diversity is not merely an educational concern, it is a major challenge to Irish society as a whole. While education can and will play its part, there needs also to be a societal response and positive commitment to creating a diverse, yet participative, heterogeneous public sphere that is premised on respect, mutual regard, and equality for all.

The concluding discussion that accompanies the recommendations is intended to indicate how the evidence presented in the earlier chapters is being interpreted, thus making the recommendations more transparent to the reader. The recommendations address different systemic needs—some are applicable at the level of school and classroom, while others require attention and reform to national policies and legislation, at local Council level, to create the conditions for community initiatives. As a consequence, the recommendations cannot be easily separated and selectively adopted. The complex nature of the challenge necessitates a suitably sophisticated and integrated approach. Much of the evidence indicates that *ad hoc*, piecemeal responses to changing needs are no longer an option. In addition to some succinct discussion therefore, the impact on policy and practice of the recommendations made are also indicated as part of this concluding chapter, thus indicating and illustrating the necessity for a systematic, sustained, comprehensive and coherent response.

## Conclusions & recommendations

It is important to acknowledge that, particularly from the perspective of teachers, principals, pupils and parents, there is much satisfaction regarding the education system. Principals and teachers are very positive in their attitudes regarding multi-ethnic classrooms and the rich teaching and learning potential they represent. However, there is evidence also that in endeavouring to make this happen, many are stretched, and certainly to a point where long-term sustainability of current 'fire fighting' is unsustainable. In the absence of systemic reforms, and more adequate supports, left to their own devices, teachers and principals will look to their own survival rather than be motivated by commitment to the common good. If such a tipping point is reached, disillusionment, and de-motivation take hold and, when this occurs in sufficient numbers, it becomes a tide that is so much more difficult to turn.

### *A discourse of diversity*

Throughout the chapters of this report, there has been a consistent effort to indicate the potential of language to facilitate an inclusive dialogue on diversity or to foster, wittingly or otherwise, a divisive discourse with potential to foster division and racist tendencies. There is need therefore to continue to draw attention to the manner in which language shapes our thinking and to pay attention to this as a major policy concern. A public discourse needs to be fostered that moves beyond the kind of paralysis often induced by political correctness, thus silencing fears and anxieties with potential to have these expressed in undesirable ways in the absence of a more sensitive and appropriate language. While this report is primarily about primary education provision in Dublin 15, it is impossible and inappropriate to separate this concern from wider regional and national socio-cultural, political and policy contexts. It may be very timely therefore to foster a national debate on the issue of immigration and integration. This is far too important an issue to be left to the education system only. As indicated above, it is a matter of considerable import for the future of Irish society.

### Recommendation 1.

**It is recommended that the Government produce a Green Paper (followed by a White Paper) on immigration and the 'new' Ireland envisaged with appropriate attention to planning for diversity and social cohesion.**

As there is an urgency regarding the necessity for public debate on this matter, this task should be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity, and within a specified timescale. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Minister for Integration (Mr. Conor Lenihan) has already indicated his intention to create a national forum on this matter. Similarly, an inter-department report about to be published has potential to form the basis of a Green Paper, thus bringing together the various legislative and other initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years, and use this as a basis for envisioning the future while seeking also to give shape to a

White Paper on major concerns and priorities. Such an initiative would signal also that the political leadership in the country is taking immigration seriously from a social, educational, as well as economic perspective, no longer dictated primarily by market forces. However, unless the consultation process involved is widely participative, the emergent dialogue on diversity will be seen as top-down, somewhat coercive, with an emphasis on multi-culturalism as conformity to mainstream norms; a politics of assimilation, with essentialist overtones.

#### *Evidence and analysis*

Although the point being made under this sub-heading may seem obvious, it is nevertheless crucial. The evidence presented indicates beyond any possible doubt that the proportion of immigrant families in the Dublin 15 area is at the upper end of the continuum when compared with other areas of the country. However, it is important to record also that, in itself, this is generally welcomed within school communities. It is also important to acknowledge that, this evidence was already available to policy-makers and planners, even if they had chosen to ignore it, or not devote sufficient time to its analysis whereby it is converted into useful knowledge for planning and decision-making purposes. There is a vital and ongoing need not only to collect information, but also to analyse it, and to articulate its implications for policy and practice. While this argument may be advanced for all areas of the system, the second recommendation calls for this in education.

#### *Recommendation 2.*

**It is recommended that more systematic ongoing data accumulation and analysis in education be undertaken with the intent of more proactive planning and decision-making in a much more fluid environment than heretofore.**

This recommendation points directly to the importance of the new Regional Office (Dublin City/ Fingal) having dedicated staff for this task. It is intended that education staff, including the inspectorate, will be accommodated within these offices, thus increasing the possibility for greater coordination and coherence in planning and implementation. From an accountability perspective, it will no longer be possible to plead—‘we did not know the scale of the challenge’—rather, it will be the responsibility of identifiable personnel to be aware of changing demographic patterns, to inform others who will be obliged to act on this evidence in a variety of sensitive and proactive ways.

#### *Devolved budgeting/ decision-making*

The report has indicated repeatedly that, even within Dublin 15, there is significant heterogeneity as demographic patterns emerge and alter. Consequently, traditional approaches to centralised planning seem inappropriate in such circumstances. They are inflexible also in terms of their capacity to respond in a sufficiently timely manner.

Consequently, greater autonomy needs to be devolved to principals and their respective Boards of Management, who are most appropriately positioned to make timely judgements regarding deployment of staff, including classroom assistants and SNAs. However, without flexibility in resource allocation this is unlikely to happen, thus perpetuating the cycle of time-consuming pleading with planning authorities with attendant frustrations and opportunity costs.

Recommendation 3.

