



**Council for
Integrated
Education**

Learning Together
for a Shared Society

Council for Integrated Education

Strategic Plan

2022-26

Addended June 2025



Addendum to Strategic Plan - June 2025

Strategic Context Update

This Strategic Plan, originally adopted to guide NICIE's work from 2022 to 2025, is hereby extended to cover the period up to 31 March 2026. This one-year extension ensures continuity of purpose and activity while a new Strategic Plan for 2026–2029 is developed in line with forthcoming policy developments.

Since the plan was first published, significant developments have reshaped NICIE's strategic environment:

- The **Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022** has come into effect, placing a statutory duty on the Department of Education (DE) to encourage, facilitate, and support Integrated Education. The Act includes a statutory definition of Integrated Education and introduces a duty to promote understanding and meet parental demand.
- The Department has now published the **Vision 2030 Strategy for Integrated Education**¹ and its associated **Action Plan** and **Benchmark Data**. These documents set out a roadmap for system-wide delivery of the Act over a five-year period. NICIE welcomes their publication and will align its work accordingly and subject to available budget.
- Under **Action 10** of the Vision 2030 Action Plan, DE has commissioned the Innovation & Consultancy Service (ICS) to conduct a review of NICIE's role and capacity as the sectoral support body. NICIE welcomes the opportunity to participate fully in this process while continuing to deliver its existing remit and champion the ethos and growth of Integrated Education.
- The Vision 2030 Action Plan identifies NICIE as a lead or supporting organisation for key actions, including expanding transformation (Action 4), promoting public understanding (Action 15), supporting ethos development (Action 13), and sector-wide leadership (Actions 1, 6, 16, and 19). NICIE's Business Plan 2025–26 has been structured to directly reflect these priorities.
- NICIE notes that the Benchmark Data publication establishes some targets and indicators, including growing the number and proportion of children educated in Integrated schools.

¹ Available at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/vision-2030-strategy-integrated-education>

- To fulfil the expectations of Vision 2030 and the 2022 Act, NICIE reiterates its position that sustained and enhanced resourcing is essential. This includes adequate core funding to deliver commissioned services and meet increasing sector demand.
- The 2025–26 period will be used to consolidate progress, contribute to the implementation of Vision 2030, and begin stakeholder engagement for the next Strategic Plan (2026–2029).

NICIE remains committed to working in partnership with DE, EA, the IEF and others to ensure that Integrated Education is accessible, visible, and properly supported as a key feature of the Northern Ireland education system.

For the period 25/26 we reconfirm the following strategic objectives which are also aligned to the NICIE Business Plan 25/26.

1. Promote Integrated Education

Promote Integrated Education to create measurable change in awareness and understanding, leading to an increase in demand for Integrated schools

2. Grow Integrated Education

Support the growth and development of Integrated Education to be an accessible option in all geographical areas in Northern Ireland

3. Support Integrated Education

Support the development of the Integrated Ethos to help governors and leaders to advance sustainable and exemplary Integrated and Transforming schools.

4. NICIE is an effective organisation

Strengthen NICIE's organisational infrastructure to ensure it is transparent, accountable and equipped to deliver sectoral leadership in line with statutory responsibilities and good practice.

Appendix A outlines the Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025 with an update as of March 2025.

