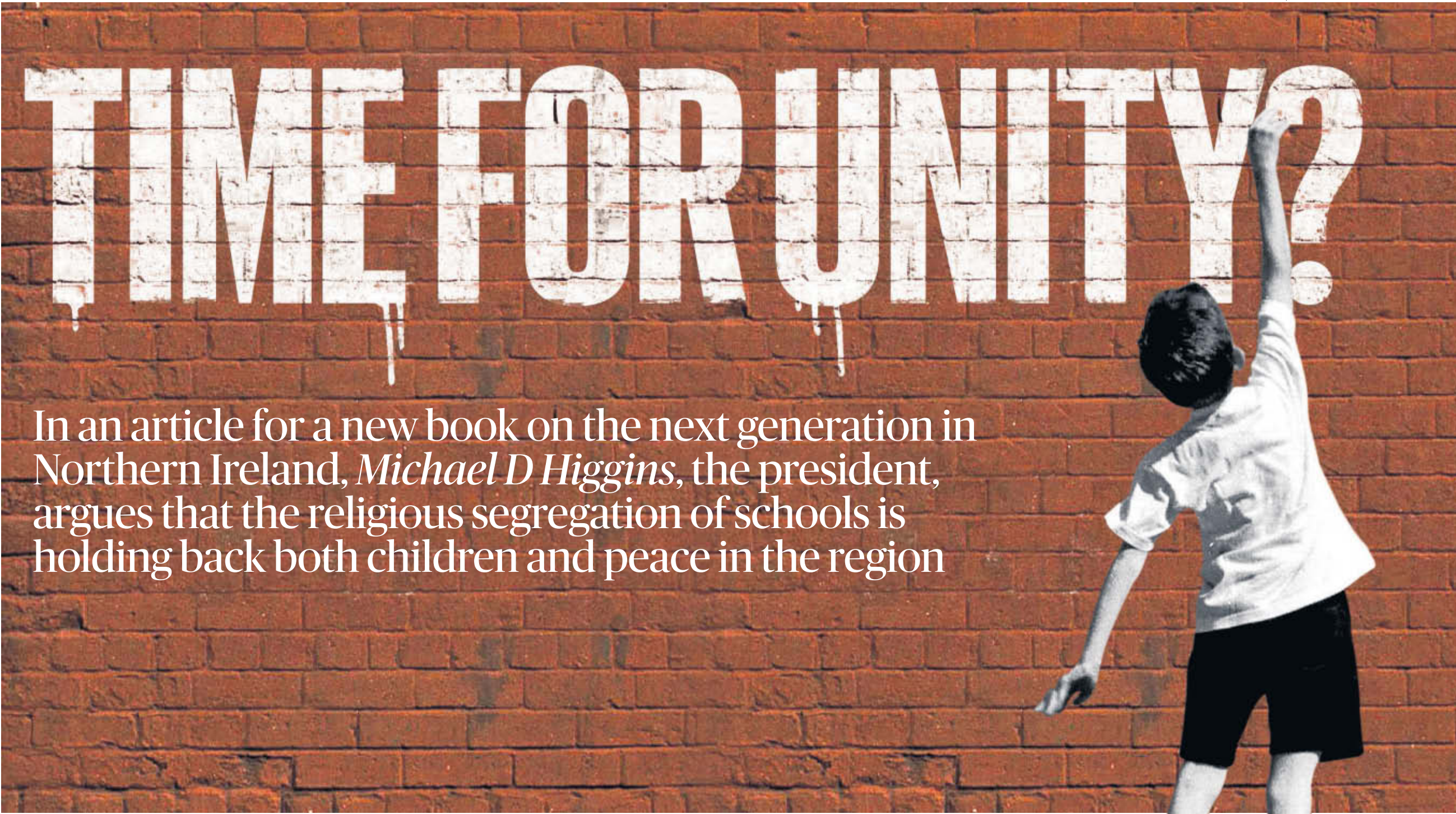


NEWS REVIEW

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In an article for a new book on the next generation in Northern Ireland, *Michael D Higgins*, the president, argues that the religious segregation of schools is holding back both children and peace in the region

In Northern Ireland, 93 per cent of schools remain segregated, meaning that most young people are educated in either a state-funded school that predominantly attracts Protestant families, or a state-funded school maintained by the Catholic church.