***It is recommended that alternative models to current staffing in schools be explored and allocation be made of more 'discretionary' resources to principals proportionate to the scale and complexity of diversity represented in schools, with additional discretion also in the deployment of staff depending on identified and documented school needs/priorities, with appropriate accountability mechanism in place.***

New models of staffing and resourcing are vital to more proactive responses to emerging demographics. However, as indicated by the evidence in the foregoing chapters, there is significant 'migration' of students particularly during the school year, movement that is disruptive in all kinds of ways for all concerned. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that, not infrequently, children and their families disappear without trace. There is need therefore for a much more systematic and standardised approach to information gathering at the point of enrolment.

Recommendation 4.

**It is recommended that all children be required to use PPS numbers on enrolment, and systematic, standardised data be gathered by all schools, to facilitate tracking and more adequate record-keeping.**

This is a recommendation that can be acted on immediately, but requires central authorities to coordinate and consult on the matter so that appropriate procedures and systems can be put in place. Some piloting of new approaches in the first instance would be desirable, and this should be seen as part of ongoing data gathering and analysis, thus being more informed, and potentially more proactive in responding to emergent needs.

#### *Professional learning: capacity building*

Another aspect of the challenge clearly manifest at the level of the school is teachers' capacity to deal with a plethora of professional concerns—understanding of multi-cultural issues, second language acquisition, teaching and learning, appreciation and knowledge of diverse cultures etc. From the voices of the teachers in this report, the prevailing model of

engaging with this reality owes much to the 'sink or swim' approach. While this is unacceptable for several reasons, suffice to say that it leaves far too much to chance. Consequently, there needs to be sustained commitment to ongoing professional development for all teachers in multi-cultural settings, dedicated to addressing aspect of the challenges in all their complexity and variety.

Recommendation 5.

**It is recommended that dedicated personnel and resources be provided that focus on a range of professional support for teachers that is sensitive to local needs while continuing simultaneously to re-visit understandings of key aspects of inter-cultural education from a practical and conceptual point of view.**

As the evidence indicates, there are several elements to providing appropriate support-language acquisition, cultural understanding, ethnic diversity, understanding of key concepts (inclusion, inter-cultural, racism & anti-racism, discipline etc.). It is necessary to understand that aspects of these concerns are unstable, shift and alter over time. Consequently, teachers will need regular ongoing opportunities both within and outside the school to build their professional capacity in relation to these concerns. Towards this end, a variety of measures should be considered, and scaled appropriately. These might include some of the following:

- a) A Special Duties post dedicated within schools as a resource for colleagues. This is possible within existing provision, but would have to be prioritised within the school, and by the BoM;
- b) An Assistant Principal position designated with 'inter-cultural' responsibilities and would take on appropriate policy development and professional support for colleagues, with a strong emphasis on building capacity at the level of the school; In certain circumstances, an additional post at either special duties or assistant principal level may be warranted;
- c) Where schools have a HSCL person on the staff, their position might be re-defined to include intercultural responsibility. However, if this were to occur, in the first instance, some discussion of established policy and practice would be required;
- d) Where schools do not currently have access to HSCL, a 'Cultural Liaison Officer' position between schools could be created to build capacity, share expertise and disseminate good practice. The professional development model (Cuiditheoir) that has proved its worth in the context of the Revised Curriculum, could be extended to a multi-cultural brief. A more radical alternative might be devolved budgeting to enable schools to determine how best to meet identified needs.

- e) Allocate a professional development budget to each individual school, and schools would be allowed to pool resources to tailor the service they 'purchase' to meet their particular needs most effectively.

Consistent with the general argument advanced at various points in the report, rather than indicate one 'fit' solutions regardless of scale of need, all of the above should be possibilities, while each could be triggered depending on agreed thresholds. Such an approach to policy-making and provision would indicate a change of mindset with an emphasis on maximising the benefit of service in the interest of the client, rather than putting systems in place that make for efficient implementation without reference to their impact on practice and quality of service.

#### *School policy*

At the level of the school, clearly language support is of major significance, and this is an obvious area for professional support. However, teachers in particular were keen to indicate that lack of mastery in English is far from the only concern, and this perspective has been reinforced repeatedly by principals' views. Consequently, part of professional support needs to pay adequate attention also to issues of cultural difference, parenting, discipline and punishment etc. While the report does not dwell on racism, it does indicate how perceptions and prejudices, if ignored, have potential to develop into racist behaviours on the part of both adults and pupils. It is necessary therefore for schools to take a proactive stance.

Recommendation 6.

**It is recommended that schools develop a comprehensive policy on intercultural education, including racism and anti-racism.**

Such a stance sets a tone and a standard, not only for the school, but for the communities it serves.

#### *School/ community and learning*

Evidence from parents in this report gave very clear indication of the significance of English language classes and reasonable proficiency as a major gateway to more active school and community participation. Consequently, availability of language learning is vital, not just in school, but within the community also.

Recommendation 7.

**It is recommended that access to English language learning for all immigrant families be encouraged and provided as early as possible after families take up residence in a**

**community, and where feasible, this be coordinated through schools and provided on the premises.**

This recommendation should, in time, reduce the necessity for interpretation support when parents deal with school principals, teachers and other social services. Nevertheless, translation and interpretation services are very necessary in practical terms, but are symbolically significant also as they provide evidence of the extent to which a system is prepared to honour its commitment to a policy of inclusion and diversity. In a similar spirit, the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation 8.