Appendix A – Strategic Plan 2022-2025

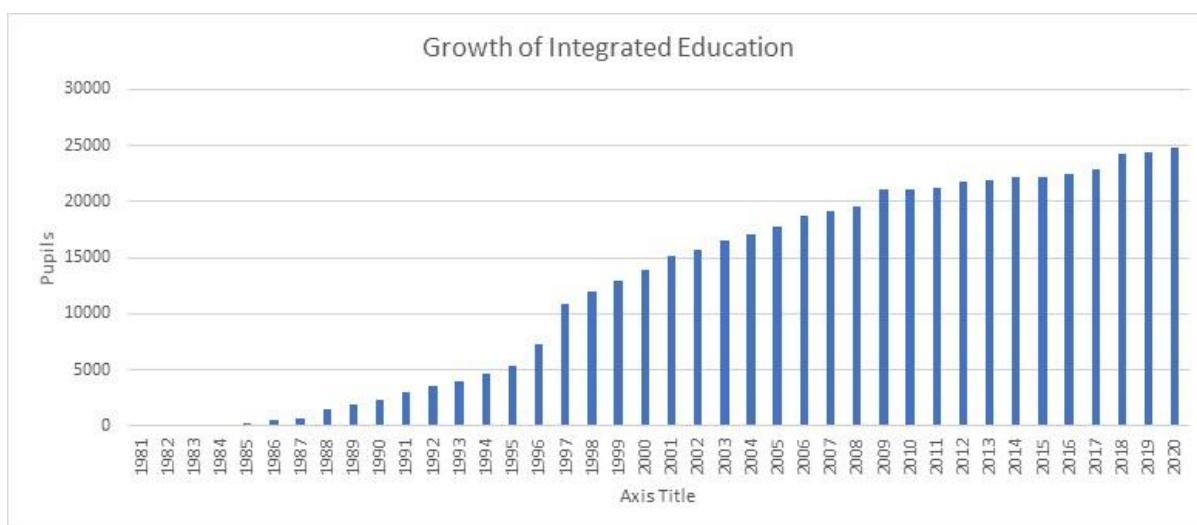
Introduction

This new strategic plan aims to further promote, grow, and support existing integrated schools; increase the opportunities for children to be educated together; and influence the wider educational system to see the educational, societal, and economic benefits in addressing and meeting the demand for Integrated Education.

This plan aligns with DE Priorities, the Programme for Government and the Children and Young People’s Strategy (appendix 1.)

NICIE believe that Integrated Education is the biggest, most sustainable, and most cost-effective community relations project that exists in Northern Ireland in its contribution to tackling division in our society. Presently almost 25,000 children are experiencing Integrated Education in 68 schools, that is, 7.3 % of the school going population and 6% of the number of schools in NI.

Since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, the number of children and young people in Integrated schools has doubled.



Integrated Education in the Northern Ireland context is about proactively and intentionally educating children from the two main traditional backgrounds (Catholic and Protestant) along with children of other cultures, beliefs, and communities together in one school, all day. The adults within the school communities including staff, governors, parents, and wider family circle also experience the community relations impacts. Integrated Education aims to prepare children and young people for a diverse world at a genuine and meaningful level.

There is consistent evidence that the majority of parents² in Northern Ireland want an integrated experience for their children. In particular, NICIE want to encourage parents and the wider public to influence their chosen school to develop an integrated ethos and for the school to consider Transforming to integrated status.

NICIE wants to work strategically to ensure that there is a network of sustainable Integrated schools across Northern Ireland.

Integrated Education deliberately and intentionally brings together children and adults in the one school community. The public in NI understand that Integrated Education is about educating children and young people from perceived Protestant and Catholic together with those from other beliefs, cultures, and communities.

For over forty years, Integrated Education practice has been refined and shared among the now established 68 Integrated schools. Many schools in NI have diverse populations but not all schools in NI have a significant number of both students from Protestant and Catholic traditions (shorthand for perceived community background.)

According to DE (Department of Education) statistics, 143 (14.4%) schools out of the 996 have at least 10% of the minority community. Sixty of this number are Integrated schools. Only 83 other schools (8.3%) in the Grammar and Primary sector have this level of mixing or more. In 287 schools, there are no pupils from the other main tradition.

Integrated Education has evolved over the last 40 years and has developed practice on how to enable children and adults in school communities to learn, play and develop positive intergroup relations together daily³. NICIE would welcome the opportunity to share the learning and practices including the NICIE training suite and the Quality Framework for Excellence in Integrated Education⁴ as widely as possible.