Young people in Northern Ireland are segregated not only by the schools they attend, but also by the languages they speak and the sports they play. Where some schools offer Gaelic football and hurling, others provide rugby or cricket, usually exclusively.

Yes, communities today are predominantly peaceful, slowly becoming more equal based on some metrics, but they are still apart. Young people are separated in the very place where they learn and build relations: the school.

Significantly, segregation disproportionately harms poorer families. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, for example, has highlighted “persistent underachievement” among Protestant boys entitled to free school meals and, while paramilitary activity is still active in working-class communities, segregation only fosters hostility and harms vulnerable, disillusioned young people who can be misled by violent actors within their communities who hold significant powers of influence.

Integrated education is not just needed, it is overwhelmingly wanted. A recent survey indicated that 71 per cent of people in Northern Ireland think it



93%

Proportion of schools that remain segregated in Northern Ireland

should be the norm, and integrated schools are consistently oversubscribed. Surely this is a matter on which we can all unite. I believe strongly that integrated education is a key element to a successful, inclusive and harmonious future in Northern Ireland.

As Abby Wallace pointed out in an award-winning article for The Guardian, the mandate for integrated education is far from new. “The Education Reform Order of 1989 placed a formal duty on the Department of Education to ‘encourage and facilitate’ integrated education. It was honoured in the Good Friday agreement through these very same words. The Education Act created more pressure for shared education,” she wrote.

“And later, in the New Decade, New Approach agreement, which brought our government back from a three-year hiatus, all five parties agreed to an independent review of our fragmented system, a process that’s only just begun.”

It is a testament to both the urgent need for integrated schools and to the lack of political will that reform, like in so many other areas of policy, has been driven by community action – citizens on the ground who demonstrate time and again that they are ahead of many members of the body politic.

The ongoing desire by some political figures to keep schools religiously segregated has understandably and justifiably been interpreted by some commentators as a cynical tactic aimed at satisfying their core support base, an exclusionary and

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Young people should feel they belong in any school, regardless of religion

sectarian method often reinforcing notions of “the other”, the attribution of particular tendencies and particular ideologies to those perceived as lesser.

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) has assisted several schools to achieve integrated status since Northern Ireland’s first integrated school in 1981. Yet, as Wallace notes, not one of these 68 schools became integrated through government action alone; rather, they came into existence mainly through parents’ groups galvanising the necessary support, working with teachers and school staff, to transform their schools’ ethos to integrated status.

The role of education is central to peacebuilding, with evidence to support the view that, when equitably available, of good quality, relevant and conflict-sensitive, education can help promote peace, inclusivity and tolerance and provide safe environments. On the other hand, when its delivery is characterised with exclusion and inequity, for example through a biased curriculum, it can exacerbate conflict.

Integrated education is a key means to enabling and sustaining a peaceful co-existence of communities, of promoting values and attitudes that provide a basis for peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting such as Northern Ireland.

Young people should feel that they belong in any school irrespective of their religion, or lack of religion. Young people should not feel segregated from others based on dangerous sectarian criteria

that merely reinforce notions of “the other”. Young people in Northern Ireland deserve to see leadership being demonstrated, to end segregation and to respond to decades of mandates for integration.

On a practical level, let us achieve together, across all communities in Northern Ireland, a consensus for curriculum reform, agreeing core elements, those that may require trial, as well as optional elements. I suggest that matters concerning sexuality education would be a good place to achieve such consensus.

We cannot be complacent about the agenda for inclusive education in the Republic either. There is a desire among much of the citizenry for more co-educational, multi-denominational and non-denominational schools at primary and secondary levels, and we need to see these options being delivered without delay.

The Sundered Children: First a United Northern Ireland and That Through Educating Together (FeedARead), edited by David Rice, includes contributions from President Higgins, professors Diarmaid Ferriter and John FitzGerald and the journalist Hugh Jordan, among others. It is available now from amazon.com at \$12.95

Marry Clarkson? Nah, I only do pig husbandry

Sandymount actress Lisa Hogan says her television star partner is a workaholic who can’t switch off – but life is never dull, she tells *Erin McCafferty*, as the Clarkson’s Farm cast love pranks

Jeremy Clarkson is a big softie – quite unlike his outspoken and sometimes controversial on-screen persona. “He often brings me flowers,” says Lisa Hogan, his partner who also appears in the Amazon Prime show *Clarkson’s Farm*. “He can be very romantic and sweet at times.”

