
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

RHEYNN YNSEE, SPOYRT AS CULTOOR



Isle of Man
Government

Reilrys Ellan Vannin

Education (Amendment) Bill

Policy Summary Notes
May 2025

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Summary

The following policy summary notes provide information on the Education (Amendment) Bill as it is introduced into the Branches of Tynwald in October. These notes provide information on measures in the Bill.

What is the purpose of the Bill?

The Education (Amendment) Bill aims to modernise existing education law¹ by making the curriculum more inclusive, managing school admissions better, and addressing additional educational needs. It ensures looked after children have equal opportunities, supports alternative education, and enhances safeguarding measures for children who are not attending school. The Bill also grants more autonomy in funding and allows for temporary school closures when necessary. Overall, it seeks to create a more inclusive, equitable, and adaptable educational system.

What are the main benefits of the Bill?

The ambitions of the Bill are set out in nine key parts:

- Promoting the Education of Children who are Looked After
- Alternative Provision of Education
- Religious Education
- Admissions and School Capacity
- Additional Safeguarding Measures
- Emergency School Closures
- Children who are not in school
- Educational grants and funding
- Additional Educational Needs

What are the main elements of the Bill?

The measures in this Bill will deliver on the following policy principles:

- **Promoting the Education of Children who are Looked After:** Introduces a power for the Department to create a virtual school. By creating this virtual school it would

¹ [Education Act 2001](#) ("the Act")

allow for the Department to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after.

- **Alternative Provision of Education:** Provides for education outside of 'traditional' school premises under certain conditions to support pupils' needs.
- **Religious Education:** Broadens religious education to include multiple beliefs, not just Christianity, ensuring all students receive a balanced educational experience that promotes a wider understanding of others' religious values and ethics.
- **Admissions and School Capacity:** Allows schools to declare a year group or class closed under circumstances where site capacity is reached. Allows Head teachers to refuse registration of children within the catchment area of that school, where required for safeguarding reasons. It also and introduces an independent appeals process.
- **Additional Safeguarding Measures:** Includes measures to safeguard children who are not attending school.
- **Emergency School Closures:** Allows for the temporary closure of schools when necessary.
- **Children who are not in school:** Requires parents to update the Department annually on their children's educational arrangements.
- **Educational grants and funding:** Provides the Department greater autonomy in providing funding support for further education and training.
- **Additional Educational Needs:** Addresses additional educational needs with modernisation of more inclusive terminology and introduces an independent appeals process.

Supporting children who are looked after

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This measure introduces a power for the Department to create a virtual school. By creating this virtual school it would allow for the Department to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after.

Since 1st September 2020, the Virtual Head teacher has had a non-statutory duty to promote the educational outcomes of all children who are looked after, through strategic leadership and support, to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best educational outcomes for children and young people in care. This measure will create a statutory role, ensuring that the Department must have a dedicated officer to champion the educational outcomes of these children, helping to improve their school attendance, engagement, and overall achievement.

This change is needed because statistically children who are looked after have poorer educational outcomes than their non-looked after peers at every stage of education. Children who are looked after face challenges that their non-looked after peers do not, and as such special attention is required for this group of vulnerable learners. Looked after children are over three times more likely to have an additional educational need than the overall pupil population.

This will also give the Department the legal mandate to continue to support these children following completion of compulsory school age until they are 19 if they remain in education. It will also provide a clear framework that will allow the Department to prioritise the needs of these children.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 5 allows the Department to create a virtual school by Order. By creating a virtual school it would allow the Department to promote the educational achievement of children aged 5-19 who are subject to a care order, an interim care order or qualify under section 25, section 27, section 76 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2001.

How will this work in practice?

The role of the Department is to promote the education of children and young people who are looked after, and to ensure that the Department's statutory duty to provide a suitable education for the child is discharged effectively.

It is anticipated that creating a virtual school will have multiple effects:

- maintain an up-to-date roll of its looked-after children who are in school or college settings, and gather information about their education placement, attendance, and educational progress.
- consult with school and other agencies DHSC, IOM Constabulary, Youth Justice (DHA) etc. to meet the Corporate Parent needs identified by the Department.