Integrated schools are very conscious of the mix in their pupil, staff and governor bodies and intentionally decide how to best use that diversity within the school calendar (events celebrated), curriculum, assemblies, guests, participation in Community events and so on. Integrated schools' market themselves to all communities that they are proactively, and intentionally,

² <https://view.publitas.com/integrated-education-fund/northern-ireland-attitudinal-poll-2018-summaryhttps://view.publitas.com/integrated-education-fund/northern-ireland-attitudinal-poll-2018-summary-report/page/1report/page/1>

³ [NICIE Online Training Programme 2021-2022 | Integrated Education Northern Ireland](#)

⁴ [Excellence in Integrated Education – EIEA | Integrated Education Northern Ireland \(nicie.org\)](#)

ensuring equal respect for both major traditions as well as those of other beliefs, cultures, and communities. Integrated Education enables sharing of the one school and in this COVID era, this model does not depend on moving large numbers of children from one school to another.

By adopting and refining an integrated ethos, using the tried and tested methodologies developed over the last 40 years by Integrated Education, school communities that decide to become more Integrated, should be supported to do so thus over time resulting in more mixing of students and adults (staff, governors, and parents) from Catholic and Protestant perceived backgrounds in individual schools. NICIE strongly believe that the Independent Review of Education should develop recommendations that are pro-active in this regard, through either legislation or policy. If left to chance there is little evidence to suggest schools will become more diverse in relation to governance, staff, and pupil intake. There is public support for Integrated Education, yet the system still relies generally on individuals and school communities to initiate Transformation or develop a new Integrated school.

A wealth of experience of integration in practice exists within the current staff team in NICIE and the wider Integrated schools. NICIE want to demonstrate those practices more widely including marketing and public relations; admissions criteria; governance; leadership; recruitment; Teacher Professional Learning and whole staff training and development of the Integrated ethos through the Quality Framework of Excellence in Integrated Education Award (EIEA). This also includes Anti-Bias approaches to education as well as policies and processes for recruitment of staff and governors and admissions criteria.

NICIE recognises the genuine intention of other school sectors to welcome and be inclusive of children and young people from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds in the one school. However, NICIE think that there should be more acknowledgement of the limited mixing in individual schools in Northern Ireland and NICIE want to develop and implement a strategic plan to assess, identify and meet the demand for Integrated Education over the next 3 years. NICIE look forward to partnering with DE and EA in planning for and implementing the Integrated Education Act 2022.

Our Vision

A society where children are educated together.

- confident to express their own identity and culture; and
- respectful of, and prepared to engage with, the identity and culture of others.

Our Mission

To promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland through Integrated Education

Core Values

We believe that:

Integration

Educating Protestant and Catholic children and those of other beliefs, cultures, and communities together in one school all day everyday provides an inclusive learning environment and prepares them for adult life. Integrated education is crucial in creating a shared forward-looking society.

Respect

Everyone is of equal worth and value and entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to feel respected and safe in their own identity.

Diversity

Differences add to the richness of society and deserve to be celebrated. We can learn much from those of different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures.

Forward-looking

To achieve our vision of sustainable peace and reconciliation, NICIE will always be forward-looking and forward-thinking, providing transformational leadership in helping change society for the better.

Strategic Priorities (specific Action statements) 2022-2025

1. Promote Integrated Education

Promote Integrated Education to create measurable change in awareness and understanding, leading to an increase in demand for Integrated schools

2. Grow Integrated Education

Support the growth and development of Integrated Education to be an accessible option in all geographical areas in Northern Ireland

3. Support Integrated Education

Support the development of the Integrated Ethos to help governors and leaders to advance sustainable and exemplary Integrated and Transforming schools.

