

Timing of the survey is also critical and therefore we have taken on board feedback received from the schools and are proposing to adopt a two phased approach:-

- ⇒ Primary Schools – December 2008
- ⇒ Post Primary Schools – January/February 2009.

We are very grateful to all the schools who participated in the pilot exercise and look forward to working with our next group of schools as we move to the full survey stage.

We hope to have much more progress to report to you at the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum on the implementation of the full survey.

Date for Your Diary
Thursday, 12 February 2009

The next Joint Consultative Forum event will take place on Thursday, 12 February 2009 from 9.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. (venue and speakers to be confirmed). The topics for discussion will be:

- ⇒ RPA - Education
- ⇒ Inequalities in Education

Please note this date in your diary

Further details will be issued in due course



**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DISABILITY DUTIES BY THE
EDUCATION BOARDS/CCMS/
STAFF COMMISSION**

Good News Story

We are delighted to share with you some good news in relation to the implementation of our Disability Duties. At our consultation event, organised in partnership with Disability Action and MENCAP in June 2007, it was suggested that the five Boards consider ways to collect information on the experiences of children and young people with disabilities of the education system.

At the Joint Consultative Forum we discussed with you progress made in taking forward this proposal including endorsement of the proposal by the Boards, CCMS and the Staff Commission, the challenges being faced in terms of methodology to be used and the questionnaires being drafted. We advised that three questionnaires were required in order to target pupils at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

The questionnaires sought to collect information on the following areas:

- ⇒ About school;
- ⇒ Experiences at School;
- ⇒ Homework;
- ⇒ Activities when not at school; and
- ⇒ Behaviour towards them in school.

Copies of the questionnaires are available on the Staff Commission's website at www.staffcom.org.uk

The image shows a screenshot of a questionnaire form titled 'Questionnaire - Pupil 1 Primary School (KS2 Pupils)'. The form asks 'What you say about your experience at school will help us to make school life better.' It contains several questions: 1. 'Are you?' with options for 'Boy' and 'Girl'. 2. 'What age are you?' with options for '8', '9', '10', and '11'. 3. 'About School' section with question 3: 'Do you come to school?' and options 'On a bus', 'In a car/pa', 'On your bike', and 'Do you walk to school'. 4. Question 4: 'We would like to know how you feel about being at school. Please tick one of the boxes on the list below.' with options 'I am very happy at school', 'I am quite happy at school', 'I am not sure', and 'I am a bit unhappy at school'. 5. Question 5: 'Do you play with your classmates at break time and lunch-time?' with options 'Yes' and 'No'. 6. Question 6: 'If you have answered No to this question, please say why not?' with a text input field.

Pilot Exercise

A pilot exercise to test the questionnaires and the methodology to be used was developed. Personal contact was made with a small number of primary/post primary schools and a special school in the controlled and maintained sectors in the Belfast, North Eastern and Southern Board areas inviting them to participate in the pilot exercise. School Principals were advised that the survey was to be completed in school, that it would be anonymous and confidential and dealt with in keeping with the law on Data Protection and that the findings from the project would be used to inform policy on education. Each School Principal was asked to nominate a member of staff to assist pupils to complete the questionnaire, if necessary, and to administer the survey.

On agreeing to participate in the pilot each school was given an information pack which contained:-

- ⇒ A briefing paper;
- ⇒ Letter for parents to obtain consent for their child to participate in the survey;
- ⇒ The required number of questionnaires;
- ⇒ Copies of a letter for KS3 and KS4 pupils explaining the survey; and
- ⇒ Advice for the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or the nominated person.

The pilot exercise was conducted in schools during June 2008 and although it was a very busy time of year, 81 responses were received which was a return rate of approximately 80%. These responses were analysed and a Data Overview Document compiled, (*available on the Staff Commission's website at www.staffcom.org.uk*). Arising from the analysis and the feedback received from the schools, amendments were made to each of the three questionnaires. A number of general suggestions were made by schools including the proposal that the survey be made available 'on-line' for pupils to complete and that the survey be conducted at suggested times during the school year.

The special school that participated in the pilot queried the questionnaire approach for their pupils and suggested that other mechanisms should be explored to collect information on the experiences of children and young people within special schools.

All of these points have now been considered.

- In regard to pupils in special schools the Working Group recognises the need for a different approach to be adopted and will be exploring possible options in consultation with the Disability Groups and Special Schools.
- The possibility of pupils completing the questionnaires on-line has been explored with C2K and we are very pleased to report that C2K has agreed to assist us.

(C2K, on behalf of the five Education and Library Boards, is responsible for the provision of an information and communications technology (ICT) managed service to schools in Northern Ireland).

The Way Forward

Plans are now underway to roll out the full survey to a sample of primary and post primary schools across Northern Ireland targeting approximately 1000 pupils. The approach to be taken to collect information from special schools is currently under consideration by the Working Party.

The Department of Education has provided a representative sample of schools broken down by:-

- ⇒ Education and Library Board;
- ⇒ School type – primary/post primary; controlled/maintained; and
- ⇒ Urban/rural.

One of the significant factors which resulted in the high response rate to the pilot exercise was the personal contact made with the schools. We believe this was critical to the success of the pilot and, for the full survey, we are proposing that Board Officers personally contact schools in the representative sample to invite them to participate in the survey.