



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 6 February 2013  
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  
Trevor Lunn MLA  
Michelle McIlveen MLA  
Sean Rogers MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)  
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)  
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)  
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

**Apologies:** None

*The meeting commenced in public session at 9.40am.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- 2.1.** The Chairperson commented on the Committee's successful event which was held on 30 January 2013 to gather the views of parents, school governors and young people on the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to PTA-NI and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to thank them for their assistance in the organisation of the event.

- 2.2.** The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has invited the Committee for Education to attend the Effective Questioning and Scrutiny workshop which has been arranged for Tuesday 5 March 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that, in view of the current busy forward work programme, it was content to join with the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development for this workshop on Tuesday 5 March 2013.

*Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 9:46am.*

- 2.3.** The Chairperson advised Members that he had asked the Clerk to circulate the report of the Westminster Education Committee on Secretary of State Gove's proposals for changes to GCSEs and the English Baccalaureate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to this issue following the publication of CCEA's report on the future of GCSEs in Northern Ireland.

### **3. Draft Minutes of 30 January 2013**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 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 correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education suggesting an additional amendment to the Education Bill which would allow Special Schools to be designated as integrated.

- 4.2.** The Committee noted correspondence from Windmill Integrated School regarding the Education Bill.

- 4.3.** The Committee noted two items of correspondence from the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) expressing its views on a number of aspects of the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that all these items of correspondence should be included in its report on the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to request legal advice on matters raised by the GBA.

### **5. Departmental briefing on responses to the consultation on the Teachers' Superannuation (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013.**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9:49am.*

Mr Mark Mawhinney, Head of Teacher Negotiating and Pensions Policy Team, and Mr Seamus Gallagher, Teacher Negotiating and Pensions Policy Team, briefed the Committee on responses to the consultation on The Teachers' Superannuation (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request information from the Department on:

- the employer / employee contributions and benefits of comparable public sector pension schemes;
- the estimated costs of the public consultation on the regulations; and
- any actions proposed by the Department to mitigate the impact of the pension changes on the lowest-paid employees.

*Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 10:15am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a Research paper on the background to changes in public sector pensions.

*Officials left the meeting at 10.27am.*

## **6. Briefing from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum on the Education Bill.**

*Representatives joined the meeting at 10:30am.*

Mr Chris Quinn, Director, Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF); Mr Martin McAuley, Chairperson, NIYF; Ms Rhíannon Ní Cheallaigh, Vice Chairperson, NIYF; and Mr Declan Campbell, presented the NIYF's submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

*Jo-Anne Dobson rejoined the meeting at 10:33am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for clarification of the impact of the Education Bill on youth services as set out in the relevant Education Orders.

*Representatives left the meeting at 11.34am.*

## **7. Education Bill: Informal Clause-by-Clause Scrutiny**

*A Departmental official joined the meeting at 11.37am.*

Mr Chris Stewart, Director of the Equality and All-Ireland Directorate, DE was in attendance to provide further information on the Education Bill as required.

The Committee commenced its informal Clause by Clause scrutiny of the Education Bill.

### Clause 1

The Committee considered suggested amendments that the acronym, ESA, should not be used with reference to the Education and Skills Authority; and that the word 'Skills' should not be included in the name of the authority.

**Agreed:** The Committee informally agreed that it did not support either of these proposed amendments.

**Agreed:** The Committee informally agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as drafted.

#### Clause 2:

The Committee considered suggestions that Clause 2(2) should be amended:

- a. to include a duty on ESA to promote shared education;
- b. to remove the duty on ESA to contribute towards the spiritual development of children and young persons;
- c. so that the duty on ESA to contribute towards the spiritual development of children and young persons would have a guaranteed level of curriculum support which might be delivered through the function of a Sectoral Support Body;
- d. so that there should be a duty on ESA to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium Education;

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reconsider proposed amendments relating to the promotion of shared education and Irish Medium Education pending receipt of legal advice.

**Agreed:** The Committee informally agreed that it did not support the amendment relating to the removal of the duty on ESA in respect of the spiritual development of children.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reconsider the proposed amendment relating to curricular support for religious education pending a response from the Department on its current obligations in law to support religious education.

The Committee considered a suggested amendment to Clause 2(2)e which would require clarification to be included in the Bill in respect of the advice provided by ESA to the Department on matters relating to schools, educational and youth services.

**Agreed:** The Committee informally agreed that it did not support the proposed amendment relating to ESA's advice to the Department in Clause 2(2)e.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on Clause 2(3) which requires ESA to treat schools on the same basis regardless of whether their premises are vested in ESA or otherwise.

The Committee discussed its current work programme and the additional workload presented by its scrutiny of the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule additional meetings on Tuesday mornings over the next few weeks.

*The Departmental official left the meeting at 1:08pm.*

## **8. Correspondence**

- 8.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding the sharing of school facilities.

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

- 8.2. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the McDonalds Happy Readers Campaign.

- 8.3. The Committee noted an invitation to attend the University of Ulster Stormont Showcase.

- 8.4. The Committee noted correspondence from the Western Education and Library Board enclosing a development proposal for Woodlands Speech and Language Unit.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister requesting an explanation as to how the closure of the Woodlands Speech and Language Unit and the transfer of pupils to different sectors met his obligations to encourage and facilitate the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification in respect of the requirement for teachers to have, or to obtain, the Certificate in Religious Education where they transfer as a result of a school amalgamation or school or unit closure.

**Agreed:** Members further agreed to arrange a meeting with the Western Education and Library Board to discuss this issue.

*Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 1:09pm.*

*Brenda Hale left the meeting at 1:09pm.*

- 8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding January Forecast Outturn Reports.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the forecast capital spend in the final quarter of 2012-13 and the forecast resource spend in March 2013.

- 8.6. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Environment regarding the Road Safety Council and road safety committees.

*Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 1:14pm.*

- 8.7. The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Education regarding revised DoE guidance on Republic of Ireland operators providing bus passenger services in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to clarify whether all of the current bus passenger service contracts for schools comply with the revised guidance and are lawful. The Committee also agreed to request information on how the renewal of such contracts will be affected by this guidance.

**Agreed:** The Committee further agreed to raise this issue with the Western Education and Library Board.

**8.8.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing the Programme for Government Quarter 3 update.

**8.9.** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the 14-19 Strategy.

**8.10.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Regional Development regarding its Inquiry into the better use of public transport and community sector funds for the delivery of bus transport options.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department for a response.

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

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its revised forward work programme.

## **10. Any Other Business**

The Committee noted preliminary information on comparisons between public sector pension contributions and benefits.

## **11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 February 2013 at 9:30am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.18 pm.*

Mervyn Storey  
Chairperson, Committee for Education  
13 February 2013