**It is recommended that particular provision be made at school/ community level to inform parents about schooling, to discuss parenting, to share cultural values and differences and arrive at shared understandings regarding school norms and expectations.**

This recommendation deliberately avoids a more narrowly focused recommendation to provide 'parenting classes' for immigrant families, or translation/ interpretation services, though these may be necessary also in the short term. An overly narrow approach assumes a 'deficit model' with the necessity to 'conform' to school requirements. The school too espouses a set of values and expected norms of behaviour and these need to be communicated clearly. These messages are not without their sensitivities and tensions. However, the recommendation is based on the belief that they need to be dealt with rather than ignored. This is a very obvious context in which a Cuiditheoir, HSCL or Cultural Liaison Officer could play a crucial role.

#### *Support services*

The evidence presented in the empirical chapters of the report clearly points to issues about testing and psychological assessment that frequently cause disquiet to immigrant families due to cultural difference. There is an issue regarding cultural sensitivity, but access and allocation of resources is also of concern. Without adequate psychological assessment and in a timely manner, some Irish parents form the impression that resources are being disproportionately allocated to immigrants. When this perception takes hold, relations both within communities and within schools may be harmed. Such eventualities contribute to social segregation, including 'white flight' rather than social cohesion and cultural diversity within communities. A more caring and efficient approach to including immigrant children in

school communities, may contribute also to less migration, something that is a serious disruption and inimical to community building.

Recommendation 9.

**It is recommended that more adequate, more comprehensive, and more timely provision of psychological assessments etc. be made available, with much greater emphasis also on continuity of service.**

Currently, there is a serious lack of continuity with attendant lack of follow-up. The service as it currently operates is inadequate both in terms of its extent, but also the manner in which it is organised and delivered. A systematic review of needs is needed in light of the demographic shifts documented here. It will be necessary also to bring more coordinated effort to bear on all services such as the Education Welfare Board.

#### *Educare*

Since access to pre-school educational facilities continues to be out of the reach of many members of the Dublin 15 community, and behaviour and language pose major challenges to infant teachers in particular, a more adequate structural response is necessary.

Recommendation 10.

**It is recommended that a three-year infant cycle or a variant of it be made available in certain circumstances depending on identified and documented need.**

Rather than pursue this recommendation in isolation from variations on it, the following should be considered with a view to making a variety of options available, depending on demographic patterns and other challenges at the level of the individual school.

- a) Create the post of Classroom Assistant (CA) to support the work of classroom teachers in relation to socialisation, language and ensure as far as possible equality of participation for all. Such a position could be full-time within one classroom or could be shared between classes depending on need.

Further refinement and variation on a CA position is possible. Additional work would need to be done to develop various 'triggers' whereby it would be possible to have a differentiated support service based on need. Additionally, it will be necessary to determine timescale in

terms of duration of such support, while there will be need also for professional support for the education and training of CAs.

### *Legislative framework*

The legislative and policy framework is of major importance in terms of the future of Irish primary education and there is much evidence in this report that current provision is severely hampering a more comprehensive approach to inclusion, based on equality of participation. Since work on this report commenced, the legislative framework that currently underpins provision has been called into question by a variety of competing interest. The report points out that in many respects, principals and teachers have become pawns in this larger policy power struggle. There is little expectation however, that the challenge will abate. Rather, it is necessary, as has been acknowledged by some of the major stakeholders, that current legislation may not be in the best interest of promoting a more inclusive inter-cultural Ireland. There is need for leadership from all sides, while reiterating that it is ultimately the responsibility of the State to provide education for all. Evidence therefore is overwhelming of the necessity to review existing legislation.

Recommendation 11.

**It is recommended that a roundtable forum be convened at the earliest opportunity of all stakeholders, with expertise from outside the jurisdiction if necessary, to review current provision and legislation, and to make recommendations regarding alternative legislative frameworks.**

While the Taoiseach has indicated the establishment of a Church/ State forum where, one assumes, several topics might be raised, in this instance, it may be more appropriate to have a designated group whose focus will be current education and equality legislation, although these will of necessity have to be discussed in light of socio-cultural ferment. However, in order that such a roundtable review make progress and shift the dialogue to a more desirable space, it will be necessary for all patron bodies to realise that they are part of the current malaise, while the State too will be required to provide appropriate leadership if progress is to be made.

### *A way forward?*

We are acutely aware that this report could very easily become 'just another report', one that takes its place on a shelf beside many of those already completed, to gather dust and become one more notch on a litany of false dawns. To avoid this eventuality, the following is

specifically intended to deal with 'next steps' to create some energy and momentum for pressing reforms.

Recommendation 12.

**It is recommended that a task force of the major educational and planning interests in Dublin 15 and Fingal be established, including appropriate DES personnel, with a specific remit to advance the recommendations in this report.**

However, as indicated at several points earlier, participative citizenship is not merely a matter for schools; it is a community wide individual and collective responsibility. If social inclusion and cohesion are to become more than aspirations that are left to be frozen out by market forces as generated locally by the rental property sector, then much more attention needs to be paid to housing and community development, facilities and sustainability. While readily recognising that this is beyond the primary focus and remit of this report, it would be a dereliction of responsibility not to point this out, as well as ignore the evidence presented earlier.

Recommendation 13.

**It is recommended that a much more proactive approach to community development, including allocation of housing and rental support be undertaken to avoid ghetoisation, isolation and exclusion and proactively build inclusive communities.**

### **Concluding comment**

Ireland of the welcomes is being re-defined as the ink dries on this report. There is need to take stock, to re-think much of what has served us well until now, but is no longer appropriate for the challenges that now exist and have yet to emerge. Not everything needs to be jettisoned in a headlong rush to create an alternative future. However, this report points quite clearly to the need for significant change. This will not happen without the active support of all concerned. Completing this report will have been worthwhile if all 'citizens' engage with the issues. The future of Irish society and Irish education depend on sustained proactive engagement, so that as many as possible can say with pride they have contributed to the shaping of the Ireland of tomorrow. In doing so, it will be necessary to face up to some of our own ghosts, briefly mentioned at the beginning—our own painful experiences of emigration. As Lentin (2002, p. 235) suggests:

As 'we' the nation celebrate 'our' sameness through Riverdancing Irish culture, 'we' expel otherness. The 'other' threatens the newly regained national voice of contemporary Ireland not only because her/ his habits, rituals and discourses interfere because it reminds it of its not-too-distant past pain.