4. NICIE is an effective organisation

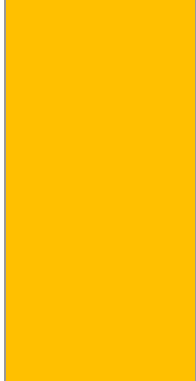



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1. Promote Integrated Education

Strategic Priority 1 Action Plan Promote Integrated Education to create measurable change in awareness and understanding, leading to an increase in demand for Integrated schools

What do we want to have happen? Outcome: (In achieving this strategic priority, what difference will we be making in our environment?)	What steps will we take? (Actions)	When? Where? (Start/End)	RAG rating Red- not yet started Amber Started Green Completed	Update at end March 2025
1 a) Integrated Education is well understood across NI	1.1 Developing a 3-year communications strategy with an annual plan – public / parents/politicians	Start April 2022 End April 2025	Amber	75% of targets within the Communications Strategy are achieved or on track to be achieved. 25% have not been achieved due to lack of resource.

	1.2 Myth busting and fact sharing campaign	Start August 2021 Ends June 2023		Partially achieved via Social Media Campaign Activity however no budget for full promotional campaign and BC for Comms Officer rejected.
	1.3 Ensure Communications strategy is resourced	Start January 2022 End April 2025		BC for Comms Officer rejected
	1.4 Continue to engage and working with all stakeholders to influence the Integrated Education Strategy	End date April 2025		Achieved and ongoing.
	1.5 New branding launch and roll out	Start January 2022 End March 2023		Complete
	1.6 Develop and maintain effective working relationship with EA Officers / Board at EA	Start June 2022 End March 2025		

<p>Integrated Education is well understood across NI</p>	<p>1.7 Build relationships with Parents (Demonstrate increased engagement with schools, parents and the wider community on IE in partnership with IEF</p>	<p>Start April 2022 End March 2025</p>		<p>Yes – NIO stats indicate increasing engagement and IEF public survey also indicate increasing awareness</p>
<p>1 b) NICIE relationship with partners is complementary and coordinated with an overarching common purpose</p>	<p>1.8 Clarify with DE the role of NICIE in promoting IE</p>	<p>Start April 2022 End September 2022</p>		
	<p>1.9 Bringing the IEF and NICIE Boards together – discussing our ‘Purpose’, sharing common ground, building relationship</p>	<p>Start January 2022 End April 2025</p>		
	<p>1.10 Develop contribution of Ambassadors for IE (Comes under Comms Strategy as well)</p>	<p>Start April 2022 Ends April 2025</p>		<p>Not progressed due to lack of Communications resource</p>

2. Grow Integrated Education

Strategic Priority 2 Action Plan Support the growth and development of Integrated Education to be an accessible option in all geographical areas in Northern Ireland

What do we want to have happen? Outcome: (In achieving this strategic priority, what difference will we be making in our environment?)	What steps will we take? (Actions)	When? Where? (Start/End)	RAG rating	Update at end March 2025
2 Support DE and EA to develop a Strategic Plan based on information and evidence gathered to assess, identify, and meet the demand for Integrated Education in all phases in all geographical areas in NI	2.1 Work with DE to support and influence the Integrated Education Strategy Action Plan	Start January 2022 End October 2024		Yes – in final stage
	2.2 Identify extra Human Resources/ extra budget required for NICIE to be able to meet the demand for Integrated Education and seek same	Start April 2022 End April 2025		NIO and DFA continuing

	<p>2.3 NICIE assess for and identify areas where Integrated Education demand exists through liaising with DE, EA and IEF community/parental engagement, with micro polls/ public meetings/ community conversations</p>	<p>Start April 2022 End April 2025</p>		<p>Awaiting DE commissioning</p>
	<p>2.4 Identify partners who can support and build collaborative relationships to help implement NICIE's strategic plan</p>	<p>Start April 2022</p>		<p>Increasing collaboration with EA, IEF and academics</p>
	<p>2.5 Influence wider policy context, including the Independent Review of Education</p> <p>Participate in the development of any review of policy or legislation that is required including DE's Integration Works policy</p>	<p>Start April 2022 End April 2025</p>	<p style="background-color: #00b050; color: white; text-align: center;"> </p>	<p>IW review underway – we are dependent on DE time scales</p>

	2.6 Clarify role of NICIE in response to IRE full Report when Published	Start September 2023 End March 2025		Context changed by Vision 2030.
	2.7 Continue to provide evidence of demand for Integrated Education to DE/EA where appropriate	Start September 2022 End March 2025		Submission of evidence via report card and Act implementation group