The couple have been partners for nearly eight years but Hogan, 51, who was born in Sandymount, Dublin, has no interest in walking down the aisle, having been married before.

“The only husbandry at the moment is Ajax, our boar, who is in with the sows,” she jokes, referring to Diddy Squat Farm in the Cotswolds, England, which features in *Clarkson’s Farm*.

“I’m not bothered about getting married again but we’re very happy together.”

Hogan and Clarkson, 64, were at a party and were introduced by mutual friends. Both were fresh out of a relationship.

While Clarkson was keen to start a romance, Hogan needed persuasion. “I was

starting to get out and about again,” she says. “I wasn’t sure if I wanted to be taken out of the market yet.”

He courted her and she was attracted to his intelligence. “He’s just so clever and interesting, and you never know what he’s going to say next.”

The requirements of a relationship alter as you age, she says. “It changes from decade to decade. In your twenties and thirties you’re looking for a partner to breed with. Then later on it’s different. I’ve done my breeding, three times over. In that sense my previous partnership was a success – but now I want someone with whom I’m compatible and who interests me.

“I’m not looking for someone who can support me and my family,” she adds. “It’s a very different relationship.”

Hogan describes Clarkson, who fronts *The Grand Tour*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and *Clarkson’s Farm*, as an “absolute workaholic”. He also writes a column for The Sunday Times. “He very rarely relaxes. His mind is

constantly moving. He just has this colossal brain. But at night he falls asleep immediately and in the morning he wakes up immediately too.”

She is naturally the more relaxed of the two but is more determined to get things done. But they also have a lot of fun and constantly wind each other up.

She pranked him while filming season four of *Clarkson’s Farm*, now the most-watched show on Amazon Prime in the UK. “We were moving the pigs and it took an hour and a half to move one pig to a new pen. When we finally managed it, I looked at the nametag and said, ‘We’ve got the wrong pig – I can’t believe you’ve done this.’ He fell for it hook, line and sinker. That kind of wind-up is typical of us, and he winds me up too,” she says.

Hogan often uses the filming of reality TV to her advantage. “If I’ve something to say to Jeremy and we have our mics on, it’s a great



opportunity to say it. The cameras are rolling and he can’t talk over me on television.”

The series is shot in their home and filming can be intense. It is a situation Hogan could not have envisaged. “I love working on the farm but I never imagined myself doing or making a reality TV show about it.”

Despite having lived in the UK for years, Hogan is immensely proud of her Irish roots and finds she appreciates her surroundings. “I walk around London marvelling at the beautiful architecture, but I don’t feel the same way about Dublin. It’s beautiful but it’s home, and I think no one appreciates where we come from.”

Growing up in Sandymount, she was one of four girls and attended Alexandra College. Her father died when she was 14 and this, she says, helped shape who she is. “His death was a real shock. My parents were besotted with each other but his loss definitely made me more independent and practical. I think it comes through on the farm. When things need to be done, I do them myself because I didn’t

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I love working on the farm but never thought I’d do a TV show about it

Lisa Hogan says she was not looking for love when Jeremy Clarkson courted her – but she was drawn to his intelligence

grow up with a father.” Hogan moved to Hong Kong and then Australia, working in PR and acting in ads. “I went travelling on my own but I’m adaptable, easy-going and inquisitive about people, so it suited me. I had interesting experiences because of it.”

She moved to London when she was 25 and worked in film production before acting in *Fierce Creatures* which starred John Cleese and Jamie Lee Curtis.

There she met Baron Steven Bentinck, a nephew of Baron Thyssen, the Madrid billionaire and art collector. They married and had three children, Wolfe, Alice and Lizzy. “I adored being a mother. I had three children under five before I ever bought a television.

“It was good because they grew up as a gang and I’d lots of energy at the time. If I was doing it now I don’t know how I’d cope.”

On June 30 Hogan will be judging the Dubai Duty Free Derby Ladies Day in the Curragh. “It’s ironic that they asked me to do it because I’m usually in jeans and muddy wellies,” she laughs. “But it is a privilege and I’m very much looking forward to it.”

For tickets, visit curragh.ie