



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education Legacy Report 2017 - 2022

Report: NIA 189/17-22

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List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

DE - Department of Education

DfE – Department for the Economy

DoH – Department of Health

CCEA - The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment

CAMHS - Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service

CO₂ – Carbon Dioxide

SEN – Special Educational Needs

EA – Education Authority

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

PE – Physical Education

ETI – The Education and Training Inspectorate

RSE - relationship and sexuality education

FETO - Fair Employment and Treatment Order

UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

GTC NI - The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

CPR – Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

AED – Automated external defibrillator

NITC - Northern Ireland Teachers Council

ASCL - Association of School and College Leaders

STEM – Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

STEAM – Science, technology, engineering, Arts and mathematics

NICCY - The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

Remit, Powers and Membership of the Committee

The Committee for Education is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and, under Standing Order 48. Statutory Committees have been established to advise and assist the appropriate Minister on the formation of policy in relation to matters within his/her responsibilities. Specifically, the Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- consider relevant secondary legislation and take the committee stage of primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for Education.

The Committee has 9 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of 5.

The Committee has 9 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

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 MLA



Review of 2017 – 2022 Mandate

Scrutiny

The Committee first met on 22 January 2020.

Key points of the Committee’s scrutiny during the 2017 - 2022 mandate are summarised below.

Inquiries

Given the abbreviated period remaining in the 2017-2022 mandate, the Committee undertook no formal inquiries.

Motions to the House

The Committee took Motions to the House on the following issues:

- Post-Primary Transfer Testing
- The Adverse Impact of the Pandemic on Access to Special Educational Needs Support for Vulnerable Children
- Restrictive Intervention and Seclusion of Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

Reviews

The Committee undertook detailed and continual reviews of a number of key policy areas via oral briefings, follow-up correspondence and in some cases the commissioning of research and or motion for debate.

- **Covid-19 Pandemic Management in Schools**

The Committee monitored and assisted the Department assiduously with its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, hearing from the Minister every three weeks in the first year of restrictions and hearing from stakeholders regarding remote and blended learning and digital poverty. The Committee pressed for contingency plans for exams from CCEA and DE; stepping up of CAMHS

provision for pupils and a summer non-academic recovery programme before restart on the advice of the Mental Health Champion; flexibility in the use of Engage funding; support for pupils transitioning back to school; and greater use of ventilation measures such as CO2 monitors and air filtration devices. The Committee heard from the Teaching Unions frequently to relay the experience of teachers in all school sectors emphatically to the Department.

- **SEN Provision**

A number of deeply concerning reports of failure to deliver on the statutorily required standards for Special Educational Need statementing concerned the Committee. While the Public Accounts Committee made retrospective inquiry in its Impact Review on SEN, the Education Committee monitored reform programmes in EA.

The Committee was also made aware of a series of judicial reviews which were under way on aspects of SEN, notably on the practice of restraint and seclusion in local schools. The Committee took extensive evidence from parent and third sector stakeholders, notably the Children’s Commissioner for Northern Ireland and the Children’s Law Centre, and pursued progress reports from the Department and the Education Authority. The Committee also sought change and greater flexibility in respect of area planning for special schools, updates on public consultation on a revised policy, and plans for an extra special school in the Belfast metropolitan area.

Most recently, the EA updated the Committee on SEN progress and demonstrated improvement in compliance with required statementing timeframes, from over 1000 late cases in 2019 to only 11 cases currently in the system for more than the 26-week threshold. EA’s outline business case is now predicated on earliest intervention and access to stage 3 services with the aim of reducing the requirement for statementing. EA is no longer in systemic failure but a successor Committee will wish to monitor what EA referred to as a systemic funding problem, with 41% of SEN schools in financial deficit at year end, underfunding relative to neighbouring jurisdictions, rising numbers in the sector and a need to align area planning with the capital programme for the sector.

- **Post-Primary Transfer**

The issue of post-primary transfer is a contested one among educationalists and so among Committee members. Members could not reach a Committee view on the matter, but surveyed schools in 2020 to inform the wider debate on the topic.

- **Budget and in-year monitoring**

The Committee received regular briefings on budget and in-year monitoring from the Department and contributed to the Committee for Finance’s collation of a whole-of-government picture of spending throughout a mandate which saw enormous pressures on departmental budgets. The Committee would point to the trends of over-reliance on the in-year process; uncertainty of one-year budgets for contractors; a lack of granularity in the detail provided by the Department; but most significantly, a pattern of gradual and extreme underinvestment in education here over the last decades. The Committee heard a budget update from DE officials in one of its last meetings and commissioned research on the Investment Strategy NI and the budget process in Education. These will be useful tools for the incoming Committee and the budget will be likely be a regular agenda item going forward for the new Committee.

The Minister made capital allocations in the last week of term, and made Ministerial Directions for expenditure on the Strule Campus despite delays. The successor Committee will wish to reconsider capital in light of rising construction and fuel costs.

- **Childcare Provision**

The Committee urged the Department to develop a comprehensive childcare strategy, but this strand of work was halted during the pandemic. The Committee pressed for continuity in childcare support schemes provided throughout the period, and a successor Committee will wish to reprise the issue of comprehensive provision now the public health situation has eased.

- **UNCRC Reporting and Restraint and Seclusion Policy**

The Committee heard briefings from the rights community and the Department on the collation and reporting process for the jurisdiction to the UN monitoring Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee urged the Department to review its outdated restraint and seclusion policy and get in line with good practice in neighbouring jurisdictions. The Committee heard extremely distressing testimony from families whose children had suffered from these techniques, and is very disappointed that the Department's report on the matter did not issue before the end of the mandate.

- **Restart and Young People's Emotional and Mental Health**

The Committee received oral and written briefing from the Department and EA, third-sector bodies and notably, the Mental Health Champion on the impact of pandemic on the physical and mental well-being of pupils. Agreeing with the Commissioner that young people had made a significant sacrifice in their formative years for other people, the Committee argued strongly for a cross-departmental approach to Restart and a summer programme to enable socialisation and recovery before a return to academia.

The Committee also initiated youth engagement in 'My life and learning in lockdown' zoom meetings to ascertain from young people themselves how they were experiencing this period. (CF 'Youth Engagement: My life and learning in lockdown'.)

- **PE in Schools**

The Committee requested regular updates on the compliance of schools with the recommended two hours' PE per week. The Committee was very disappointed to learn that compliance with this minimum threshold was very low, and engaged with the ETI, departmental officials and the Forest Schools Association to explore ways to increase physical activity and outdoor learning.

The Committee has also asked to be provided with data on the availability of outdoor space to schools. This has not been forthcoming.

- **RSE, Consent, Gender Budgeting, Gendered Violence, Period Poverty**

The Gillen Review gave fresh urgency to the question of how relationship and sexuality education in schools deals with issues of consent and violence, but young people also reflected strongly their views that RSE should more actively address issues considered “taboo”, such as gender-fluidity, family models and menstruation. The Committee conveyed these views expressed by Belfast Youth Forum and Pure Mental to the Minister and EA and registered its concern in early 2022 that the Department had not replied to requests for input from the Gillen team.

- **The *Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO)* and Integrated Education**

The Committee heard from the UNESCO Centre for Transformation in Education on its recent research on the teacher exemption from fair employment legislation under the provisions of FETO; and on Integrated Education.

The exemption had for many years been seen as a safeguard for faith interests in education but several key stakeholders were coming to a view that in the interests of diversity it was time for change.

The Committee sought evidence and views on these topics from relevant stakeholders notably the Churches and sector representative bodies. The Committee provided their replies to the Executive Office Committee to assist with its Committee Stage scrutiny of the FETO (Amendment) Bill, a private members bill sponsored by the Education Committee Chairperson, Chris Lyttle MLA.

The Committee undertook its own Committee Stage scrutiny of the Integrated Education Bill sponsored by Kellie Armstrong MLA. The Bill passed its Final Stage in February 2022.

The FETO (Amendment) Bill passed its Final Stage on 24 March 2022.

Primary Legislation: Executive Bills

The Committee dealt with 2 Executive Bills during the mandate.

- **School Age Bill**

The Committee was in favour of flexible school starting age and engaged with stakeholders even as it agreed to the Minister's request for accelerated passage for a bill providing narrow flexibilities. The Committee communicated stakeholder views, and liaison with the Minister resulted in first: a review clause being provided by amendment at Consideration Stage of the bill; and secondly: a refinement of the definition of "deferred cases".

These changes were accepted by the Assembly and honed the bill to the wishes and needs of stakeholder parents not only of young for year pupils, but pupils born prematurely and perhaps exhibiting some developmental delay. The review clause also allowed the Department to collate more information before reviewing the definition to see if all potential deferrals were described in the legislation. This mechanism also provided an opportunity for a future Education Committee to exercise post-legislative scrutiny and ensure effectiveness of the operation of the law. The School Age Bill was enacted in February 2022.

- **GTC NI (Directions) Bill**

The General Teaching Council was the main arm's-length body to exercise the Committee's attention in this mandate. In special measures for a second time and prompting grave concerns of dysfunction from the teaching unions, the Committee considered that the council had an unwieldy design and faulty underpinning legislation.

The Department undoubtedly devoted significant resource to problem-solving at the troubled organisation but did not expect to legislate to address issues at GTC in this mandate.

However, following an independent effectiveness review by Baker Tilly Mooney Moore, the Minister consulted the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee

before announcing the decision in December 2021 to dissolve the Council with immediate effect.

The GTC NI (Directions) Bill was introduced, again with Ministerial consultation with the Committee and by accelerated passage, to strengthen the Department's position against legal challenge of the decision to dissolve the organisation.

The GTCNI (Directions) Bill was passed on 16 March 2022 with the support of the Committee for Education.

Throughout the Committee urged the Department to legislate to properly describe the vires required by such a regulatory body; and to address its composition. It is hoped that this will be undertaken early in the new mandate.

Primary Legislation: Non-Executive Bills

The Committee undertook 3 Committee Stages during the mandate. These were all in relation to Private Members' Bills.

- **Integrated Education Bill**

The Integrated Education Bill proposed reforms to facilitate greater alignment between provision and demand for integrated education.

Around 1118 organisations and individuals responded to the request for written evidence. The Bill was relatively contentious, and the Committee considered the Bill, stakeholder evidence and commissioned research and legal advice at 17 of its meetings taking evidence from the Bill's sponsor, the Department of Education, a youth panel and selected stakeholders who had submitted written evidence. The Committee proposed amendments which were agreed by the Assembly. The Integrated Education Bill became law on 9 March 2022.

Read the Committee's report on Integrated Education Bill:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/education/reports/report-on-the-integrated-education-bill-education-bill/>

- **Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill**

The Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill proposed to make life-saving skills a mandatory part of the Key Skills 3 curriculum in line with international best practice and neighbouring jurisdictions. The Committee was very supportive of the measure and explored the merits of aspects such as follow-up training and the resourcing required. The Bill Sponsor liaised closely with the Committee regarding his engagement with the Minister and, on 26 January 2022, indicated that he was content that draft secondary legislation proposed by the Department of Education would achieve the same policy intention without recourse to primary legislation. Mr McGrath accordingly announced his withdrawal of the private member's bill.

The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 was agreed by the Committee on 23 February 2022.

Read the Committee's report on the Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/education/reports/report-on-the-education-curriculum-cpr-and-aed-bill/>

- **Period Products (Free Provision) Bill**

The Committee undertook scrutiny of this cross-cutting Bill given its support for the eradication of period poverty and its impact on equality of access to education.

Around 66 organisations and individuals responded to the request for written evidence.

The Committee considered the Bill and related issues at 11 of its meetings, taking evidence from the Bill's sponsor, the Department of Education, a youth panel and selected stakeholders who had submitted written evidence.

Questions of Executive funding and co-ordination of the bill were unresolved at the time of the Committee's report. It tabled amendments to require privacy, confidentiality and consideration of sustainable options in the arrangements for

provision of period products, and these were accepted by the Assembly. It also recommended a coeducational awareness raising approach to the roll-out of the scheme to reduce period stigma and present sustainable options.

The Period Products (Free Provision) Bill passed its Final Stage on 24 March 2022.

Read the Committee's report on the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/education/reports/period-products-free-provision-bill/>

• **Holiday Hunger**

The Committee supported measures to maintain the provision of nutritious meals to school-age children during the school holidays, and anticipated working on an additional private members' bill on this topic proposed by Deputy Chair Karen Mullan MLA and taken on by her successor Deputy Chair Pat Sheehan MLA. Measures initiated by the Department which received undertakings of funding support until 2025 appeared to make such a bill redundant. However, the Committee was dismayed to note that holiday hunger funding is in doubt as a result of non-agreement of a budget.

Secondary Legislation

The Committee considered statutory rules as follows:

- SR 2022/45 The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 – agreed: 23 February 2022
- SL1 - Teachers Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022 – The Committee indicated that it was content for the Department to proceed with the statutory rule at its meeting on 16 March 2022.

Committee Motions Debated in Plenary

The Committee debated in plenary motions in regard to:

- Post-Primary Transfer Testing

- The Adverse Impact of the Pandemic on Access to Special Educational Needs Support for Vulnerable Children; and
- Restrictive Intervention and Seclusion of Children and Young People with Additional Support Need

Approach

The Committee recognised the challenge presented by the wide-ranging nature of education policy and the varying experiences of different sectors within Northern Ireland and in other jurisdictions. The Covid–19 pandemic and lockdowns impacted heavily on the Education sector and the Committee held regular briefing with the Minister of Education and stakeholders examining the effect of school closures, remote learning on children’s education and mental health and wellbeing. The Committee also engaged directly youth groups and young people on the impact of lockdown.

In addition to formal meetings – for which key statistics are appended – the Committee also undertook a number of other actions which are set out below.

Youth Engagement and Committee values

The Committee worked on two occasions with expert facilitation to enhance its group effectiveness, questioning techniques and time management. In the course of this work each Member described their objective for the Committee. These were a reference point for Members to bring their strategic focus to every briefing and business item in Committee.

The Committee considered this to be valuable work.

The Committee heard from officials from the Irish and Scottish Governments on their approach to youth engagement in respect of a variety of issues such climate justice action plans and sheltered housing and care settings. Professor Laura Lundy from QUB briefed the Committee on her advisory role on youth engagement in many jurisdictions and on the Lundy model of engagement. In due course, the Committee heard from the Department of Education who had now also engaged with Professor Lundy. Her model of “space, voice, audience

and influence” was key to the zoom sessions planned by the Committee for its youth engagement from then on.

Research Commissioned

The Committee sought to bring an impartial evidence base to its deliberations and decision-making and accordingly commissioned a series of research reports by RAISE (the Assembly’s expert research and information service). These can be found on the Committee webpage and deal with:

- 8/12/2020 - Academic Selection
- 26/02/2021 - Children’s Rights and Educational Policy in Northern Ireland: Implementation of the UNCRC
- 26/02/2021 - Restraint and Seclusion of Children with Additional Needs in Schools
- 18/03/2021 - Gender Budgeting and Gender Inequalities in Northern Irish Education Policy
- 16/04/2021 - The New SEN Framework: Review of the Draft Regulations and Accompanying Code of Practice
- 27/05/2021 - School Starting Age: Policy and Practice in the UK
- 03/06/2021 - Physical Activity and the Wellbeing of Children and Young People
- 02/07/2021 - School Uniforms: Cost, Gender and Behavioural Considerations
- 02 09/ 2021 - The Role of Sleep in Adolescent Health and Wellbeing
- 15/11/2021 - Integrated Education Bill
- December 2021 - Period Products (Free Provision) Bill

- January 2022 - The implementation of CPR and AED training in schools in Northern Ireland
- 03/03/2022 - Executive's Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland: A preliminary examination against key principles underpinning public investment strategies
- 10/03/2022 - Newcomer Pupils in Northern Ireland
- 10/03/2022 - Public expenditure on education

Informal Meetings/Stakeholder events/Concurrent Meetings of the Committee

The Committee undertook around 40 stakeholder events or informal meetings during the mandate. The discrete life and learning in lockdown youth engagement project reached and engaged with hundreds of school pupils of all ages.

The largest of the former involved around 30 participants. The smallest of the latter involved perhaps 2 representatives of a single organisation. Groups represented a wide range of educational interests including parents and children and young people. The Committee found these informal exchanges to be most informative and influential in subsequent Committee decision-making.

The stakeholder events consulted select education stakeholders on:

- the delivery of Special Educational Needs education in lockdown and the support provided to vulnerable children;
- the support and emotional health and wellbeing issues experienced by pupils during lockdown and transition out of lockdown into school with restrictions;
- the Integrated Education Bill; and
- the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill.

The Committee held the following informal meetings with stakeholders:

- 28 January 2020 - Teaching Unions on the teachers' pay and conditions dispute;
- 30 January 2020 – The Education Authority Board;
- 11 February 2020 – the Strategic Leadership Group of Special School Principals on Special Educational Needs;
- 27 February 2020 – The Education Authority on Special Educational Needs;
- 31 March 2020 – Parenting NI and Parenkind to discuss parental involvement in children's education;
- 21 April 2020 – Sectoral bodies on key issues for the Education system;
- 04 May 2020 – Childcare organisations on the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on childcare;
- 13 October 2020 – The Equality Commission and the Equality Coalition about the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on learning for children in disadvantaged groups and the Restart;
- 20 October 2020 – Angel eyes on its work supporting blind and partially sighted children;
- 3 November 2020 – Belfast Special Schools on Special Educational Needs;
- 24 November 2020 – The Homeless Period, Belfast on the provision of free period products in schools;
- 18 December 2020 – Department of Education on the provision of free period products in schools;
- 12 January 2021 – Belfast Youth Forum on the 'Any Use' Report on Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools;

- 23 February 2021 – Parent Action on the work of the organisation and its support for parents;
- 9 March 2021 – Northern Ireland Teachers Council (NITC) on governance issues regarding the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI);
- 16 March 2021 - Northern Ireland Teachers Council (NITC) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) on guidance from CCEA on alternative awarding arrangements for Summer 2021 CCEA qualifications;
- 23 March 2021 – CCEA on guidance on alternative awarding arrangements in lieu of exams, and the process outlined for schools and colleges for Summer 2021;
- 13 April 2021 – Ms Karen Mullan MLA on the proposed private members bill on holiday hunger;
- 11 May 2021 – Mr Colin McGrath MLA on the proposed private members bill on the mandatory provision of CPR training in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland;
- 18 May 2021 - Apple education team on its work with schools and students;
- 21 May 2021 – The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman on the process of complaints to the Public Service Ombudsman and complaints in relation to education;
- 8 June 2021 – Parenting NI on the findings of its Emotional Health and Wellbeing Survey;
- 8 June 2021 - Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA on the proposed private members bill on the provision of integrated education;

- 6 July 2021 - Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) on concerns about on changes to testing, changes to the curriculum, the appeal process, and the General Teaching Council NI (GTCNI);
- 14 September 2021 - Dyslexia Awareness NI on the support available for Children with dyslexia in schools in Northern Ireland;
- 21 September 2021 – Education Trade Unions on issues relating to restart and contact tracing;
- 5 October 2021 – Future Schools Project on the background to project;
- 19 October 2021 – Linking Generations Northern Ireland on intergenerational engagement in communities;
- 14 December 2021 – Tynylife and Early Years on flexibility in school starting age for children;
- 11 January 2022 – Northern Ireland Forest School Association on its work with nursery and primary school age children and its aims to develop and deliver outdoor learning to children and families;
- 15 February 2022 - Baker Tilly Mooney Moore on the Landscape Review of the Education Authority.

The Committee invited the Departments of Education and Economy to brief a Concurrent Committee of Education and Economy on the 14-19 strategy.

This meeting was cancelled by DfE at short notice.

The Committee invited the Departments of Health, Education, the Public Health Agency and the Chief Medical Officer to brief a Concurrent Committee of Education and Health on covid-19 precautions in schools.

The Minister for Health was unable to attend due to personal circumstances but the meeting went ahead and productive discussion eventuated.

The Children’s Commissioner briefed a Concurrent Committee of Education and Health, at this Committee’s invitation, on her monitoring update report on young people’s mental health, the ‘Still Waiting’ report.

Visits and External Meetings

The Committee planned a visit to the Forest Schools Association at Clandeboye, but was unable to proceed with this due to the pandemic situation prevailing at the time. Instead the Committee held an informal briefing with Forest Schools Association.

The Committee planned a visit to Armagh Observatory and Planetarium on Wednesday 16 March 2022 to receive informal briefings:

- From Armagh Observatory and Planetarium on its work promoting STEM with schools; and
- From STEAM NI on its work.

The visit could not proceed due to pressure of end of mandate plenary scheduling. Instead the Committee held a briefing from STEAM NI at its antepenultimate formal meeting.