- ensure there is an up to date, effective, and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focusses on educational outcomes and that all children who are looked after have a PEP.
- ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP.
- support educational transitions through proactive, multi-agency collaboration.
- ensure the educational achievement of children who are looked after is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- report regularly to the Department on the attainment, progress, and school attendance of children who are looked after in accordance with the Isle of Man's corporate parenting arrangement.

Alternative Provision of Education

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This measure provides a statutory framework for establishing education facilities outside of traditional school premises under certain conditions, to support pupils' needs. It is designed to cater to children who may not be able to access a conventional school environment, due to various challenges, such as dangerous or harmful behaviours, or being subject to a court order.

Some children face significant challenges that make it difficult for them to succeed in a traditional school setting. These challenges can include behavioural issues, significant mental health concerns, or legal circumstances. By providing an alternative provision centre, the measure ensures that these children receive the education and support they need in a more suitable environment. This helps to address their specific needs and promotes their overall well-being.

Children at risk of significant harm or those subject to court orders often require support from multiple agencies, including education, social services, and youth justice. The alternative provision centre may offer a multi-agency approach, bringing together various services to provide comprehensive support where necessary. This integrated approach ensures that all aspects of the child's needs are addressed, leading to better outcomes.

Traditional school settings may not always be flexible enough to accommodate the unique needs of certain children, particularly those with dangerous or harmful behaviours. The measure allows for the education of children offsite, providing a more flexible and tailored approach to their education. This flexibility ensures that children receive the right support at the right time, in an environment that is conducive to their learning and development.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 4 amends Section 2 to provide that the centres will have the primary purpose of providing education and support for children who cannot be safely educated in a provided, maintained or special school because they are subject to court orders or are at risk of significant harm to themselves and/or others. This ensures that children who cannot be safely or effectively educated in a traditional school setting still receive a suitable education.

Clause 6 allows for the establishment of alternative provision centres by Order.

How will this work in practice?

The measure will have a positive impact on children who are placed in alternative provision centres. These children will benefit from placements that are better suited to their needs, maintaining community links, and allowing for long-term pathway planning. This ensures they are in the right placement for their needs at the right time.

Children in alternative provision centres will be supported by a skilled, multi-disciplinary workforce. This team may include educators, social workers, healthcare professionals, and other specialists who can provide comprehensive support tailored to each child's needs.

Despite being educated offsite, children will remain on the school roll. This ensures continuity in their education and allows for a smooth transition back to a traditional school setting if and when it becomes appropriate.

Overall, this measure is necessary to provide a statutory framework for alternative education facilities that cater to the unique needs of vulnerable children. By offering a flexible, multi-agency approach, the measure ensures that these children receive the education and support they need to thrive.

Religious Education

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This measure broadens religious education in schools to include multiple beliefs, not just Christianity, ensuring all students receive a balanced educational experience that promotes a wider understanding of others' religious values and ethics.

The reason this is included in the Bill is that the current law stipulates that religious education shall be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' By amending this to a balanced overview of religion and philosophical beliefs including shared values and ethics, pupils will have opportunities to explore these concepts through a variety of sub lenses which make up the religious education disciplinary lens.

In the curriculum for the Island, religious education is objective, critical and pluralistic, both in content and pedagogy; it is not about making learners 'religious' or 'non-religious.' This amendment will ensure that all pupils are offered opportunities to engage with different religions and non-religious philosophical convictions in their own locality as well as in the wider world.

What is the effect of the legislation?

The current law stipulates that religious education shall be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' Clause 7 will amend Section 12 of the Act to require that religious education shall cover Christianity **and** other religions.

How will this work in practice?

The most important points about planning for and teaching religious education are:

- Planning for this new approach to religious education should follow the curriculum design requirements of the Religious Education Advisory Committee (REAC). Under the Act, it is the role of the REAC to prepare a Religious Education syllabus for pupils on the Isle of Man and advise the Department on matters relating to Religious Education. The Religious Education Advisory Committee Regulations 2004² prescribe that the committee should be composed of:
 - The Bishop
 - 5 members from the Education Council
 - The Head of Religious Education for each secondary school
 - 3 Primary school Headteachers
 - A further representative of the Church of England, appointed by the Bishop
 - A Roman Catholic representative
 - The Chairperson of the Methodist District, or his nominated representative
 - A further representative of Protestant non-conformist Churches
 - Any co-opted members for specialist purposes, as the Committee see fit.