As educators, we are optimistic that there is considerable potential to further the task of creating a more pluralist multi-cultural Ireland. It requires the commitment of every citizen, not merely teachers and principals.



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## **Appendix A: Breakdown of Electoral Divisions into Parish or Estate**

**The following list shows the large estates that are included in each respective Electoral Division (ED)**

**Abbotstown** James Connolly Memorial Hospital, Millstead, St Mary's Park, Herbert Road, St Joseph's River Road, Tory Square, Woodpark, Basket Square, Talbot Downs/Court, Dunsoghly, Cappagh Hospital, Dunsink Lane, National Aquatic Centre

**Blakestown** Castlefield Woods/Park/Court, Swallowbrook, Hartstown, Castlewood, Pinebrook, Hansfield, Huntstown, Inglewood, Hazelbury, Rusheeney, Little Pace, Portersgate, Huntersrun, Rosedale, Clonsilla Village, Aldemere, Westhaven, Charnwood, Portersgate, Stonebridge, Deerhaven, Windermere, Lohunda Park, Manorfields, Bramblefield, Ongar, St. Joseph's Hospital, Castaheany, Linnetfields, Delhurst, Annely, Stralem

### **Castleknock - Park**

Ashleigh, Ashtown, Auburn Avenue, Beech Park, Castleknock Gate /Green / Manor / Park, Chesterfield, Deerpark, Dunsandle, Hadleigh, Hawthorn, Mill Lane, Morgan's Place, Navan Road (Pt), Park Villas, Parkview, Peck's Lane, Pelletstown, Phoenix /Court / Drive /Gardens/Place, Railway Cottages, River Road(Pt), The Hawthorns, Woodview Park

**Coolmine** Whitechapel/Mountview Estate, Summerfield, Whitestown/ Sheepmore Estate, Westland Village, Fortlawn, Estate Aspen Wood, Blakestown Way, Limelawn Park, Lohunda Downs, Blanchardstown Town Centre, Springlawn, Broadway Road, Orchard Grove

**Corduff** Corduff/ Sheephill/Edgewood/ Brookhaven/ Ashling Heights.

**Delwood** Delwood Estate, St Mochtas, Glenville Estate, Coolmine Close, The Courtyard, Coolmine Green, Brompton Estate, Kirkpatrick/ Rockfield Estate

### **Knockmaroon**

Annfield, Ashfield, Astagob, Bramley, Burnell, Carpenterstown, Castleknock, Cherry Avenue, College Grove, College Park, Diswellstown, Farnleigh, Fernleigh, Georgian Village, Knockmaroon, Laurel Lodge Road, Laverna, Luttrellpark, Luttrellstown, Maple, Mountsackville, Mulberry, Oaktree Estates, Park Estates, Phoenix View, Porterstown, Riverwood, Strawberry Beds, Sycamore Estates, Warren Estates, White's Road, Woodberry

**Lucan North** Allenswood, Barberstown, Barnhill, Broomfield, Clonsilla, Coldblow, Kellystown, Laraghcon, Porterstown, St Catherine's Park, Westmanstown, Woodlands

**Mulhuddart** Dromheath Estate, Warrenstown, Castlecurragh Park, Blanchardstown Heath, Institute of Technology, Mulhuddart Wood

**Roselawn** St Brigid's Park, Rushmore, Roselawn Road, Church Avenue

**The Ward (Dublin Suburbs Fingal):** Ballentree, Belgree, Bishops Orchard, Cappoge (Pt), Curragh Hall, Tyrrellstown **(Rural Area):** Ballycoolen, Baleskin, Bay, Belgree, Bishopswood, Broughan, Cappoge (Pt), Cherryhound, Cloghran, Coldwinters, Coolatrath, Coolquoy, Cruiserath, Gallanstown, Goddamendy, Grange, Hollystown, Hollywood, Huntstown, Irishtown, Johnstown, Kildonan, Killamonan (E.D.Blanchardstown), Killamonan (E.D.Finglas), Kilmartin, Kilshane, Mitchelstown, Mooretown, Newtown, Powerstown, Sprickelstown, Ward Lower, Ward Upper, Yellow Walls

**Tyrellstown** Wellview Estate, Parslickstown Estate

**Appendix B: Breakdown of Youth Population of Dublin 15**  
**(0 – 18 yrs) as reported in Census 2006**

Age Group	No. of Persons
0	1,881
1	1,833
2	1,913
3	1,964
4	1,766
5	1,559
6	1,395
7	1,366
8	1,264
9	1,145
10	1,103
11	1,115
12	1,050
13	1,059
14	1,151
15	1,158
16	1,077
17	1,223
18	1,227
019+	64,725

**Appendix C: Projected Increase in  
Primary School Age Population: 2006 to 2011**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Projected Primary School-Age Population (i.e. 5 to 12 year olds)</b>	<b>Cumulative Increase</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>9,997</b>	
<b>2007</b>	<b>10,713</b>	<b>716</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>11,562</b>	<b>1,565</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>12,372</b>	<b>2,375</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>13,060</b>	<b>3,063</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>13,677</b>	<b>3,680</b>

These figures are derived from the 2006 Census figures for the 12 Electoral Divisions in Dublin 15.

