



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

23 November 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mrs Diane Dodds MLA
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Mr Justin McNulty MLA
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Marcus Matthews (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Officer)
Ms Caroline Perry (Bill Clerk)



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Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 9:21am in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Integrated Education Bill – Formal clause by clause consideration

The Committee commenced its formal clause by clause consideration of the Integrated Education Bill.

Clause 1 - Meaning of “integrated education”

The Sponsor’s amendment text was considered:

Clause 1, Page 1, Line 11

Leave out paragraph (2) and insert –

‘An “integrated school” is a school which—

- a) intentionally supports, protects and improves an ethos of diversity, respect and understanding between those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, between those of different socio-economic backgrounds and between those of different abilities, and
- b) has acquired—
 - i. grant-maintained integrated status, or



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ii. controlled integrated status

under the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

The Committee considered clause 1 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for amendment 1 and clause 1 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendment or the clause.

Clause 2 - Purpose of integrated education

Amendment text from NI Humanists was considered:

Clause 2, Page 2, Line 7

After 2.(e) insert:

“Religious education and assemblies

2A. Article 21 of The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 is amended as follows:

(a) In Subsection (1) after “every such school” add “apart from an integrated school”

(b) After Subsection (2), insert —

“(2A) In an integrated school, the school day shall include an assembly which is principally directed towards furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils regardless of religion or belief.



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(2B) Subject to subsection (2C) no acts of worship or other religious observance may be organised by or on behalf of an integrated school (whether or not forming part of the curriculum).

(2C) Staff or pupils of a school may arrange voluntary acts of worship on school premises, provided that—

(a) subject to paragraph (b), pupils are permitted to decide whether to attend any such acts of worship; and

(b) for pupils aged under 16, a parent or guardian may request that their child should not attend.

(2D) In an integrated school the religious education required by paragraph (1) —

(a) must reflect the principal religious and non-religious philosophical convictions represented in Northern Ireland; and

(b) must be taught in a manner that is objective, critical and pluralistic.

(2E) In subsection (2D) the reference to “philosophical convictions” is to philosophical convictions within the meaning of Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.”

(c) In Subsection (3), remove “(a) a controlled integrated school” and “(b) a grant-maintained integrated school”

(d) After Subsection (3A), insert —

“(3B) In —

(a) a controlled integrated school; and



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- (b) a grant-maintained integrated school

compliance with the standards for religious education and assemblies set out in paragraphs (2A)-(2E) shall be the responsibility of the Board of Governors of the school and shall be subject to inspection by the Department.

2B. Article 102 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 is amended as follows:

- (a) At the start of Subsection (7) insert “Except where the school is an integrated school,”

- (b) After Subsection (7) insert —

“In an integrated school, the religious education required under Article 5(1)(a) of the 2006 Order must be subject to inspections under this article at a frequency of no less than every 5 years.”

2C. In Article 11(1) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 after “grant-aided schools” insert “(other than integrated schools)”

2D. After Article 11 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, insert —

“Core syllabus for religious education in integrated schools

11A. —(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Department may by order specify a core syllabus for the teaching of religious education in integrated schools, that is to say a syllabus which —



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(a) sets out certain core matters, skills and processes which are to be included in the teaching of religious education to pupils in such schools, but does not prevent or restrict the inclusion of any other matter, skill or process in that teaching (provided it does not contravene Article 21 (2D) of the 1986 Order);

(b) is such that the teaching of any of the matters, skills or processes set out in that syllabus would not contravene Article 21(2D) of the 1986 Order.

(2) The Department shall not specify a core syllabus under paragraph (1) unless a draft of that syllabus —

(a) was prepared by a group of persons (“the drafting group”) appearing to the Department to be persons having an interest in the teaching of religious education in integrated schools that must include —

(i) persons to represent each of the principal religious and non-religious philosophical convictions that, in the opinion of the Department, will appropriately reflect the range of such convictions held in Northern Ireland;

(ii) persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the Department, ought to be represented;

(iii) persons to represent bodies that include in their objectives the provision of support and advice to the Department in its promotion of integrated education as recognised under Article 3 of the Integrated Education Act [202X].

(b) was published, in accordance with directions given by the Department, together with a notice inviting representations to be made before a specified date not being less than four weeks from the date of publication;

(c) was revised, if necessary, by the drafting group, after considering all representations made in accordance with the notice mentioned in sub-paragraph (b); and

(d) was submitted to the Department by the drafting group together with—

(i) a report by that group on the nature of representations made in accordance with the notice mentioned in sub-paragraph (b) and on the extent to which, and the manner in which, account has been taken of those representations in the draft submitted to the Department; and



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(ii) any other information which the Department may request.

(3) Paragraphs (1) and (2) apply with appropriate modifications to amendments to, or a revision of, an existing core syllabus.

(4) An order under paragraph (1) may, instead of containing the provisions to be made, refer to provisions in a document published as specified in the order and direct that those provisions are to have effect or, as the case may be, are to have effect as amended by the order.”

