



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

2 June 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 Daniel McCrossan MLA  
Mr Justin McNulty MLA  
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

**Apologies:**

Mr Robbie Butler MLA  
Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

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



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The meeting commenced at 9:38am in public session

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies recorded above.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

2.1 Informal Meeting with Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman on Friday 21 May 2021.

2.2 Final Report: An Action Plan from the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education on the report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement and his statement on to the Assembly on this.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education about its concern that the report was provided to the media before it was shared with the Committee.

2.3 Press coverage of Committee Briefings on GTCNI

The Committee noted press coverage of its briefing with the Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Executive of GTCNI at its last meeting.

2.4 Integrated Education Bill

The Committee noted the Integrated Education Bill as introduced.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule briefings with Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA and the Assembly Bill Office on the Bill.



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### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 26 May 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### 5. Irish-medium Education - Oral Briefing by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:45am:

Mr Ciaran Mac Giolla Bhéin, CEO, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Mr Tarlach Mac Giolla Bhríde, Senior Education Officer, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

The witnesses briefed the Committee on Irish Medium Education.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education highlighting concerns about recovery of the sector post-pandemic; local educational pathways and teacher shortages for Irish Medium schools particularly at post primary level and in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects; the impact of Brexit on teachers from other jurisdictions accessing roles in this sector; support to the sector; and the benefits of bilingual education for all young people but particularly those with special educational needs. The Committee also agreed to ask about:

- the role of area planning in Irish Medium Education; and
- common funding formula allocations in supporting Irish Medium Education.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority about the lack of resources for Irish Medium schools to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) support.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

**6. Appeals and Contingency Plans - Oral Briefing by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from CCEA.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:22am:

Mr Tommy O'Reilly, Chairperson, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Ms Margaret Farragher, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Ms Amanda Swann, Temporary Director of Examinations, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Michael McAuley, Business Manager for Qualifications, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

The witnesses briefed the Committee on Appeals and Contingency Plans.

The Briefing was reported by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to CCEA seeking:

- Sight of the review of policies collated from centres;
- The urgent publication of examination appeals arrangements; and
- An update on lessons learned in 2020-21.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a meeting with trade union stakeholders on this matter.

Mr Newton left the meeting at 12:58pm

### 7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding Covid-19 Testing and the Vaccination Programme in Special Schools.

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding its Budget for 2021-22.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Finance.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding guidance on addressing over-subscription at schools.

7.5 The Committee noted a part-response from the Education Authority providing an overview of the child school placement position by council.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from Chris Lyttle MLA in an individual capacity informing the Committee that he has issued a public consultation on proposals for a Private Members Bill to remove the exception of teachers from the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy providing a response from Ulster University on its Neurodiverse Student Group.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerking and Member Support Office regarding online training sessions for Members on 'Protecting your Social Media Reputation'.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Belfast City Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.



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7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the BT Group regarding BT's launch of Hope United to tackle online hate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to highlight this issue on social media.

7.14 The Committee noted an invitation from Dyslexia Awareness NI to a Dyslexia Awareness Event.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to highlight the event on social media.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with Dyslexia organisations.

7.15 The Committee noted an invitation from Brown/O'Connor Communications to a webinar to launch 'FE for Me'.

7.16 The Committee noted correspondence raising issues relating to an External Independent Review of Education, New Decade New Approach and a Parental Vision for the Future of Education in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it intends to invite the Chair and panel members of the External Independent Review of Education when these are appointed.

7.17 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the CCEA Appeals process.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it cannot become involved in individual cases.

7.18 The Committee noted correspondence seeking a contact to discuss qualifications for school leavers.



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7.19 The Committee noted correspondence seeking information on school transport for children with Special Educational Needs.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an update on its engagement regarding transport and transition arrangements for Special Educational Needs pupils.

**8. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its forward work programme as amended.

**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 9 June 2021 by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:13pm

**Chris Lyttle MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education  
9 June 2021**