**Appendix D: Usually Resident population by ethnic  
or cultural background by Electoral Division**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White Irish</b>	<b>White Irish Traveller</b>	<b>Other White</b>	<b>Black or Black Irish</b>	<b>Asian or Asian Irish</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Not stated</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Geographic Area</i>								
<b>Blanch-Abbotstown</b>	<b>2142</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>4061</b>
	<b>53%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch-Blakestown</b>	<b>22473</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3696</b>	<b>2496</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>1348</b>	<b>32051</b>
	<b>70%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch- Coolmine</b>	<b>8000</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1093</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>10692</b>
	<b>75%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch-Corduff</b>	<b>3936</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>4789</b>
	<b>82%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch- Delwood</b>	<b>3865</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>4917</b>
	<b>79%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch-Mulhuddart</b>	<b>1613</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>2751</b>
	<b>59%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch-Roselawn</b>	<b>1644</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1807</b>
	<b>91%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Blanch-Tyrrelstown</b>	<b>1111</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>1545</b>
	<b>72%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Castleknock-Knockmaroon</b>	<b>12826</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>16849</b>
	<b>76%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Castleknock-Park</b>	<b>3918</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>4307</b>
	<b>91%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Lucan North</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1149</b>
	<b>90%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>The Ward</b>	<b>2824</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>5125</b>
	<b>55%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65383</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>10046</b>	<b>5481</b>	<b>3371</b>	<b>2253</b>	<b>2865</b>	<b>90043</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White Irish</b>	<b>White Irish Traveller</b>	<b>Other White</b>	<b>Black or Black Irish</b>	<b>Asian or Asian Irish</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Not stated</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>% in each category</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	

**Appendix E: Population reported as 'White Irish' and  
'Other than White Irish' in 2006 Census**

<b><i>Geographic Area</i></b>	<b>White Irish</b>	<b>As % of total</b>	<b>Other than White Irish</b>	<b>As % of total</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Castleknock-Park</b>	<b>3,918</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4,307</b>
<b>Blanch-Roselawn</b>	<b>1,644</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1,807</b>
<b>Lucan North</b>	<b>1,031</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>1,149</b>
<b>Blanch-Corduff</b>	<b>3,936</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>4,789</b>
<b>Blanch- Delwood</b>	<b>3,865</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>4,917</b>
<b>Castleknock- Knockmaroon</b>	<b>12,826</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>4,023</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>16,849</b>
<b>Blanch- Coolmine</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>2,692</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>10,692</b>
<b>Blanch-Tyrrelstown</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>1,545</b>
<b>Blanch-Blakestown</b>	<b>22,473</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>9,578</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>32,051</b>
<b>Blanch-Mulhuddart</b>	<b>1,613</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>1,138</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>2,751</b>
<b>The Ward</b>	<b>2,824</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>2,301</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>5,125</b>
<b>Blanch-Abbotstown</b>	<b>2,142</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>4,061</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65,383</b>		<b>24,660</b>		<b>90,043</b>

**Appendix F : Number of Teachers based in Dublin 15 Schools  
on 29th September, 2006**

Teaching Category	Number In category	% in category
Walking/Administrative Principal	23	4%
Ordinary Class Teacher	375	65%
Recognised Special Class Teacher and/or Resource Teacher for Travellers	22	4%
Learning Support / Resource Teachers (high incidence pupils)	67	11%
Resource Teachers (low incidence pupils)	20	3%
Home/School Community Liaison Teachers	4	1%
English Language Support	54	9%
Other Teachers	15	3%
<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>580</b>	

**Appendix G: ELS pupils in Dublin 15 schools as a percentage of Total Enrolment**

School code	ELS numbers	Total Enrolment	ELS as a % of total Enrolment
12	0	230	0%
15	49	784	6%
3	14	180	8%
11	23	268	9%
5	13	111	12%
19	83	686	12%
21	35	261	13%
16	117	741	16%
18	68	429	16%
22	101	526	19%
2	75	381	20%
4	118	581	20%
23	60	285	21%
7	221	972	23%
20	80	337	24%
17	90	371	24%
8	66	270	24%
6	128	492	26%
24	81	305	27%
10	93	297	31%
13	214	678	32%
9	106	316	34%
1	89	244	36%
14	33	58	57%
25	127	212	60%
<b>Total Enrolment</b>	<b>2,084</b>	<b>10,015</b>	<b>21%</b>

## **Appendix H: Country of origin of Pupils as reported in ELS Applications**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Number</b>
Ireland	55
U.K.	2
Remainder E.U. 15	33
Romania	280
Poland	124
Remainder of E.U.	152
Europe: Other states	234
<b>Total Europe</b>	<b>880</b>
Nigeria	574
Congo	74
Other	196
<b>Sub-total Africa</b>	<b>844</b>
Middle East	37
India	42
Pakistan	87
Afghanistan	12
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>178</b>
China	40
Phillipines	80
Asia: Other	27
<b>Sub-Total: Asia</b>	<b>147</b>
North America	3
South America:	4
<b>Sub-total: Americas</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>NATIONALITY UNKNOWN</i>	28
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>2,084</b>

