



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 5 December 2012
Senate Chamber

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Sean Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Kerry Richards (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

Apologies:

Trevor Lunn MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 9.10am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

- 2.1. The Chairperson thanked Members who attended the Committee's Priorities for Youth informal briefing event on 28 November 2012.
- 2.2. The Chairperson thanked Members who attended the Committee's visit to Lough View Integrated Primary School on 4 December 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write and thank the principal and teachers involved in the visit.

- 2.3. The Chairperson advised Members that he had spoken at the launch of the Letterbox Evaluation event organised by Booktrust on 6 November 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from Booktrust as part of a literacy-themed evidence day in the New Year.

3. Draft Minutes of 28 November 2012

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were a number of matters arising from last week's meeting.

4.1 The Committee noted a Guide to the Primary Legislative Process in the Assembly provided by the Assembly Bill Office.

4.2 The Committee noted written submissions to the Committee Stage of the Education Bill from: the Community Relations Council; Ms Irene McCourt; Parents Outloud and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers; and Ms Roisin Gilheaney.

5. SL1: The Education (Levels of Progression for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) Order (NI) 2012

The briefing commenced at 9.15am.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 9.19am.

Brenda Hale joined the meeting at 9.27am

Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 9.32am.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 9.35am.

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards, DE; Dale Heaney, Head of Assessment and Qualifications Team, DE; and Ruth Kennedy, CCEA briefed the Committee on the above proposed statutory rule.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 9.53am.

The briefing ended at 10.13am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of the proposed statutory rule until 12 December 2012

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating that it may be content for the proposed rule to be made but sought the following assurances:

- the Department and CCEA to engage in real and meaningful discussions with schools involved in the Shadow Year with a view to addressing the concerns set out in the Shadow Year Evaluation Report;
- CCEA to enhance the provision of support for schools in the development of tasks and to streamline and improve the task approval process;
- CCEA to issue specific and detailed guidance as to how tasks are to be delivered so as to ensure consistency of approach among schools; and

- the timetable for the assessment of Levels of Progression to be amended such that assessments will be undertaken by all schools near the beginning of the summer term. The Committee believed that this revised timetable would reduce the assessment burden on schools. The Committee also suggested that unmoderated Levels of Progression results might usefully be reported to parents by 30 June with teachers providing the necessary context. Moderated results could then be produced during the summer by CCEA - in time for school prospectuses and formal written annual reports to parents.

Agreed: The Committee also reiterated its previous agreement to review the outworking of the Levels of Progression assessments after Easter 2013 with a view to assessing the Department's compliance with its undertakings to the Committee.

6. Briefing from the TRC on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 10.21am.

The following representatives of the Transferors' Representative Council (TRC): the Reverend Ian Ellis, Secretary TRC; Reverend Trevor Gribben, Member of TRC; and Miss Rosemary Rainey, Vice-Chair, TRC briefed the Committee on TRCs submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mervyn Storey declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of a controlled school at 10.40am.

Mervyn Storey declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of an independent Christian faith-based school at 10.45am.

Brenda Hale declared an interest as a member of the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness at 10:57am.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of three schools at 11.11am.

The briefing ended at 11.15am.

7. Briefing from IEF and NICIE on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 11.17am.

Ms Marie Cowan, Chairperson, Integrated Education Fund (IEF); Mr Nigel Arnold, Principal, Glengormley Integrated School, IEF; Ms Noreen Campbell, Chief Executive Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); and Mr Ian McMorris, Director NICIE, briefed the Committee on their individual submissions to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 11:22am.

Mervyn Storey declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of a controlled school at 11.39am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should seek written confirmation of NICIE's proposed amendments to the Bill.

The briefing ended at 12.10pm.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10pm.

Jo-Anne Dodson left the meeting at 12.10pm.

Sean Rodgers left the meeting at 12.10pm.

The meeting resumed in public session at 12.26pm.

The Committee agreed to take the following agenda item.

8. Correspondence

8.1. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding home to school transport and whistle-blowing and fraud prevention.

8.2. The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board and the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding Area Planning and surplus places.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to re-consider this correspondence when it receives a briefing from the Department of Education on Area Planning.

8.3. The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board on the Committee for Regional Developments Inquiry into the better use of public and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport options.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Regional Development.

8.4. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Schools Football Association.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to re-consider this correspondence along with the Department of Education's written briefing on Sport in Schools at its meeting on 12 December 2012.

8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from Lisburn City Council regarding the Provision of Post 16 Education in Beechlawn School, Hillsborough.

8.6. The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board regarding a school bus accident that took place on 30 October 2012.

8.7. The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the launch of the Financial Capability Strategy for Northern Ireland.

- 8.8.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure enclosing a briefing paper from the NSPCC.

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

- 8.9.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education on a consultation on “Potential short term changes to GCE A Levels”. The Committee also noted correspondence from the Westminster Education Committee providing an update its scrutiny of the Westminster Government’s proposals in respect of A-Levels.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to consider a Departmental briefing on the responses to the consultation in March.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal briefing event with A-Level practitioners so as to inform a possible Committee response to the Department’s consultation.

- 8.10.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education of Education regarding October 2012 – Outturn and Forecast Outturn.

Jo-Anne Dobson re-joined the meeting at 12.28pm.

- 8.11.** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to issues arising out of the Minister for Education’s statement to the Assembly on 6 November which was entitled ‘Putting Pupils First: Improving Outcomes; Improving Opportunity’.

- 8.12.** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to a request for a further breakdown of school attendance statistics.

- 8.13.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Review of the Balance of Competences.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Education for comment.

- 8.14.** The Committee noted a response from the South Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the Board’s Educational Psychology Services use of NFER assessment information.

- 8.15.** The Committee noted correspondence from Ballyclare Primary School regarding Computer-Based Assessments.

- 8.16.** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the draft regulations – Provision of Performance and Information Relating to Pupils and Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating that it:

- accepted the use of 5+ good GCSEs as the standard measure of performance for schools;
- was concerned at the significant difference in attainment between boys and girls but welcomed the reporting of this important statistic in future;
- cautioned against a further increase in the reporting burden for schools generally and in particular the additional expense associated with developing school websites;
- suggested the use of an optional standardised template for reporting school information;
- suggested that the Department aligns the implementation programme for this legislation with other work e.g. the upgrade of ICT provision in schools; and
- suggested that the Department make strenuous efforts to explain and justify the need for change in the relevant regulations to schools and parents.

Sean Rodgers re-joined the meeting at 12.38pm.

8.17. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to attend a reception to mark International Human Rights Day.

8.18. The Committee noted correspondence from Booktrust thanking the Chairperson for his attendance at the launch of the Letterbox Evaluation.

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

The Committee agreed to take the following agenda item.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Assembly Legal Services for 9 January 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that in the event that the Department of Education are unable to brief on Area Planning on 9 January 2012, it would receive a briefing from the Department on the Corporate Plan and from Assembly Research on Rural Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from the Minister of Education regarding the Early Years Strategy on 16 January 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an Early Years informal briefing event in January 2013 to include representation from key Early Years stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an Education Bill call for evidence event on 23 January 2012 to include the Parents Teachers Association–Northern Ireland (PTA-NI) and the NI Youth Forum.

10. Briefing from CnaG on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 12.42pm.

Brenda Hale left the meeting at 12.42pm.

The following representatives from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta: Dr Micheál Ó Duibh, Chief Executive; Noldlaig Ní Bhrollaigh, Senior Development Officer; Liam Mac Giolla Mheana, Senior Education Officer; and Caoimhín Ó Peatain, Chairperson presented CnaG's submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 12.55pm.

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 1.08pm.

Mervyn Story left the meeting at 1.26pm and Danny Kinahan assumed the Chair. The Committee became inquorate; however the meeting continued under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5).

The briefing ended at 1.36pm.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 December 2012 at 9.30am in the MacElhinney Suite, the Pavilion, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.37pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
12 December 2012