3 Support Integrated Education

Strategic Outcome 3 Action Plan Support the development of the Integrated Ethos to help governors and leaders to advance sustainable and exemplary Integrated and Transforming schools

What do we want to have happen? Outcome: (In achieving this strategic priority, what difference will we be making in our environment?)	What steps will we take? (Actions)	When? Where? (Start/End)	RAG rating	Update at end March 2025
2 NICIE encourage quality of Integrated Education by supporting schools to be stronger in their Integrated ethos and thus the experience for those involved	3.1 Increase capacity with a pool of dedicated Excellence in Integrated Education Award (EIEA) Assessors	Start April 2022-end December 2022		
	3.2 Create and share Case Studies of the situation and benefits of interventions based on evidence gathered during self-evaluation process <i>{KPI 5 NIO Bespoke project}</i>	Start September 2022 End March 2025		In progress 25-26

	<p>3.3 Assess effectiveness of staff and governor development evaluation to meet the needs of the participants to support a quality Integrated Ethos including Integrated Education Framework (Pathway) July 2023</p>	<p>Start January 2023 April 2025</p>		<p>Review governors' sessions evaluations?</p>
	<p>3.4 EIEA –Research will be commissioned to test the extent to which this creates a 'virtuous circle' whereby a stronger ethos supports sustainability</p>	<p>Starts September 2023 Ends April 2025</p>		<p>Could look at enrolments in schools with EIEA? But research has not been commissioned as unaffordable.</p>
	<p>3.5 Commence the process to review of NICIE Statement of Principles (<i>not done since 2007</i>)</p>	<p>Start September 2023 Ends April 2025</p>		<p>Insufficient funds. To be progressed in 25/26 subject to funding</p>
	<p>3.6 Access to and engagement with Governors of Integrated schools via a contact list that is reviewed annually</p>	<p>Start March 2023 Ends January 2024</p>		<p>Increased engagement with governors as schools engage in EIEA and gov session is often part of that</p>

	3.7 Number of high-quality facilitated development sessions in Anti-Bias Approaches to Education delivered	Start March 2022 Ends April 2025		There has been large demand for anti-bias – this can be green
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Strategic Outcome 4 Action Plan NICIE is an effective organisation

Workstream No	Workstream name	Desired outcome	Lead	Action (s) to date	Further action required	By when	RAG	Update at end March 2025
4.1	Move to accessible new premises	NICIE moved to James House with new IT provider in place.	MJ/MR	1. Successful move to James House completed		By September 2023		
				2. Tender for IT and telephony ongoing				
4.2	Hybrid Working Policy review, now that in new premises	Hybrid working policy that works for all agreed by staff and directors	RM/MR/Hybrid Working Subgroup	Hybrid Working Policy Pilot started. All staff aware of pilot and what is expected from them to gather	Monitor engagement of staff members with the pilot as it is rolled out	20 November 2023 -end of January 2024		
					Analysis of data			

				the data required to enable effective review of Hybrid Working to enable work/life harmony and health and	Report and recommendations Consulted on by Board and Staff			
					Review of Hybrid Working Policy			

Workstream No	Workstream name	Desired outcome	Lead	Action (s) to date	Further action required	By when	RAG	Update
				well-being of all staff				
4.3	Review of staffing structure and recruitment and retention of staff members	A plan in place to ensure that NICIE is resourced appropriately to lead and manage change in the context of strategic planning for Integrated	MM/RM/SMT/FGPSC (HR Sub Committee)/HR Provider	Additional funding secured from DFA to March 2024.	Review of organisational structure	By January 2024		To be done as part of IE strategy
				Additional funding secured from NIO to support schools going through the Transformation process and	Review of Strategic and Business Plan and alignment with DE CHILD priorities within current budget and staffing	By March 2024		