No external meeting was held in the reporting period. The Committee hopes the successor Committee will enjoy many visits and connections to inform its scrutiny of the Review of Education.

Social Media and Virtual Work

The Committee maintained a social media presence – on Twitter and the Assembly website – and used this to promote engagement in the Committee’s work. In addition, the Committee used the Assembly’s new ‘Citizen Space’ online consultative platform to seek relevant input in calls for evidence regarding the Committee Stages of Bills. The Committee also used an online survey to gauge support for the transfer test and ran its stakeholder events via zoom. The Committee operated fully virtually for the last year of the mandate to responsibly

ensure that it was taking every precaution to socially distance and nonetheless to carry out effective scrutiny.

Suggested Issues for the Successor Committee

The Committee considered a number of issues which have yet to be formally concluded. These are discussed briefly below.

Issue 1 – Budget Scrutiny

The outgoing Committee exited at a time of extreme budgetary uncertainty. A pattern of underfunding of education has become long entrenched, and at the time of writing, even initiatives such as the Fair Start programme to tackle systemic underachievement and the Review of Education were under funding threat. Workforce planning, including a review of arrangements for substitute teachers and education welfare officers, is an equally urgent matter in the resourcing of the education system. The Committee commissioned a research paper on DE's budget and put the questions within it to the Department via correspondence. The successor Committee may wish to reprise this material with departmental officials early in the new mandate.

Issue 2 – Comprehensive Childcare Strategy

The successor Committee may wish to undertake rigorous scrutiny of resource and planning for a comprehensive childcare strategy, the lack of which the current Committee has identified as a gender budgeting issue and systemic impediment to equal opportunity for women in the workforce and the economy generally.

Issue 3 – Emotional Health and Wellbeing

To complement its scrutiny of the DE Emotional Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, the successor Committee may wish to consider scheduling periodic Concurrent Committee meetings with the Health Committee and respective Ministers to continue to monitor early interventions to support pupil mental health and the provision of access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Services, with an emphasis on remedial initiatives for the pandemic cohort. The NI Children’s Commissioner (cf NICCY’s ‘Still Waiting’ report and annual monitoring) and Mental Health Champion may also be of assistance in this strand of work. The Mental Health Champion highlighted at the current Committee’s last meeting the needs underpinning wellbeing: food, rest, exercise, play and digital equality.

Issue 4 – 14-19 Strategy

The successor Committee may wish to consider scheduling periodic Concurrent Committee meetings with the Economy Committee to receive a joint briefing from their respective Ministers on the 14-19 Strategy. Particular issues the Committee would wish to promote are parity of esteem between academic, artistic and vocational paths; and the use of whole-community approaches and industry partnered (CSR) initiatives in school and college to make the progression from education to work more evident and relevant.

The Committee recommends that should the improved public health outlook prevail, the incoming Committee visit the Planetarium as part of a workstream regarding the 14-19 strategy.

Issue 5 – PE in schools

The Committee proposes that the successor Committee consider undertaking an inquiry into PE and outdoor learning in schools, and in the course of this inquiry consider whether minimum hours of PE currently provided in guidance should become statutory requirements.

The Committee recommends that should the improved public health outlook prevail, the incoming Committee visit inter alia Forest Schools and Eco Schools as part of an inquiry into the holistic benefits of Physical Education and outdoor learning.

Issue 6 – RSE

The successor Committee may wish to ask the Education Minister to commission updated evaluations of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary, Post-Primary and Special Education Needs Schools; and on foot of these results to consider whether additional measures are required to achieve a more consistent and pupil-centred approach to RSE across all schools regardless of their ethos.

Issue 7 – SEN; SEND and Engage Funding

The successor Committee will wish to continue to monitor provision for and compliance with legislation relating to pupils with Special Educational Needs. The Committee may also wish to pursue the matter of Restraint and Seclusion in local schools, given that this is a critical issue of disharmony with UNCRC standards and, disappointingly, the Department had not reported on it before the end of the 2017-22 mandate. The Committee considers that Engage funding should be mainstreamed and suggests that the successor Committee urge a dedicated SEN budget line for transparency in scrutiny of this funding in both DE and DoH.

