



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

19 May 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Mr Justin McNulty MLA
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)



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Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9:30am in open session

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Assessment, Restart and Contingency Planning - Minister of Education Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education; the Minister's statement to the Assembly on the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) assessment arrangements; a response from the Minister on Restart; a response from the Minister on Alternative Examination Arrangements; a response from the Minister on School Restart and the Summer Programme; a Department of Education response on CCEA awarding arrangements and a CCEA response on Alternative Examination Arrangements.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:30am:

Mr Peter Weir MLA, Minister of Education

Mr Ricky Irwin, Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Department of Education

Ms Karen McCullough, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Assessment, Department of Education

Dr. Suzanne Kingon, Head of School Improvement Team, Department of Education

The Minister briefed the Committee on Assessment, Restart and Contingency Planning.

The Briefing was reported by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.



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Mr McNulty left the meeting at 11:27am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to endorse his submission of papers to the Executive with a view to gaining commitment to a childcare strategy before the end of the mandate; seeking to be kept up to date on the provision and demand for counselling services, and urging that he not delay but press ahead with a bid for further resources to address the waiting list and possible delayed trauma; and commending the primary school counselling pilot, while also asking how schools were selected and details of the schools taking part.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA urging publication of the appeals process as soon as possible and before its briefing on 2 June 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking what measures and bespoke interventions are in place to support Irish Medium schools following the Pandemic, whose pupils suffered disproportionately from school closure without the immersive environment critical to their learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking details of the activities which have been planned for a summer programme.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Draft integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Bill.

The Committee noted correspondence from Kelly Armstrong MLA providing an update on her draft integrated Education (Northern Ireland) Bill.

3.2 Informal meeting with Apple

The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had an informal meeting with the Apple Education Team on digital learning.



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4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 12 May 2021.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Restraint and Seclusion - Department of Education Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Department of Education on Restraint and Seclusion and a copy of interim guidance on Restraint and Seclusion.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:42am:

Mr Ricky Irwin, Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Department of Education

Mrs Julie Humphries, Head of Additional Education Needs Team, Department of Education

Ms Shauna Collinson, Interim Assistant Director of Pupil Inclusion, Wellbeing and Protection, Education Authority

Ms Andrea Kelly, Head of Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions, Education Authority

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the use of restrictive practices and seclusion in schools.

The Briefing was reported by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Newton left the meeting at 12:19 pm.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 12:40 pm.



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Mr Humphrey left the meeting at 12:41pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- Information on the roles and responsibilities of the Child Protection Support Service (CPSS);
- How parents refer a complaint to CPSS;
- The threshold for CPSS to refer a complaint to Social Services; and
- How many times CPSS has referred a parental complaint regards the actions of a school, school staff or Board of Governors to Social Services; and
- How many times a school has been reported to Social Services overall

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to the Department of Education asking how it had engaged with stakeholders on this matter and how it intended to continue this engagement going forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to reiterate its endorsement of mandatory autism training and to stress the need for the guidance to address the use of mechanical or chemical restraint.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Education on the Temporary Modification of Education Duties Notice made under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a response from the Department of Finance to the Committee for Finance providing a more detailed breakdown of Departments' accruing resources for the year 202-21.



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7.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law centre providing advice on the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into a local Bill of Rights.

7.5 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence to the Minister from the Raise Your voice campaign on Relationship and Sexuality Education.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from parents of pupils at Killinchy Primary School raising concerns regarding the conduct of the current Board of Governors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking information on accountability measures available to parents with concerns about a school's Board of Governors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to signpost the correspondents to the Education Authority and constituency MLAs for further support.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the launch of a Targeted Consultation to update the Children (Public Performances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996.

8. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing regarding governance at the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) from the Chairperson and Vice-Chair of GTCNI, followed by a briefing from the Chief Executive of GTCNI at its meeting on 26 May 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to follow its youth engagement project 'My life and learning in lockdown' with a brief report and a motion to the House in due course.

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.



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9. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 May 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:01pm

Chris Lyttle MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
26 May 2021