## Appendix I: Summary Grid of Teachers' Perspectives

Themes:	Positive experiences	Challenges: Meeting the needs of newcomer children	Teaching, Language and Learning Support	Pupil Attrition	School / Family Interface
<b>Teacher Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Motivation of newcomer children</i></li> <li>• <i>Success in the Primary school curriculum</i></li> <li>• <i>Awareness of difference: cultures and nationalities</i></li> <li>• <i>Integration of children into Community: Encouraging Extra-curricular and Community Participation</i></li> <li>• <i>Schools pro-active adaptation to changing realities</i></li> <li>• <i>Providing professional support</i></li> <li>• <i>Collective/individual professional initiatives</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Socialisation</i></li> <li>• <i>Not just a language issue</i></li> <li>• <i>Discipline</i></li> <li>• <i>Behaviour: A gender issue?</i></li> <li>• <i>Punishment: Different cultural Perceptions?</i></li> <li>• <i>School Responses?</i></li> <li>• <i>Home/School: Cultivating shared norms and values</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>English Language Support</i></li> <li>• <i>Temporary Status of English Language Support teachers</i></li> <li>• <i>An oral language rich environment?</i></li> <li>• <i>Language acquisition: an age related issue</i></li> <li>• <i>Language and learners</i></li> <li>• <i>From English Language Support to Learning Support</i></li> <li>• <i>Impact of Language Support Cap on Senior schools</i></li> <li>• <i>Language Proficiency of Parents</i></li> <li>• <i>Language and Discipline</i></li> <li>• <i>Translation Services</i></li> <li>• <i>Language Support for Parents</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Impact on Teaching and classroom dynamics</i></li> <li>• <i>Impact of Attrition on Statutory Services: Teachers' Perceptions</i></li> <li>• <i>Parental attitudes to Assessment / Special Needs</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>(Home School Community Liaison Focus group)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Provision of course and training for parents through the HSCL scheme</i></li> <li>• <i>The Parent Room</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving language skills of parents</i></li> <li>• <i>Parental Support: An Equity Issue</i></li> <li>• <i>Adapting the role of the HSCL teacher</i></li> </ul>

## Appendix J: Summary Grid - Teachers' and Principals' Perspectives

Themes:	Positive experiences	Challenges: Meeting the needs of newcomer children	School / Family Interface	Teaching, Language and Learning Support	Factors affecting Integration in Dublin 15	Pupil Attrition
<b>Teacher Focus Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation of newcomer children</li> <li>• Success in the Primary school curriculum</li> <li>• Awareness of difference: cultures and nationalities</li> <li>• Integration of children into Community: Encouraging Extra-curricular and Community Participation</li> <li>• Schools pro-active adaptation to changing realities</li> <li>• Providing professional support</li> <li>• Collective/individual professional initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socialisation</li> <li>• Not just a language issue</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Behaviour: A gender issue?</li> <li>• Punishment: Different cultural Perceptions</li> <li>• School Responses?</li> <li>• Home/School: Cultivating shared norms and values</li> </ul>	<p>(Home School Community Liaison Focus group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of course and training for parents through the HSCL scheme</li> <li>• The Parent Room</li> <li>• Improving language skills of parents</li> <li>• Parental Support: An Equity Issue</li> <li>• Adapting the role of the HSCL teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Support</li> <li>• Temporary Status of English Language Support teachers</li> <li>• An oral language rich environment?</li> <li>• Language acquisition: an age related issue</li> <li>• Language and learners</li> <li>• From English Language Support to Learning Support</li> <li>• Impact of Language Support Cap on Senior schools</li> <li>• Language Proficiency of Parents</li> <li>• Language and Discipline</li> <li>• Translation Services?</li> <li>• Language Support for Parents</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on Teaching and classroom dynamics</li> <li>• Impact of Attrition on Statutory Services: Teachers' Perceptions</li> <li>• Parental attitudes to Assessment / Special Needs</li> </ul>
<b>Principal Group</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial assessment</li> <li>• Placement</li> <li>• Special needs</li> <li>• Refusal to give consent for referrals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language/ communication</li> <li>• Social Capital and Motivation</li> <li>• Communicating school values and routines</li> <li>• Abuse/ Corporal punishment</li> <li>• Disappearance of pupils</li> <li>• Documentation</li> <li>• Enrolment Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of pre-school experiences</li> <li>• Special Needs Assistant</li> <li>• Parachuting</li> <li>• Differentiation of challenge</li> <li>• Learning support</li> <li>• Outside agencies stretched</li> <li>• Absenteeism</li> <li>• 'Enforced' enrolment</li> <li>• Professional Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Perspective of Irish parents</li> <li>• 'White Flight'</li> <li>• Housing policy</li> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Suggestions for policy reform: Resources</li> <li>• Reduced class sizes</li> <li>• HSCL</li> </ul>	

### **Appendix K: Themes and actions covered by the Meitheal Project**

Themes covered by the Meitheal Project	Actions incorporated in this theme include:
<p><b><u>Theme 1: Language and Communication</u></b></p> <p>Learning the English language is a basic entry point for participation in the local community and wider society. Numbers of members of new communities are presenting to local primary and second level schools with either no English or limited language proficiency skills. Local schools are experiencing a very rapid change in the balance of new communities enrolled in the schools. There may be variations within families regarding English language capacity with for example, some older members or parents with limited or minimal language skills. This has the potential for family dislocation and future alienation from Irish civil society by individuals or social groups. It also severely militates against adults accessing employment in the current very healthy labour market.</p> <p>The Language and Communication theme focuses on utilising existing contact points: for example, schools, local community centres, health centres, youth organisations, employment organisations and specialist businesses such as ethnic food shops. Individuals targeted will include children, parents, adults presenting to services in the community, and vulnerable adults accessed through the special outreach initiative.</p> <p>There will be an exponential expansion of language provision with a concentration not only on language capacity, but also on communication skills, understanding of Irish cultural life, Irish mores and more specific an in-depth understanding of e.g. business, enterprise and employment conventions, norms and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting after school programmes for children and young people suited to varying levels of competency.</li> <li>• Working with Youth projects using interactive methodologies suited to the ethos of the youth sector.</li> <li>• Providing courses for adults who are engaged with community organisations or who are using BAP employment services.</li> <li>• Facilitating one to one or small group language classes for those who are identified as being vulnerable.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Theme 2: Reaching Vulnerable Adults</u></b></p> <p>Pilot Project</p> <p>Meitheal's outreach worker has responsibility to work with the Project Coordinator in developing and implementing a pilot project to address the social and learning requirements of vulnerable adults from within the new communities. The outreach worker will identify and support vulnerable adults who may be isolated within the host community due to barriers such as language difficulties, cultural differences and/or lack of social networks. The persons to be supported may include for example, individuals with no extended family members in Ireland or one who lacks no contact with members of their national group and/or with a specific difficulty e.g. mental health issues.</p> <p>The Pilot Project activities targets the identification of such people, exploring methodologies for engagement and providing support to particular nationalities so that they may engage with members of their own community. In collaboration with clients concerned, the outreach worker will enable individuals to gain access to education and training as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a framework for the pilot project.</li> <li>• Identifying clients meet participation criteria and who are willing to participate.</li> <li>• Engaging with a diversity of education and training advisors within BAP to ensure that clients learning and social requirements are progressed.</li> <li>• Liaising with external agencies to ensure that</li> <li>• Creating a strategy for longer-term support of vulnerable adults and groups within the new communities.</li> </ul>

