



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

1 December 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)



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Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 9:36am in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Committee discussed concerns regarding covid safety in schools and staff shortages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Minister for Education to brief it urgently on covid safety in schools and staff shortages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange briefing from Education Trade Unions on covid safety in schools and staff shortages.

2.2 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People on children and young people's mental health

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a joint briefing with the Committee for Health to hear from the Commissioner on this matter.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 24 November 2021.



4. Matters Arising

Mr McCrossan joined the meeting at 9:41am.

4.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education providing an update on the finalised arrangements for awarding Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland for the 2021/22 academic year.

4.2 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on the Department of Education's response to the Department of Finance's Budget 2022-2025 Information Gathering exercise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Fiscal council to brief it on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department of Education to brief it on this matter.

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education on childcare-related support led by the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Employers for Childcare seeking its views on the Minister's letter.

5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) regarding the publication of its approach to awarding grades for the academic year of 2021-2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CCEA to provide it with an oral briefing on its approach to awarding grades.

5.4 the Committee noted correspondence regarding training for MLAs on Personal Security.



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5.5 The Committee noted an invitation from the Commission for Victims and Survivors to the launch of CVS' EU Peace IV-funded research "Better Together: Reviewing the needs of victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict".

The Committee noted that Marie Lindsay, former principal of St Mary's College had won a Gold Award in the Pearson National Teaching Awards for The Award for Lifetime Achievement, while Lisneal College principal Michael Allen won The Award for Head teacher of the Year in a Secondary School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Marie Lindsay and Michael Allen congratulating them on their success.

The Committee noted with sadness the death of Francis Lagan, the head of St Mary's Primary School in Maghera.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write extending its condolences.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

7. Verbal Arts Centre - Oral briefing on the work of Verbal

The Committee noted correspondence from the Verbal Arts Centre.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 9:54am:

Ms Andrea Doran, Director of Programming, Verbal Arts Centre.

The witness briefed the Committee on the work of Verbal.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 10:34am

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education highlighting the work of Verbal, its beneficial results in improving emotional regulation and reducing re-presenting at CAMS for all pupils including those with autism and ADHD. The Committee also agreed to ask officials to meet with Verbal and to report back to it the result of this engagement.

8. Period Products (Free Provision) Bill - Oral briefing from the Bill sponsor, Pat Catney MLA

The Committee noted:

- The Period Products (Free Provision) Bill, as Introduced;
- The Period Products (Free Provision) Bill, Explanatory and Financial Memorandum; and
- A briefing paper from Mr Pat Catney MLA.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:24am:

Mr Pat Catney, MLA - Lagan Valley, Northern Ireland Assembly

Mr Johnny McCarthy, Researcher

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the background and purpose of the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities seeking their views on the clauses of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Catney seeking further information on the effect of the Bill during school holidays and possible lockdown due to the pandemic.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of the Examiner of Statutory Rules on delegated aspects of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange briefings with Homeless Period Belfast, NI Period Poverty Action Group and the Red Box Project.

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 8 December 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm.

Chris Lyttle MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for Education
8 December 2021**