

Our ref: ACL/pb

2 April 2003

Jane Kennedy MP  
Minister  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
Balloo Road  
BANGOR

Dear Minister

### **Statutory Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Key Stage 3**

Thank you for meeting Gavin Boyd and myself on Monday 31 March. We were very pleased to have the opportunity to share with you the Council's views on Post-primary education, particularly in the light of the ongoing review of the curriculum.

During our meeting we explained in some detail our view of the importance of the development of Key Skills, those skills which are vital for success in life and work. We seek to move the balance of the curriculum from content (the traditional academical approach) towards the development of skills which will be appropriate for our young people as they face the rapidly changing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Although this objective has widespread support, the most recent consultation has indicated concerns amongst teachers about how these proposals might be implemented. This may be partly because the proposals were not presented in enough detail to be clearly understood (we did not wish to present a "fait accompli" for consultation).

The Council's view is that widespread agreement is vital before we embark on major change to the curriculum. To this end we have carefully studied the views we have received from schools and from a wide variety of other interested bodies. We have also continued further informal consultation. Over the next three months we will prepare more detailed proposals than those published in 2002 and present these for a further period of formal consultation from August to November. I expect to provide you with final advice at the end of the year that should enable the process of change in schools to commence in September 2005.

In drawing up these further proposals, I believe we ought to adhere to some important principles. They are:

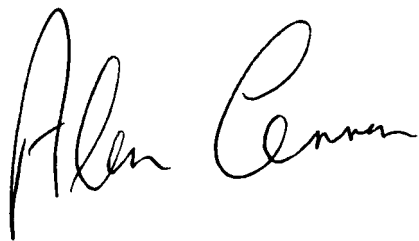
- to present a statutory curriculum in the form of statements expressing the minimum to which every child is entitled;
- to include, at the centre of the curriculum, statements relating to "life and work", including citizenship and personal development and skills such as problem solving,
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- team working, self-management, communication, use of number and computer-literacy;
- to present statements of minimum entitlement for general education in a way that:
  - gives appropriate emphasis to literacy and numeracy ;
  - emphasises their contribution to the area of life and work mentioned above;
  - makes as explicit as possible the interconnections among subjects;
- to set out assessment arrangements in which formative assessment in the classroom is the foundation upon which all other aspects are built;
- to ensure that, taken together, the assessment and reporting arrangements serve the needs of pupils, teachers, parents, schools and government.

Attached to this letter is our advice on the framework for the curriculum and assessment arrangements at Key Stage 3, setting out our arguments in support of these principles. I have also attached an executive summary written for a non-specialist audience with a view to wide publication and I would be grateful for your permission to publish this at an early date.

I will write to you with advice for the curriculum at Key Stage 4 shortly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Lennon', written in a cursive style.

**Alan Lennon (Dr)**  
**Chairman**