² [Religious Education Advisory Committee Regulations 2004](#)

- It must be pluralistic, reflecting the fact that religious traditions in the Island are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in the Isle of Man.
- It must also reflect the fact that non-religious philosophical convictions are also held.
- It must be provided in an objective and critical way. Teachers must take an impartial approach to teaching religious education that does not require or encourage learners to be religious or non-religious, or to accept a prescribed viewpoint.

Admissions and School Capacity

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This change to the law is designed to address the growing strain on some schools. The Act entitles children to attend their designated catchment area school as prescribed by the School Catchment Areas Order 2022³. However, this entitlement has led to challenges when schools reach their capacity, as there is currently no legal power to declare a year group or class or school full. This means schools must admit children from their catchment area, even if they lack the capacity or resources to meet their needs.

Schools are legally required to admit all children from their catchment area, regardless of capacity constraints. This can lead to overcrowded classrooms, strained resources, and a diminished quality of education.

The new measure allows schools, with Department approval, to declare a year group or class closed under specific conditions when site capacity is reached. This helps manage student numbers more effectively and ensures that schools can maintain a high standard of education.

Overcrowded schools struggle to provide adequate resources and support to all students, impacting their educational experience and outcomes. By allowing schools to limit admissions once capacity is reached, resources can be better allocated to meet the needs of existing students, ensuring a more supportive and effective learning environment.

The Department has limited powers to manage admission of pupils who may pose a significant risk of harm to other pupils already at their school. The new measure grants Head teachers, with Department approval, the power to refuse admission to children where required for safeguarding reasons. This ensures the safety and well-being of all students.

Admission appeals are currently heard under the Education (Admission Appeals) Regulations 2004⁴, this measure introduces an independent appeals process for admissions. By allowing an independent body to hear appeals, the legislation provides a mechanism for parents and guardians to challenge decisions regarding their child's school admission.

Overall, this measure is necessary to ensure that schools can manage their capacity effectively, allocate resources appropriately, and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Current provisions within the Act do not provide the Department and schools with any powers to restrict admission to a school that is already at or over capacity.

³ [School Catchment Areas Order 2022](#)

⁴ [Education \(Admission Appeals\) Regulations 2004](#)

Clause 9 amends Section 15 to allow for the restriction of admissions to a particular school year group once they have reached capacity. This empowers schools to manage their student numbers more effectively and maintain a conducive learning environment.

Clause 9 amends Section 15 to include the power for the Head teacher (with Department approval) to refuse admission to any child whose admission would seriously prejudice the admission of any child already registered at the school. This ensures that the safety and educational needs of existing students are prioritised.

Clause 10 adds Section 15A which allows for the school to redirect them to another school or Alternative Provision Centre.

Clause 27 introduces an independent appeals process, providing for an independent body to hear appeals for matters regarding school admissions.

How will this work in practice?

If a child's catchment school is at capacity, they will be redirected to the nearest catchment school with sufficient capacity. Parents can also submit an out-of-catchment request for another school if they prefer. The child's needs will be considered when making alternative arrangements to ensure they receive appropriate support and resources.

In cases where a Head teacher (with Department approval) denies admission due to serious prejudice to existing students, the Department will direct another school to register the child.

Additional Safeguarding Measures

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

Under existing law, parents have a duty to notify the Department of their educational arrangements if they choose not to register their child at a Department school. This measure introduces several key changes to improve data sharing between Government agencies, enhancing the safeguarding and support of children and families.

There are limitations in how information is shared between Government agencies, which can hinder the ability to safeguard and support children effectively. The measure establishes an information-sharing duty that provides a clear legal basis for sharing information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This will give professionals confidence to request and provide information appropriately and in line with data protection legislation, removing barriers to providing targeted, timely, and accurate support for families.

Without a clear legal framework, multi-agency collaboration can be inconsistent, leading to gaps in understanding a child's situation. Multi-agency information sharing not only protects children from harm but also helps in the earlier identification of support needs. This ensures that children get the help they need to make the best possible start in life. By combining data from various Government agencies, professionals can create a clearer and more accurate picture of the risks and needs, leading to better assessments, protection, and support for the child.

Currently, parents of children with existing safeguarding concerns are not required to seek Department approval to home educate. The measure introduces a requirement for parents of some children with existing safeguarding concerns to obtain Department approval to home educate.

In respect of children already being home educated; the Department already has the authority to require them to attend school should it have reasonable grounds to believe that the child is not receiving a suitable education.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 11 establishes a clear legal framework for information sharing of the home education register for the purpose of safeguarding. This ensures all relevant details are considered. Pursuant to Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR, this processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller (i.e., child protection and safeguarding purposes).

Clause 11 amends Section 16 to create powers where a notification of home schooling is received by the Department for a child who is registered at a school that is subject to a Section 46 enquiry or has a Child Protection Plan under the Children and Young Persons Act 2001. Safeguarding consideration would be given with respect to matters connected with the education of the child via a multi-agency risk assessment made by the child's core group as to whether the child can be removed from the school register and the Department will have powers to keep them on the school register where it is determined that the risk of the child

suffering significant harm is increased, if removed from school and therefore prudent for the school to continue to take an interest in the child's educational progress. This ensures that decisions are made based on a comprehensive understanding of the child's circumstances.

How will this work in practice?

Professionals will be able to use the new information sharing duty as a clear legal basis to both disclose and request information about a child for the purposes of safeguarding and promotion of welfare. This will promote a more seamless sharing of information so that professionals can consider the full picture of a child's life.

When a notification of home schooling is received for a child with existing safeguarding concerns, a multi-agency risk assessment will be conducted by the child's core group. This group will evaluate whether homeschooling poses additional risks to the child's safety and well-being and with respect to matters connected with the education of the child.

The Department may prevent a child from leaving the school roll if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child would suffer significant harm if removed from school and therefore prudent for the school to continue to take an interest in the child's educational progress. This decision will be based on a multi-agency risk assessment, ensuring that the child's best interests are prioritised.

Overall, this measure is necessary to enhance the safeguarding and support of children by improving data sharing and multi-agency collaboration. It ensures that professionals have the information they need to make informed decisions and provide the best possible support for children and families.

Emergency School Closures

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This measure allows for the temporary closure of schools when necessary. There is no provision in the Act which allows the Department to close schools in an emergency. Currently, this is either done by Ministerial Decision or through the Emergency Powers Act 1936 but could be exercised more efficiently and in a more responsive manner if the power lies with the Department.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 14 grants the Department the power to direct any school to close in an emergency situation. This ensures that decisions can be made swiftly and appropriately.

How will this work in practice?

Examples of scenarios where such a power could be relevant are during periods of adverse weather, Public Health emergency, as experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, risk or threat of harm to the school community and any other risk, threat or occurrence of similar gravity.

During periods of adverse weather, such as heavy snow or flooding, the Department can quickly decide to close schools to ensure the safety of students and staff. This decision will be based on the Adverse Weather Protocol, which provides guidelines for assessing weather conditions and determining the need for school closures.

In the event of a Public Health emergency, such as an outbreak of a contagious disease, the Department can close schools to prevent the spread of illness. This decision will be guided by Public Health advice and the need to protect the health of the school community.

The Department will communicate school closures promptly to parents, students, and staff through various channels, including school websites, social media, and local news outlets. Coordination with other Government agencies and emergency services will ensure that closures are managed effectively and that alternative arrangements are made where necessary.

The Department may at any time, lengthen or reduce the duration of the school closure if satisfied that doing so is warranted and in that event must communicate the change in duration to schools in the same way the initial closure was communicated.

Overall, this measure is necessary to provide the Department with the legal authority to close schools in emergencies, ensuring that the safety and well-being of students and staff are prioritised.

Children who are not in school

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

Under existing law, parents have a duty to notify the Department of their educational arrangements if they choose not to register their child at a Department school. The Department is notified only once when parents decide to educate their child outside of Department schools. This can lead to outdated records and a lack up-to-date information on all children's educational arrangements.

This measure amends the Act to require annual updates from parents, which will allow the Department to maintain accurate and current records of all children's educational arrangements.