		Education in NI		support recently established Integrated schools to become sustainable to March 2025.	Appropriate level of staff members at all levels in NICIE and any gaps in funding identified and reported to NICIE Board and DE	By March 2024		
					A retention and recruitment plan in place	January 2024		

Workstream No	Workstream name	Desired outcome	Lead	Action (s) to date	Further action required	By when	RAG	Update
4.4	Programmes and Training for Staff and Directors on Integrated Education	Awareness raised with staff and Directors of the Integrated Education	CEO/SMT/Development Team/	Further development of the self evaluative tool for Excellence in Integrated Education	Sharing of developments with staff and directors	By March 2024		

		and Ethos in preparation for the work on the NICIE Statement of Principles		considering the new IE (NI) Act 2022 Development of Anti Bias Approaches in Education	Identify programmes and training for staff and directors regarding Integrated Education	By April 2024		
					Put in place a plan for staff and directors regarding training and development on Integrated Education	By June 2024		Audit of existing board to be completed
					Business Case and Procurement training organised by MJ	By February 2024		

Workstream No	Workstream name	Desired outcome	Lead	Action (s) to date	Further action required	By when	RAG	Update
4.5	Review of Policies and Practice related to	NICIE Workplace policies, practices	SMT/Board HR Sub Committee/HR Provider	NICIE has recently reviewed its				Approved Dec 24

	the workplace	and processes consulted on and reviewed as part of the rolling programme of NICIE Policy review		Recruitment and Selection Policy latest draft to be reviewed at next FGPSG meeting 27 August 2024 NICIE has a draft Dignity at Work to replace the Bullying and Harassment Policy and a revised draft Equal Opportunities Policy.	Review these policies and ratify at Board level	By August 2024		DAW & EQ policies in draft.
					Identify any further policies, practices and processes for review Dignity at Work and Equal Opportunities Policies to be reviewed at next GPSC meeting 27 August 2024	By August 2024		EDI Strategy
	Review of EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy developed	HRSC/SMT/CEO	Complete tender process to commission external support to develop strategy	Ensure internal Board and Staff communications regarding this work	By 5 July 2024		
Workstream No	Workstream name	Desired outcome	Lead	Action (s) to date	Further action required	By when	RAG	

					Strategy and Action Plan to be brought forward by new CEO			
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Appendix 1

Links to DE Priorities, the Programme for Government and the Children and Young People’s Strategy

DE Corporate Plan

1. Championing all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life
2. Helping all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being
3. **Inspiring all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society**
 - **Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference To achieve this, we will:**
 - **Encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated and Irish-Medium Education;**
4. Meeting the Learning needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential
5. Delivering an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high-quality education system

Draft Programme for Government

Draft Outcomes (these are not numbered in the PfG)	Key Priority Areas requiring DE input
Our children and young people have the best start in life	<p>Access to Education Addressing resourcing pressures, taking a strategic approach to area planning i.e., ensuring all have access to fit for purpose schools and supporting our education sector, including integrated and shared education. (DE, DOF)</p>
	<p>Tackling Sectarianism, Respect, and Identity Tackling the issues of the past and ending sectarianism. Promoting and protecting the rights of individuals to ensure different values and identities are respected and welcomed in society. (TEO, DFC, DOJ, DE)</p>

<p>Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other</p>	<p>Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect, and Identity Supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing integrated and shared education, tackling sectarianism, ending paramilitary activity, and addressing the harm and vulnerabilities caused by it. (DOJ, DE, TEO, DFC)</p>
<p>People want to live, work, and visit here</p>	<p>Tackling Sectarianism, Respect, and Identity Supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing</p>
	<p>shared/integrated education, tackling sectarianism, ending paramilitary activity. (DOJ, DE, TEO, DFC)</p>

Children and Young People's Strategy Outcomes

(in support of the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015)

1	Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy
2	Children and young people enjoy play and leisure
3	Children and young people learn and achieve
4	Children and young people live in safety and stability
5	Children and Young People experience economic and environmental well-being
6	Children and young people make a positive contribution to society
7	Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights
8	Children and young people live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted

