



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

22 September 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

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

**Apologies:** Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA



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The meeting commenced at 9:33am in public session

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies as above.

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

#### **2.1 Informal meeting with Dyslexia Awareness NI**

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Dyslexia Awareness NI.

#### **2.2 Informal meeting with Trade Unions**

The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had had an informal meeting with representatives of the NIC-ICTU Education Group of Trade Unions and Northern Ireland Teachers Council on concerns about Restart and Contact Tracing; and that these concerns were summarised in a Clerk's brief in the tabled pack.

The Committee noted correspondence from ASCL on Restart and Contact Tracing.

#### **2.3 Letter from Caoimhe Archibald Chair of Economy Committee**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on the concurrent meeting of the Committee to discuss the 14-19 strategy.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 15 September 2021.



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#### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

#### 5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on the pilot scheme to address period dignity in schools.

5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Executive and Assembly processes in relation to EU legislation.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance seeking its views on a Legislative Consent Motion for the Public Services Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ascertain the implications of the LCM in regard to Education.

5.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Defamation Bill.

5.6 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the testing of children with Covid-19 symptoms.

5.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the NIC-ICTU Education Group of Trade Unions on contact tracing.

5.8 The Committee noted correspondence about a launch event of the Gambling with Lives Education Programme Pilot and Film Premiere.

5.9 The Committee noted correspondence on the provision of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy Services.

5.10 The Committee noted correspondence regarding contact tracing in Schools.



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5.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health regarding issues around vaccination.

### **6. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Mr McCrossan joined the meeting at 9:50am.

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

### **7. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

### **8. Minister of Education - Oral Briefing**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:02am:

Ms Michelle McIlveen, Minister of Education, Department of Education

Dr Mark Browne, Permanent Secretary, Department of Education

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

Mr James Hutchinson, Director of Restart, Department of Education

Ms Joan Cassells, Head of Qualifications and Assessment, Department of Education

Ms Sara Long, Chief Executive, Education Authority

Ms Kim Scott, Assistant Director, Education, Education Authority



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Mr Paul Crooks, Acting Assistant Director, Operations and Estates, Education Authority

Professor Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health

Dr Joanne McClean, Associate Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health

The witnesses briefed the Committee on Restart and contact tracing.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 11:43am.

Mr Harvey left the meeting at 11:51am.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and officials for the briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education expressing concerns that the lack of confidence in the contact tracing system needs to be addressed and seeking:

- Information on the Department's bid for funding to improve ventilation in schools;
- Sight of contingency plans for schools in the event of increased cases of Covid-19.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Medical Officer expressing concerns that the lack of confidence in the contact tracing system needs to be addressed and asking that he engage directly with schools and school leaders. The Committee also agreed to ask for:

- Data for close-contact positivity for the third term and for the most recent period including delta-wave data; and
- A clear definition of close contact.



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**9. Integrated Education Bill – Committee Stage Oral Briefing by the Department of Education**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:58am:

Mrs Janis Scallon, Director of Sustainable Schools Policy and Planning, Department of Education

Ms Alison Chambers, Director of Promoting Collaboration and Tackling Disadvantage, Department of Education

Mrs Lorraine Finlay, Head of Area Planning and Policy, Department of Education

Mrs Shirley Sweeney, Head of Irish Medium and Integrated Education Team, Department of Education

The witness briefed the Committee on aspects of the Integrated Education Bill.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 12:30pm.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Department of Education seeking:

- A clause by clause response to the bill;
- Statistics in relation to the percentage of children placed in first preference integrated places;
- Statistics in relation to the number of places available in Post-Primary Irish Medium Sector schools;
- A breakdown of the outcomes of development proposals for nursery schools;
- Text of draft amendments proposed by the Department, a summary of the legal observations giving rise to these and references for the legal judgements mentioned on impartiality of development proposals;



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- An update on the status of and actions against recommendations in the Committee's Report on the Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education of July 2015;
- An update on the Strategic Review of Integrated Education.

**10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 September 2021 by video conference at 9:15am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:18pm

**Chris Lyttle MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education  
29 September 2021**