Parents have the right to choose how their child is educated, whether through private schooling or home education. However, there is limited ongoing communication between parents and the Department once the initial notification is made. The measure respects parents' wishes to educate their children as they see fit, while ensuring that the Department remains informed and can offer guidance in relation to home schooling if required. This balance helps uphold the Department's commitment to respecting parental choice in education.

Without regular updates, it is challenging for the Department to have up-to-date information of educational arrangements of all children on the Isle of Man who are of compulsory school age (5-16). Annual notifications allow the Department to keep track of education arrangements for each child, ensuring that no child is missing in education.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 15 amends Section 24A of the Act so that parents who choose to educate their child outside of Department schools will be required to notify the Department on an annual basis rather than just once. This ensures that the Department has up-to-date information on all children's educational arrangements.

How will this work in practice?

The Department will maintain an up-to-date and accurate register of children not registered within Department schools. This will require annual updates from parents, which will allow the Department to maintain accurate and current records of all children's educational arrangements.

The Department respects the arrangements made by parents for their children's education outside of Department schools. This means the Department will not interfere with the educational choices parents make but will ensure that it has up-to-date records of all children's educational arrangements.

The Department will produce and provide guidance for home education. This guidance will help parents understand the requirements and best practices for providing a suitable education at home, ensuring that children receive a high-quality education.

Overall, this measure is necessary to ensure that the Department has accurate and current information on all children's educational arrangements and respects parental choice. By requiring annual updates, the Department can better support parents and ensure that all children receive a suitable education.

Educational grants and funding

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

Financial Support for Further Education and Training:

The Department currently provides financial support, scholarships, and bursaries to prevent hardship, with awards subject to means testing. However, this has limited access to financial support for individuals seeking to transition to careers in high-demand fields, like teaching and nursing.

The new measure amends Section 37 to allow the Department to provide some bursaries without the need to consider hardship. This change addresses the need for more flexible financial support, enabling individuals to pursue training in critical fields, without being means tested. It should be noted that some funding streams will still be means tested and this will be laid out in secondary legislation.

Financial Support for Early Education and Childcare:

This measure allows the Department greater autonomy in providing funding support for further education and training. It includes the expansion of the universal Childcare Credit Scheme and the introduction of bursaries for training in fields critical to national interests, such as nursing and teaching.

The Isle of Man provides a universal Childcare Credit Scheme to support access to early education and childcare, replacing the state preschool provision previously provided through the Department. This initiative is part of the Isle of Man Childcare Strategy⁵, approved by Tynwald in July 2022, which aims to support the Island Plan's objectives over three years.

The Childcare Strategy expanded the Pre-School Credit Voucher Scheme 2022 to a Childcare Credit Scheme 2024, extending this offer to parents of children in the academic year in which they turn three, starting from September 2024. This measure ensures that more families can access affordable childcare, promoting early childhood education and supporting working parents.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 16 amends Section 37 of the Act to enable regulations to be made in relation to specify the courses of study for which funding can be made available under subsection and conditions to which such availability is subject. This measure allows the Department to create regulations for the manner in which these bursaries will be made available, ensuring targeted support for critical sectors.

It also provides for the payment of childcare credit and connected matters. The Childcare Credit Scheme provides for the award and payment of childcare credits to child day care

⁵ [Childcare Strategy 2022 GD 2022/0050](#)

centres and childminders for children aged 3 and 4. These credits are paid monthly and can be used towards the total cost of childcare, ensuring consistent support for families. Current provisions for the Childcare Credit are made under Section 3 of the Financial Provisions and Currency Act 2011.

How will this work in practice?

The Department will have the powers to establish regulations for the provision of bursaries, focusing on fields critical to national interests. These bursaries will be available without means testing, allowing more individuals to access financial support for training in high-demand professions. This approach ensures that the Island can meet its needs for skilled professionals in areas like nursing and teaching.

The Childcare Credit Scheme will continue to be administered by the Department, with childcare credits awarded and paid monthly to registered child day care centres and childminders. Payments will be made regardless of attendance, ensuring stability for childcare providers and families. Eligibility requires children to be registered with a child day care centre or childminder and living on the Isle of Man.

Overall, this measure is necessary to enhance support for early education and childcare, and to provide flexible financial support for further education and training in critical fields. By granting the Department greater autonomy, the legislation ensures that resources are allocated effectively to meet the needs of the community and support the Island's long-term objectives.

