



The Sharing Education Programme supports schools in the formation of cross-sectoral partnerships in order to provide enhanced educational opportunities for the students involved. The programme promotes reconciliation by facilitating collaboration and sharing between the schools, in particular focusing on the provision of sustained, high-quality curricular activities.

# The Sharing Education Programme

- Over £7 million of funding over 6 years
- Over 120 primary and post-primary schools from the Catholic Maintained, Controlled and Integrated sectors involved in sustained high quality collaboration
- Over 8000 pupils benefiting

**SEP Background:** The first phase of the programme commenced in September 2007, and throughout the first three years of the programme over 5000 pupils from over 60 schools benefited from additional educational opportunities across a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The first cohort of schools demonstrated the effectiveness of cross-sectoral collaborative activity and the potential for schools to form effective inter-dependant relationships. The second cohort of partnerships commenced three years of activities in September 2010 and these partnerships will build upon the experience gained over the first 3 years of the programme. For more details on the programme and the schools involved, please visit us online.



SEP has demonstrated the clear educational, economic and social benefits of encouraging schools to form cross-sectoral partnerships:

**Educational:** Pupils get access to resources and subject choices that previously were unavailable to them. In addition to this, schools involved in the first phase of the programme report that subjects such as Citizenship are delivered more effectively in a cross-sectoral context as participants can explore many of the themes with peers who have different cultural perspectives. The independent evaluation of the first phase of the programme reported that participation in the SEP resulted in pupils gaining new experiences and skills and increasing their level of confidence.

**Societal:** An independent evaluation was carried out after the first phase of the programme to assess the impact it has had on the pupils and teaching staff involved. Amongst other things, the findings indicate that pupils who are directly involved in the programme suffer less anxiety about engaging with people from a different community, and say they are more willing to make new friends as a result of the programme.

**Economic:** DENI Sustainable Schools Policy states “given surplus capacity and falling rolls, it is important that opportunities for sharing both across and within sectors are fully considered and evaluated to improve current educational standards, to make better use of resources and to serve even better the needs of young people and those who teach them.” SEP provides a cost effective model for facilitating this type of relationship.

**Policy Environment:** The recent publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) and Community Relations Equality and Diversity in Education (CREDE) consultation papers provide a real opportunity to demonstrate the tangible benefits that SEP has produced, not only for the pupils, but for parents, teachers and the wider community.

SEP will also contribute to the continuing development of Area Learning Communities. Schools involved in SEP will be able to bring their experiences of partnership working to their ALCs in order to further the effectiveness. In addition to the potential impact on the ALCs, the ongoing SEP activities provide transferable models for other schools to meet their commitments as set out in the Entitlement Curriculum.