



The Western Education and Library Board is the local Education and Library Authority for the western part of Northern Ireland. It serves an extensive area, one hundred miles long and forty miles wide, covering the five local government districts of Derry City, Limavady, Strabane, Omagh and Fermanagh. It is an attractive area, stretching from the rugged coastline in the North, through the heather-clad uplands of the Sperrins to the tranquillity of Fermanagh's lakelands. To the west and to the south-west across the border lies some of the most beautiful countryside in the Republic of Ireland. The total population is just over 250,000 and the school population is over 60,000.

The Board and its Committees

The Board is composed of elected representatives from the local district councils, representatives of the churches, teacher representatives and nominees of the Minister of Education. Much of its work is carried out through its Education, Services, Finance, Teaching Appointments, Youth and Library committees.

Management Structures and Types of School

In the Board's area there are schools of four different types - controlled, maintained, integrated and voluntary grammar. All are state funded but to an extent are dependent on the degree of independence retained by the management of the schools. In all there are 10 nursery schools, 195 primary schools, 52 secondary schools, 10 special schools.

Pupils must spend 7 years in primary school, beginning at age 4, and 5 years in secondary school, beginning at age 11. Most continue in full-time education after the age of 16. Most children can now avail of one year pre-school education before enrolling in primary school.

Many of the schools, particularly the primary schools, serve small rural and village communities. Over 100 of these schools have enrolments of fewer than 100 pupils, and many have enrolments of fewer than 50 pupils. There are more than 65,000 pupils and almost 4,000 teachers at schools in the Board's area.

Post Primary Schools

Northern Ireland has retained a selective system with a transfer procedure which includes an examination at the age of 11. Approximately one-third of each year group transfers to grammar schools with the remainder going to secondary high schools.

Colleges of Further Education

Four colleges of further education, situated in Derry, Omagh, Enniskillen and Limavady, provide a wide range of vocational courses leading to graduate and post-graduate awards, national and higher awards, and other vocational awards. The colleges also provide a wide range of non-vocational courses. These colleges are not within the responsibility of the Board, but have representation on the Board and enjoy a close working relationship with it.

Functions of the Board

The Board has responsibility for:

- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Special Education

- Nursery Education
- Social, Recreational, Physical, Cultural and Youth Facilities
- Library Services

In support of these the Board provides a broad range of services including:

- Curriculum Advice and Support
- Training of Boards of Governors
- Financial Services
- School Planning
- Estates Management
- Transport Services
- Education Welfare Service
- Meals Service
- Schools Psychology Service
- Human Resources
- Computer Services

The Western Board also has responsibility, on behalf of the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland, for the Classroom 2000 Project, which has as its central purpose the design, development and operation of an ICT infra-structure to support the curricular, management and information needs of the major bodies within the Education Service in Northern Ireland.

The Board's Library Service is responsible for providing access to a comprehensive range of books, information and library facilities in support of the educational, economic and cultural needs of people in the area. Key functions include the provision and management of:

- The public library service including 16 branch libraries and 12 mobile libraries
- The schools library service operating to 267 schools in the area
- Special services including hospitals and community homes

Stock includes:

- 490,000 volumes in secondary schools
- 435,000 volumes in primary schools
- 27,000 other items, including videos and CD-ROMs
- 540,000 store items for loan or reference

It is in the process of developing the most up-to-date IT systems throughout the whole area in all its libraries.

Curriculum Service

The Curriculum Service is responsible for: curriculum advice and support to schools; curriculum development and initiatives; induction and training of teachers and school managers; review and development of school effectiveness; the Music Service; Special Needs Education; Psychology Service; Education Welfare Service; the Youth Service; Outdoor Education; Development of Sport.

The Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) consists of a team of permanent advisors and a number of advisory teachers who are normally on secondment from school. A major task of the service is to provide assistance to schools and to individual teachers with regard to aspects of curricular, organisational and staff development. The help given includes in-service training and in-school support.

International Dimension

The Board is responsible for developing European and international awareness, strengthening educational links with other countries and promoting cross-border and international partnerships and projects, particularly through use of the new technologies. It has extensive links with other parts of

Europe and with the USA and is using video conferencing to overcome the barriers of distance and to develop the global classroom.

The Board's Budget

- The Board receives all its funding, capital and recurrent, from Government
- The Board's total recurrent budget in 1999/2000 is almost £200 million
- Capital budget for new buildings and equipment is more than £7 million pounds
- Approximately half of the recurrent budget (£100 million) is delegated to schools to cover their running costs, including teacher costs.
- Other major items within the budget include:

| | £m |
|--------------------|-----|
| Transport | 10 |
| Meals | 7 |
| Libraries | 3.5 |
| Youth Service | 3 |
| Curriculum Support | 4 |
| Special Schools | 8 |

- The Board employs just over 7000 people of whom a large proportion are employed in schools and in the School Meals Service.