Additional Educational Needs

What does this measure do and why do we need it?

This measure addresses additional educational needs with modernisation of the terminology used to enable more inclusive practice and introduces an independent appeals process via a Tribunal.

The change from 'special educational needs' to 'additional educational needs' reflects a shift towards more inclusive language, aligning with the new Inclusive Education Policy⁶. This policy aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their needs, are supported in a way that promotes equality and inclusivity. By updating the terminology, the legislation acknowledges the evolving understanding of educational needs.

Additionally, the introduction of 'personalised learning plans' instead of 'reports on special educational needs' signifies a move towards a more individualised approach to education. This change ensures that each student's unique needs are met through tailored educational strategies, fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment.

The correction of the terminology in Section 18(4)(b) to include both 'maintained' and 'provided' schools ensures clarity and consistency in the application of the law, preventing any misinterpretation that could affect the provision of educational services.

The power to publish guidance that staff must adhere to ensures that educational practices are aligned with the latest standards and best practices, providing a clear framework for educators to follow.

Finally, the introduction of an independent appeals process is a significant step towards ensuring fairness and accountability. By allowing an independent body to hear appeals, the legislation provides a mechanism for parents and guardians to challenge decisions regarding their child's educational needs. This process ensures that the Department takes reasonable steps to identify and meet the needs of all children with additional educational needs, promoting transparency and trust in the educational system.

Overall, these changes are necessary to modernise the educational framework, promote inclusivity, and ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

What is the effect of the legislation?

Clause 19 amends terminology throughout the Act from 'special educational needs' to 'additional educational needs'.

Clause 20 amends terminology in Section 59(1) of the Act from 'difficulty' to 'need'.

⁶ [Inclusive Education Policy 2024](#)

Clause 12 amends an error in Act in s18(4)(b) which should read both 'maintained' and 'provided' schools rather than just 'provided'.

Clause 13 amends terminology in Section 19 and any other references through the Act from 'Report on child's special educational needs' to 'personalised learning plan' to reflect current practice.

Clause 13 creates a power for guidance to be published so that staff must have regard to such Department published guidance.

Clause 27 introduces an independent appeals process, providing for an independent body to hear appeals for matters regarding the Department's duty to take reasonable steps to identify all children with additional educational needs and in doing so, where required, make provision to meet their needs. Existing regulations Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 2004 will need to be updated to refer to the new appeals process.

How will this work in practice?

In practice, the changes introduced by the new legislation will work in tandem with the Inclusive Education Policy to create a more supportive and equitable educational environment in the following key areas:

- **Inclusive Language:** By changing the terminology from 'special educational needs' to 'additional educational needs,' the legislation aligns with the Inclusive Education Policy's goal of promoting respect and valuing diversity. This shift helps to foster a more inclusive atmosphere where all students feel valued and supported.
- **Individualised Support:** The replacement of 'reports on special educational needs' with 'personalised learning plans' ensures that each student's unique needs are addressed through tailored educational strategies. This approach is central to the Inclusive Education Policy, which emphasises the importance of individualised support to help all students reach their full potential.
- **Consistent Practices:** The power to publish guidance that staff must follow ensures that educational practices are consistent with the latest standards and best practices. This aligns with the Inclusive Education Policy's principle of committed leadership and a whole-school approach, where all staff members work collaboratively to support inclusive education.
- **Fairness and Accountability:** The introduction of an independent appeals process allows parents and guardians to challenge decisions regarding their child's educational needs. This process ensures that the Department takes reasonable steps to identify and meet the needs of all children with additional educational needs, promoting transparency and trust in the educational system. This aligns with the Inclusive Education Policy's commitment to collaboration with the school community and a multi-sectoral approach.
- **Clarity and Consistency:** Correcting the terminology in Section 18(4)(b) to include both 'maintained' and 'provided' schools ensures clarity and consistency in the application of the law. This prevents any misinterpretation that could affect the provision of educational services, supporting the Inclusive Education Policy's goal of providing equal and equitable opportunities for all students.

Overall, these changes will help create an educational environment where all students, regardless of their needs, can thrive and achieve their full potential. The Inclusive Education

Policy provides the framework and guiding principles to ensure that these legislative changes are implemented effectively and consistently across all schools.