



## **Keynote speaker prof. Joanne Hughes**

### **Short Bio**

Joanne Hughes is Professor of Education in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, and Director of the Centre for Shared Education in the School. She also holds a UNESCO Chair in education. Her main research interests are in the role of education in divided societies, and inter-group relations in conflict and post-conflict societies. In recent years she has led a number of research projects on the implementation of the shared education model in Northern Ireland and worked with academics and educational stakeholders in regions across the world to explore the potential for adapted shared education models in other divided contexts. She has also advised Government Officials and Ministers nationally and internationally on the development of policies and interventions to promote good relations in schools.

In 2019, her work along with that of colleagues at Queen's, was recognised by Her Majesty the Queen in a Queen's Anniversary Prize, awarded to Queen's University for Shared Education.

In 2022 she was awarded an MBE for services to education and community in Northern Ireland.

### **Keynote Abstract**

Contact, connection and collaboration: The role of shared education in a society transitioning from conflict.

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998 signaled the end of more than three decades of conflict in Northern Ireland. Some 25 years on society remains divided and this is mirrored especially in the education system where the majority of young people continue to attend schools that are characterised by ethno/religious separation. Seeking to capitalise on the role that schools can play in promoting social cohesion, and underpinned by contact theory, a Shared Education initiative was piloted by Queen's University in 2007. The approach promotes collaboration between schools from different sectors as a vehicle for improving educational opportunity for all children and building intergroup relations. Shared education has had significant impact in a relatively short time period, with the majority of schools in NI participating and an associated legislative and policy framework now in place. The approach has also attracted interest from other divided jurisdictions and shared education projects based on the NI model have been trialled in Israel and countries in southeast Europe. This presentation examines the evidence for shared education and explores its unique contribution to promoting social cohesion in a society still recovering from conflict.