Themes covered by the Meitheal Project	Actions incorporated in this theme include:
<p><b><u>Theme 3: The Arts and Culture</u></b></p> <p>The project recognises the pivotal role of the Arts in breaking down barriers, fostering an appreciation of diverse cultures, and facilitating exploration of controversial issues. This theme should enable members of the new communities to play a more active role in the artistic life of the community in Dublin 15 as well as enabling members of the new ethnic communities to become more informed about social norms and expectations in the context of Irish life and culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building capacity within the new communities for engagement with the arts.</li> <li>• Exploring mechanisms for using the arts as a means to represent and engage new communities in Irish culture, history and social norms.</li> <li>• Providing of support to cultural and arts groups from the new communities and other arts groups who may wish to include an international component.</li> <li>• Holding of an intercultural event to celebrate the cultural diversity and skills in a variety of arts.</li> <li>• Utilising local arts facilities and forging links between the local arts community and the new communities</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Theme 4: Employment and Enterprise</u></b></p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Employment is essential to full integration; it assists with social cohesion and provides individuals with independence and greater self-reliance. A number of challenges face refugees seeking access to employment. These challenges may include any of the following; the language and literacy competency of those concerned, displacement and trauma, inability to transfer qualifications, low self esteem and confidence, loss of previously acquired skills and/or the lack of family support and networks. To compound these challenges, it is frequently the case that individuals from new communities who are seeking employment may not have an established employment records in Ireland.</p> <p>This theme seeks to reduce barriers to employment. Meitheal strengthens access to employment by building on the existing skills within the new communities. It also provides opportunities for training, skills enhancement and enables members of new communities to learn more about the existing employment sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing business support and mentoring networks for refugees.</li> <li>• Incorporating specific cultural and language components into self-employment training programmes.</li> <li>• Exploring options for financing the seed capital required for setting up new businesses.</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Theme 5: Awareness Raising Among Employers</u></b></p> <p>This action will focus on a strengthening of relationships with local employers to actively promote recruitment of refugees. The Blanchardstown Area Partnership Employers' Group has been very effective in recent years. Its members include IBM, Symantec, Blanchardstown Chamber of Commerce and several small local businesses. This group has initiated and implemented actions centred on equality issues, such as selection and recruitment. The Project proposes to build on the existing relationships and experience within this group and specifically address the requirements of members of new communities as they interact with employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting equality and diversity workshops for employers.</li> <li>• Providing information for employers regarding potential induction requirements of employees from new communities.</li> <li>• Organising a trade fair where potential employees can meet with prospective employers and learn more about matching their skills with those required in particular sectors of industry and employment.</li> <li>• Facilitating reciprocal exchanges comprised of visits to local companies by potential employees and inputs by local employers to training programmes.</li> <li>• Exploring opportunities for placement and work shadowing experiences for individuals from new communities who may lack work experience in Ireland.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Theme 6: National and international Links</u></b></p> <p>Meitheal aims to forge collaborative national and international links with actors and agencies concerned with integrating new communities in Ireland and beyond. The Partnership has already established links with two other areas of Ireland that have experienced a similar rapid increase in residents from new communities. The process of strengthening national and international links is based on previously established organisational good practice. This was initiated as a feature of the EQUAL Employability/Accessibility Network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing national and international networks.</li> <li>• Identifying shared themes for follow up round table discussions and collaboration.</li> <li>• Promoting good shared communications resulting in shared good practice regarding local actions on training, education opportunities and youth development.</li> <li>• Producing joint policy papers on the broader themes of shared importance.</li> <li>• Collaborating on the development of relevant tools and materials.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix L: Summary Grid - Children's and Parents' Perspectives**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Headings</b>
<b>Children's perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness of 'otherness' <span style="float: right;">- Experience of racism</span></li> <li>- Involvement in the community <span style="float: right;">- Awareness of Language</span></li> <li>- Difficulties</li> <li>- Positive Outlook</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study One</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ireland of the Welcomes</li> <li>- Relocation: putting down roots / rebuilding community</li> <li>- Language: home and school <span style="float: right;">- School Enrolment</span></li> <li>- Confidence, Community and Active Citizenship <span style="float: right;">- Parental Involvement: The School and community</span></li> <li>- Language Support: Key to children's Integration</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Two</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School Enrolment</li> <li>- Experience of Schooling: Child and Parent</li> <li>- Enrolment Policy: Impact on families</li> <li>- Accessing educational facilities: limited economic resources</li> <li>- Social life: inclusion?</li> <li>- Inclusion and employment opportunity? <span style="float: right;">- Experience of racism?</span></li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Three</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changing Community: unplanned?</li> <li>- Experience of Schooling</li> <li>- Increasing diversity: internal migration</li> <li>- Work, family and continuity</li> <li>- School ethos: Inclusion?</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Four</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ireland: Initial Experience / inclusion</li> <li>- Split Family: The 'price' of belonging</li> <li>- Becoming Irish: Cultural Conjuncture / Disjuncture?</li> <li>- Economic Security: family reunion</li> <li>- Experience of schooling: identity?</li> <li>- Language, Culture and Inclusion</li> <li>- Language Support: A major contribution / Cultural Discontinuity</li> <li>- Community: Exclusion / inclusion <span style="float: right;">- Career trajectory: Securing a future</span></li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Five</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language and Identity <span style="float: right;">- School Enrolment: Mixed Experience</span></li> <li>- School, family, Community</li> <li>- Parental involvement: The language divide</li> <li>- Responsive School Communities: More Resources</li> <li>- Valuing Education: Formal and Informal</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Six</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties settling in <span style="float: right;">- School Enrolment</span></li> <li>- Movement between schools <span style="float: right;">- Integrating Newcomers</span></li> <li>- Language: home and school</li> <li>- Experiences of Racism?</li> <li>- Long-term commitment to Ireland</li> </ul>
<b>Case Study Seven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New school development</li> <li>- Enrolment Difficulties for second child: school enrolment policy</li> <li>- Movement between schools / Shortage of Primary School Places</li> <li>- Parent Association Activities</li> <li>- Low representation of newcomer families in Parents Association</li> <li>- Perspective of Irish Parents: bias in favour of newcomer children?</li> <li>- Behaviour of newcomer children an issue? <span style="float: right;">- Multi-Cultural future?</span></li> </ul>

