

Executive Information Service

Department of Education

4 September 2001

HOLY CROSS GIRLS' PRIMARY SCHOOL, ARDOYNE

STATEMENT BY MARTIN McGUINNESS MP MLA

In a statement made following meetings held in North Belfast today with the Board of Governors of Holy Cross Primary School and also with parents representing the Right to Education Group, Mr McGuinness said he believed the situation surrounding Holy Cross Primary School could be resolved.

Speaking at a press conference held in North Belfast earlier today, Mr McGuinness said: **"I would encourage all political leaders to raise their voices in defence of these innocent schoolchildren and their right to be educated free from fear and intimidation.**

"This situation is affecting young people in both communities, and is deeply damaging to children not just at Holy Cross but also Wheatfield Primary School.

"I remain hopeful that political leaders, on all sides, will recognise the importance of finding a resolution to this problem and that they will engage in bringing community representatives together to deal with the difficulties. Young children have a basic right to travel to school without fear and to be educated in a safe environment."

Mr McGuinness paid tribute to the teachers and school authorities involved and singled out the Principals of both Holy Cross and nearby Wheatfield Primary Schools for all their efforts in dealing with the situation.

The Minister also said that officials in his Department would continue to work closely with the relevant education authorities and would fully support efforts by those organisations aimed at a speedy resolution.