The Committee noted the proposed amendment and agreed to write to the NI Humanists acknowledging the suggested amendment.

The Committee considered clause 2 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for clause 2 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the clause.

Clause 3 - Advisory body

The Bill Sponsor’s amendments were considered:

Clause 3, Page 2, Line 9

After ‘functions’ insert ‘in relation to integrated education’

Clause 3, Page 2, Line 12

Leave out ‘promotion of’ and insert ‘support for’

The Committee considered clause 3 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.



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The Committee moved to closed session at 9:48am.

The Committee moved to public session at 9:56am.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendments and for clause 3 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.

Clause 4 - Promotion etc of integrated education

The Bill Sponsor's amendments were considered:

Clause 4, Page 2, Line 18

Leave out 'promote' and insert 'support'

Clause 4, Page 2, Line 23

Leave out 'promote' and insert 'support'

The Committee considered clause 4 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendments and for clause 4 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.

Clause 5 - Meaning of promotion

The Bill Sponsor's amendments were considered:

Clause 5, Page 2, Line 25

Leave out 'the promotion of' and insert 'support for'



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Clause 5, Page 2, Line 26

Leave out 'increase' and insert 'meet'

The Committee's amendment was considered:

Clause 5, Page 2, Line 29

After 'to' insert 'aim to'

The Committee considered clause 5 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendments and for clause 5 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.

Clause 6 - General duty

The Committee considered clause 6 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

The Committee moved to closed session at 10:35am

The Committee moved to public session at 10:48am.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for clause 5 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.



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Clause 7 - New schools

Bill Sponsor's amendment considered:

Clause 7, Page 3, Line 6

Leave out paragraph (2) and insert -

'In subsection (1) "new school" means any new grant-aided school established under the development proposal process, but does not include—

- a) two or more existing schools that have amalgamated to create a new school,
- b) an existing school that has significantly changed in character or size, or
- c) an existing school that has relocated.'

Committee amendment considered:

Clause 7

The Chairperson of the Committee listed below gives notice of his intention to oppose the question that clause 7 stand part of the Bill.

Chair, Committee for Education

The Committee considered clause 7 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that the Bill sponsor had not yet secured a draft amendment to Clause 7 and that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee noted the proposed amendments and expressed qualified support for clause 7 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.



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Clause 8 - Integrated education strategy

Bill Sponsor's amendments considered:

Leave out 'promotion' and insert 'support for'

Clause 8, Page 3, Line 16

Leave out 'promote' and insert 'support'

Clause 8, Page 3, Line 23

Leave out 'promotion' and insert 'support for'

The Committee considered clause 8 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendments and clause 8 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.

Clause 9 - Biennial reporting

The Committee considered clause 9 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for clause 9 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.



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A number of Committee members did not agree with the clause.

Clause 10 - Regulations

Committee amendments were considered:

Clause 10, Page 5, Line 8

After 'regulations' insert 'in respect of integrated education'

Clause 10, Page 6, Line 1

Leave out subsections (3) and (4) and insert-

'(3) Regulations under this section may include any supplementary, incidental, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provision the Department considers appropriate—

(a) for the general purposes, or any particular purpose, of this Act;

(b) in consequence of any provision made by this Act; or

(c) for giving full effect to the provisions of this Act.

(4) Regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.'



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Bill Sponsor amendment was considered:

Clause 10, Page 5, Line 18

Leave out 'promote' and insert 'support'

The Committee considered clause 10 as drafted. Committee members expressed concerns that further amendment to the clause may be required.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendments and for clause 10 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.

Clause 11 – Guidance

Committee amendment considered:

Clause 11, Page 6, Line 9

At end insert –

'(1A) The Department of Education must–

- a) lay the guidance, and each revision, before the Assembly; and
- b) publish the guidance in such a manner as it considers appropriate.'

The Committee considered clause 11 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendment and for clause 11 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause.



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Clause 12 - Consequential amendments

Committee amendment considered:

Clause 12, Page 6, Line 22

Leave out subsection (3)

The Committee considered clause 12 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for the amendment and for clause 12 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the amendments or the clause..

Clause 13 - Interpretation: general

The Committee considered clause 13 as drafted. Committee members indicated concerns regarding the definition of educational bodies.

Agreed: The Committee expressed qualified support for clause 13 at this time, subject to further advice, amendment and liaison with the Bill Sponsor.

A number of Committee members did not agree with the clause.

Clause 14 - Commencement

The Committee considered clause 14 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 14 as drafted.

Clause 15 - Short title

The Committee considered clause 15 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 15 as drafted.

Long Title

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the long title of the Bill.

The Chairperson advised Members that the formal clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Integrated Education Bill had concluded.



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The session on the Integrated Education Bill was reported by Hansard.

3. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 November 2021 by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:36am.

Chris Lyttle MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for Education
24 November 2021**