



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 10 October 2012
THE LECTURE THEATRE, SOUTH WEST COLLEGE, OMAGH

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Sean Rogers MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)
Caroline Perry (Research Officer) *for item 5 only*

Apologies:

Michaela Boyle MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 11.01am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business.

- 2.1.** The Chairperson referred Members to the CCEA Regulator's report on the AQA GCSE English results for 2011-12 and a related press release from the Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department, seeking a joint CCEA / Departmental briefing: on the report; the implications of the Welsh Regulator's decision in respect of grade adjustments; the implications for

Northern Ireland students who sat the Welsh Examination Board's English GCSE; and on the way forward for pupils affected this year.

- 2.2.** The Chairperson advised Members that the Minister had written to schools regarding technical issues associated with the Northern Ireland Numeracy Assessment (NINA) and the Northern Ireland Literacy Assessment (NILA). The Chairperson also referred Members to correspondence from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Ulster Teachers' Union on the same issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department, seeking an urgent briefing on this matter, with particular reference to: the numbers of schools affected; whether the problems are purely IT issues; what support is available for schools; and the revised timescale for the completion of assessments.

- 2.3.** The Chairperson noted the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill. Members agreed that the Committee should optimise its scrutiny of the current Education Bill by making use of relevant papers from the previous mandate.

Agreed: The Committee formally agreed that it was content for unpublished papers associated with the previous Education Bill and as considered by the predecessor Committee for Education to be made available to the current Committee.

Agreed: Members also agreed that the Clerk should consult the legal advice obtained by the predecessor Committee and, as appropriate, seek revised advice from Legal Services for the current Education Bill.

- 2.4.** The Chairperson highlighted his concerns in respect of recent press reports relating to accidents involving school buses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the issue of Health & Safety on Home to School transport again upon receipt of responses to its most recent queries.

- 2.5.** The Chairperson referred Members to a recent press release from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, announcing £26 million for projects that included the provision of employment for 230 newly-qualified teachers to deliver one-to-one tuition in mathematics and literacy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for further information on the announcement.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department for further information on how this initiative is to be delivered; how the Department is continuing to address issues relating to the re-employment of recently retired teachers; and whether the initiative will provide Early Professional Development (EPD) opportunities for new teachers.

3. Draft Minutes of 3 October 2012

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. The Committee discussed planned Departmental briefings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a further Departmental briefing on the Education (Levels of Progression for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) Order (NI) 2012 at its next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to postpone a Departmental briefing on consultation responses to the Provision of Performance and other Information about Pupils and Schools.

4.2. The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA announcing the appointment of a new Interim Chief Executive, Mr Richard Hanna.

5. Briefing from RalSe on the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 11.25am.

Ms Caroline Perry, Assembly Research Officer, briefed the Committee on the Education Bill and highlighted a number of areas for further consideration.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing ended at 11.40am.

6. Departmental briefing on the Education Bill

A Departmental official joined the meeting at 11.41am.

Mr Chris Stewart, Director of the Equality and All-Ireland Directorate, briefed the Committee on the Education Bill which was introduced to the Assembly on 2 October 2012.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Sean Rogers left the meeting at 12.05pm.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 12.10pm, and the Deputy Chairperson took the chair.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of the Boards of Governors for a number of different schools at 12.16pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on the anticipated management hierarchy; the description of functions and the local office structure for the Education and Skills Authority (ESA).

The Chairperson rejoined the meeting and resumed the chair at 12.33pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information on the timescale for the establishment of the Tribunal referred to in Clause 3 (4) of the Bill. The Committee also agreed to seek details of which elements of current Education legislation are intended to remain in force should the Bill be enacted as currently drafted.

The official left the meeting at 1.15pm.

7. End of Session Report

The Committee considered its draft End of Session report for the period 12 May 2011 until 31 August 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its 2011-12 End of Session Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for its 2011-12 End of Session Report to be published.

8. Correspondence

8.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department setting out the August 2012 Budget Outturn and Forecast Outturn for 2012-13.

8.2. The Committee noted a response from the Department on its anti-bullying strategy and current anti-bullying measures within schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this response to the Anti-Bullying Forum for comment.

8.3. Members noted further correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning on recent admission errors at the University of Ulster.

8.4. The Committee considered a response from the Department on current estimates of the number of unfilled school places.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the response to its Special Adviser on Area Planning, Professor Tony Gallagher, for information. The Committee also agreed to request an Assembly Research paper on the background to the statistics on unfilled school places.

8.5. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, requesting information on the services available in schools to support pupils with allergies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Minister for comment.

8.6. Members noted correspondence from the Middletown Centre for Autism, enclosing a copy of its Inspection Report.

8.7. The Committee noted a response from the Department on the possibility of extending Statements of Special Educational Needs to the age of 24.

- 8.8.** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department, requesting the postponement of a briefing on proposed increases to teachers' pension contributions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the briefing until relevant proposals had been finalised and the associated consultation had commenced.

- 8.9.** Members noted a response from the House of Commons Education Committee on its scrutiny of the proposed reforms of GCSE examinations in England.

- 8.10.** Members noted correspondence from the Department relating to the Priorities for Youth draft policy consultation.

- 8.11.** The Committee noted recent media reports on the surrender of Translink bus passes in exchange for financial recompense.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for comment on these reports.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Committee for Regional Development seeking information on the reported award of a new contract to Translink for the provision of Home to School transport.

- 8.12.** The Committee noted press statements on a report on the Role and Contribution of Special Needs Assistants and Classroom Assistants in Ireland and Northern Ireland, produced by the Children and Youth Programme (CYP).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of this Report and a briefing from the authors.

The Committee also noted a number of Department of Education News Releases which were previously emailed to Members.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed its draft Forward Work Programme.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 1.29pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed in principle to request an extension to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

Agreed: Subject to the level and nature of responses to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill, the Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 October 2012 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.32pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
17 October 2012