



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 23 January 2013
Room 21

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Trevor Lunn 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)
Jonathan McMillen (Legal Services) - *item 7 only*

Apologies:

Chris Hazzard MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 9.48am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education regarding the publication of the report of the Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme.

Agreed: Members agreed to receive a briefing on the report from the Independent Review Panel at the next Committee meeting on 30 January 2013.

2.2. The Chairperson discussed the recent temporary closure of schools due to the adverse weather conditions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on the Working Group which is understood to be developing

procedures for temporary school closures including enhanced information update services for parents.

- 2.3.** The Chairperson discussed the Minister's statement to the House on 22 January 2013 entitled 'Advancing New Schools in Planning'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department welcoming the prospect of new school build projects and seeking a briefing on: the link between new school builds and area plans; and the status of new builds promised to amalgamated schools.

- 2.4.** The Chairperson discussed the DFP Minister's January Monitoring Round statement on 22 January 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask how it is to improve management of the End Year Flexibility for schools so as to avoid a surrender of £5m as indicated in the January Monitoring Round.

3. Draft Minutes of 16 January 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2013 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 response from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding the Committee's call for evidence for the Education Bill.

- 4.2.** The Committee noted correspondence from Braidside, Portaferry, Drumragh, Forge, Millside and Shimna Integrated schools regarding the Education Bill.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 9.52am.

- 4.3.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister on the appointments process for the ESA Board.

Sean Rogers joined the meeting at 9.54am.

5. Briefing from the Association of Controlled Grammar Schools on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 9.58am.

Brenda Hale joined the meeting at 9.59am.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.01am.

Trevor Lunn joined the meeting at 10.02am.

Mr Stephen Black, Antrim Grammar School, Chairperson of the Association of Controlled Grammars (ACGS); Mr David Knox, Ballyclare High School; Mr Robin McLoughlin, Grosvenor Grammar School; and Mr Raymond Pollock OBE, Banbridge Academy presented the ACGS's submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

Brenda Hale left the meeting at 10.28am.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as Chairman of a Board of Governors of a controlled school at 11.07am.

The briefing ended at 11.33am.

6. Briefing from the Northern Ireland Voluntary Grammar Schools Bursars' Association on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 11.34am.

Brenda Hale re-joined the meeting at 11.44am.

Dr Christine Byrnes, Sullivan Upper School, Holywood and Chairperson, Northern Ireland Voluntary Grammar Schools Bursars' Association (NIVGSBA); Mr John Robinson, Methodist College, Belfast, Vice-Chairperson NIVGSBA; Ms Elisabeth Hull, Belfast Royal Academy; and Mr Shane McBrien, St Malachy's College, Belfast presented the NIVGSBA's submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12.27pm.

The briefing ended at 12.33pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 12.34am.

Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 12.34pm.

7. Briefing from Assembly Legal Services regarding employment issues in the Education Bill.

The briefing commenced at 12.34pm.

The Committee considered legal advice regarding employment issues in the Education Bill.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 12.52pm.

Brenda Hale left the meeting at 12.58pm.

The briefing ended at 1.00pm.

8. Departmental response on the Education Bill

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the Departmental briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking the following information:

- following passage of the Education Bill will, controlled grammar schools be able to pay honoraria;
- following passage of the Education Bill, will controlled grammar schools be able to procure services without the support or permission of ESA;
- an explanation of the difference between the power and role of inspectors in respect of schools and in respect of further education colleges;
- a summary of the current powers held by school inspectors;

- commentary on Clause 38(2) of the Bill – specifically a description of the actions ESA is to undertake to promote high standards in schools;
- confirmation as to whether ESA will they take a larger role in ensuring good health and safety practice in voluntary schools in-line with ESA's responsibility for payment of liability insurance,
- confirmation as to whether the Department is to bring forward a Statutory Rule which (like the Education Order 1991) will clarify the employment roles of BoGs and ESA – specifically to allow a BoG to give effect to an instruction from a court regarding employment.
- commentary as to whether ESA's status as the single employer will lead to a change in terms and conditions for non-teaching staff and consequently wage inflation for non-teaching staff.

9. Correspondence

- 9.1. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding post-19 SEN provision and the 14-19 Education Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating its surprise and concern that DE is not to develop a 14-19 Education Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the 14-19 Education Strategy following the briefing from the independent panel on the Common Funding Scheme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Employment and Learning and the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety for comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek: further information from CCEA regarding its review of SEN and the Entitlement Framework and sight of the guidance it is to develop in respect of the Entitlement Framework and pupils in Learning Support Centres.

- 9.2. The Committee noted an invitation from the Children's Law Centre to attend a youth drama event supporting positive mental health in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Children's Law Society seeking a copy of its briefing report when it becomes available.

- 9.3. The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding Priorities for Youth.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to re-consider this correspondence when the Department briefs on the feedback to the Priorities for Youth consultation.

- 9.4. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding caps on class sizes for P5-7 pupils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating its concern in respect of unacceptably large class sizes and seeking the Department's response to the concerned parent who raised the issue.

- 9.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the Regional Training Unit (RTU) commenting on a RalSe paper on Underachievement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to RTU indicating that the RalSe paper was an overview and informing RTU that the Committee will be re-visiting underachievement issues in future.

- 9.6. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding Disability Sport NI's ongoing work on a proposal to improve participation in sport by disabled people.

- 9.7. The Committee noted an invitation from the Human Rights Commission to attend the launch of a report entitled 'Education Reform in Northern Ireland – A Human Rights Review'.

- 9.8. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Education to an NSPCC briefing paper on 'Safeguarding in Sport'

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

The Committee noted a response from the Minister to correspondence from the NI Schools Football Association. The Committee also noted that it expected further correspondence from the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee regarding this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

- 9.9. The Committee noted an invitation from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee to attend the launch of an exhibition of Chinese art to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that owing to a clash with the Committee's weekly meeting it will be unable to attend the exhibition.

- 9.10. The Committee noted correspondence from Parents Outloud regarding school starting age.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DE seeking the evidence base for the Minister's comments on 16 January 2013 relating to extra pre-school years and possible adverse educational impact.

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

10. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the Departmental briefing on the Teachers Superannuation Regulations (NI) 1998 until the 6 February 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule its visit to Lisburn to meet with a group of principals to discuss key educational issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the forward work programme subject to these changes.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 January 2013 at 9:30am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.10pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
30 January 2013