### **Appendix M: Section 29 of the 1998 Education Act.**

**29.**—(1) Where a board or a person acting on behalf of the board—

(a) permanently excludes a student from a school, or

(b) suspends a student from attendance at a school for a period to be prescribed for the purpose of this paragraph, or

(c) refuses to enroll a student in a school, or

(d) makes a decision of a class which the Minister, following consultation with patrons, national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, may from time to time determine may be appealed in accordance with this section, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may, within a reasonable time from the date that the parent or student was informed of the decision and following the conclusion of any appeal procedures provided by the school or the patron, in accordance with *section 28*, appeal that decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science and that appeal shall be heard by a committee appointed under *subsection (2)*.

(2) For the purposes of the hearing and determination of an appeal under this section, the Minister shall appoint one or more than one committee (in this section referred to as an “appeals committee”) each of which shall include in its membership an Inspector and such other persons as the Minister considers appropriate.

(3) Where a committee is appointed under *subsection (2)* the Minister shall appoint one of its number to be the chairperson of that committee and who, in the case of an equal division of votes, shall have a second or casting vote.

(4) In hearing and determining an appeal under this section an appeals committee shall act in accordance with such procedures as may be determined from time to time by the Minister following consultation with patrons, national associations of parents, recognized school management organisations and recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and such procedures shall ensure that—

(a) the parties to the appeal are assisted to reach agreement on the matters the subject of the appeal where the appeals committee is of the opinion that reaching such agreement is practicable in the circumstances,

(b) hearings are conducted with the minimum of formality consistent with giving all parties a fair hearing, and

(c) appeals are dealt with within a period of 30 days from the date of the receipt of the appeal by the Secretary General, except where, on the application in writing of the appeals committee stating the reasons for a delay in determining the appeal, the Secretary General consents in writing to extend the period by not more than 14 days.

(5) On the determination of an appeal made under this section, the appeals committee shall send notice in writing of its determination of the appeal and the reasons for that determination to the Secretary General.

(6) Where—

(a) an appeals committee upholds a complaint in whole or in part, and

(b) it appears to the appeals committee that any matter which was the subject of the complaint (so far as upheld) should be remedied, the appeals committee shall make recommendations to the Secretary General as to the action to be taken.

(7) As soon as practicable after the receipt by the Secretary General of the notice referred to in *subsection (5)*, the Secretary General—

(a) shall, by notice in writing, inform the person who made the appeal and the board of the determination of the appeals committee and the reasons therefore, and

(b) in a case to which *subsection (6)* applies, may in such notice give such directions to the board as appear to the Secretary General (having regard to any recommendations made by the appeals committee) to be expedient for the purpose of remedying the matter which was the subject of the appeal and the board shall act in accordance with such directions.

(8) The Minister, in consultation with patrons of schools, national associations of parents, recognised school management organizations and recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, shall from time to time review the operation of this section and *section 28* and the first such review shall take place not more than two years from the commencement of this section.

(9) In the case of a school which is established or maintained by a vocational education committee an appeal against a decision of the board of such school shall lie, in the first instance, to the vocational education committee and thereafter to the Secretary General in accordance with *subsection (1)*.

(10) The Minister shall, from time to time, following consultation with vocational education committees, national associations of parents and recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, prescribe—

(a) the procedures for appeals under this section to vocational education committees, and

(b) which appeals shall inquire into whether the procedure adopted by a board in reaching a decision or conducting an appeal was fair and reasonable and which appeals shall be by way of a full re-hearing.

(11) The Secretary General may, in accordance with sections 4 (1) (i) and 9 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, assign the responsibility for the performance of the functions for which the Secretary General is responsible under this section to another officer of the Department of Education and Science.

(12) For the purposes of *subsection (1)(c)*, “student” means a person who applies for enrolment at a school and that person or his or her parents may appeal against a refusal to enroll him or her in the same manner as a student or his or her parents may appeal a decision under this section.