Issue 8 – Green recovery/Green new deal/SDGs

The successor Committee may wish to ask the Department for an update on the initiatives it would propose for a green new deal, and how it is guiding schools towards ecological sustainability on the schools' estate. The current Committee put these questions to the Department a calendar year ago and received no reply. The UN Sustainable Development Goals should now be an integral part of departmental planning and the successor Committee should expect to see them reflected in Programme for Government commitments, departmental Business Plan, budget and worldview of the Department.

Issue 9 – Newcomer pupils

The Committee received research on issues for newcomer pupils and engaged with some refugee pupils in its Life and Learning in Lockdown youth engagement on mental health and emotional wellbeing. The successor

Committee may wish to explore the experience of newcomer pupils in greater detail than time permitted in this mandate.

Thanks

The Committee wishes to extend its thanks and sincere appreciation to all those working in the education system; the stakeholders who came and wrote to Committee; the pupils who made such a sacrifice of their social and school lives during lockdown for the rest of us; the Ministers and departmental officials who supported the Committee's role; and the Assembly secretariat support team. Special thanks must go to the Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer, Peter Burns, who so capably and courteously handled the Committee's requests of the Department.

Appendix 1 – Committee for Education

The Committee has 9 members. The membership of the Committee throughout the current mandate was as follows:

- Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) (1)
- Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
- Mr Robbie Butler MLA
- Mrs Diane Dodds MLA (2)
- Mr Harry Harvey MLA (2)
- Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
- Mr Justin McNulty MLA
- Mr Robin Newton MLA

1 From 1 February 2021 Mr Pat Sheehan replaced Ms Karen Mullan as a member of the Committee

2 From 21 June 2021 Mrs Diane Dodds and Mr Harry Harvey replaced Mr William Humphrey and Mr Maurice Bradley as members of the Committee.

Appendix 2 – Mandate facts and figures

Committee meetings & visits

Session	Number of meetings held	Percentage minutes public / closed	Number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Number of committee visits
2019/2020	27	Public – 97% Closed – 3%	0	0
2020/2021	39	Public – 93% Closed – 7%	0	0
2021/2022	47	Public – 84% Closed – 16%	0	0

Committee Bill Reports

Session	Name of Bill	Committee report (Ordered to print)
2019/2020	-	-
2020/2021	-	-
2021/2022	Report on the Integrated Education Bill - NIA 23/17-22	24 November 2021
2021/2022	Report on the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill - NIA 166/17-22	2 February 2022
2021/2022	Report on the Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill - NIA 167/17-22	2 February 2022

Committee Inquiries / Reviews / Micro inquiries

Session	Name of report	Committee Report (ordered to print)	Date debated in Plenary (if applicable)
2019/2020	-	-	-
2020/2021	-	-	-
2021/2022	-	-	-

Committee Motions Debated in Plenary (excluding Inquiries / Reviews / Membership changes)

Session	Motion	Date debated in Plenary
2019/2020	-	-
2020/2021	Post-Primary Transfer Testing	02/11/2020
2020/2021	The Adverse Impact of the Pandemic on Access to Special Educational Needs Support for Vulnerable Children	26/01/2021
2020/2021	Restrictive Intervention and Seclusion of Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs	24/05/2021
2021/2022	-	-

Statutory Rules

Session	Negative Resolution	Affirmative Resolution	Draft Affirmative	Confirmatory	Not laid	Total
2019/2020	-	-	-			
2020/2021	-	-	-			
2021/2022	2	-	-			2

Committee Reports (excluding Bill and Inquiry reports)

Session	Name of report	Date (date approved by Committee)	Date debated in Plenary (if appropriate)
2019/2020	-	-	-
2020/2021	-	-	-
2021/2022	Youth Engagement: My Life and Learning in Lockdown	24 March 2022	-

Witnesses

Session	Number of Organisations who gave evidence to the committee
2019/2020	34
2020/2021	74
2021/2022	66

Appendix 3 - Expenditure for the period 1 September 2017 – 27 March 2022

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings		£0.00
Advertising	Includes the cost of advertising relating to:	£1,688.59
External Consultancy	Includes costs associated with committee use of external consultants to assist in consideration of legislation, inquiries, etc.	£0.00
General expenses	Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, committee events, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, and conference fees for members etc.	£790.15
All budget areas	All details	£2478.74

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