



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
TUESDAY 12 March 2013 and WEDNESDAY 13 March 2013  
ROOM 30 and 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  
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)  
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)  
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)  
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)  
Eilis Haughey (Bill Clerk) – Item 5 only.

**Apologies:**

None

*The meeting commenced in public session at 9.32 am.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Draft minutes of 5 and 6 March 2013**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meetings held on 5 and 6 March 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

### 3. Matters Arising

The following matters were considered:

**3.1.** The Committee noted correspondence from Phoenix Integrated Primary School and from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education on the Education Bill.

**3.2.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Education and Training Inspectorate offering to brief the Committee on the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would be unable to facilitate any further briefings at this point in its scrutiny of the Bill.

*Michelle McIlveen joined the meeting at 9.34 am.*

**3.3.** The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to its queries on the Shared Education Advisory Group; the legal competence of provisions relating to cross-border consultation; and the impact of the Charities (Amendment) Act 2013 on schools.

**3.4.** The Committee also noted a further response from the Department on the role of the Commissioner for Public Appointments on the appointment of school governors; and on the anticipated relationship between ESA and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

*Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 9.35 am.*

### 4. Education Bill - Informal Clause-by-clause scrutiny

*Departmental Officials joined the meeting at 9:36 am.*

Chris Stewart, Director of the Equality and All-Ireland Directorate, and Peter Burns, Central Support and Co-ordination Branch, were in attendance to provide further information on the Education Bill as required.

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

*Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 9.36 am.*

#### Clause 2: Functions and general duty of ESA

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this clause and all proposed amendments until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 1: The Education and Skills Authority

*Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 9.51 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 2: Provisions required in employment schemes

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 9.56 am.*

*Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 9.59 am.*

The Committee noted that no response had been received from the Minister for Education, or from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, on possible amendments to resolve anomalies in the Bill relating to the Heads of Agreement.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

*The Chairperson suspended at the meeting at 10.00 am to enable Members to take part in Plenary business.*

*The meeting resumed at 11.23 am. The following Members were in attendance: Mervyn Storey, Jonathan Craig, Jo-Anne Dobson, Chris Hazzard and Trevor Lunn.*

#### Schedule 3: Transfer to ESA of staff employed by Boards of Governors

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 4: Transfer of assets, liabilities and staff of dissolved bodies

The Committee noted that the list of assets, liabilities and staff posts to be transferred to ESA was still being prepared by the Department, and would not be available before the end of the Committee Stage of the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 5: Transfer of certain assets and liabilities of CCMS before appointed day

*Michelle McIlveen rejoined the meeting at 11.39 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 6: Transfer of certain staff of the Department

The Committee noted a Ministerial assurance that any transfers of staff from CnaG and NICIE to ESA would be on the same terms and conditions as those transferring from statutory bodies, although it was not yet clear whether any such transfers would be necessary.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was informally content with the schedule as drafted.

#### Schedule 7: Minor and consequential amendments

The Committee noted the Department's intention to bring forward amendments to define 'Catholic school' and 'Irish-speaking school'.

*Brenda Hale rejoined the meeting at 11.48 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would reserve its position on this schedule until the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

#### Schedule 8: Repeals

*Danny Kinahan rejoined the meeting at 11.56 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was informally content with the Schedule as drafted.

#### Miscellaneous issues

The Committee considered a number of amendments suggested by stakeholders who responded to its call for evidence.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to support an amendment to facilitate the nomination of controlled post-primary governors from amongst the transferor nominating authorities, rather than solely from the governors of the particular contributory primary schools.

No other proposed amendments were agreed by the Committee.

*Departmental officials left the meeting at 12.09 pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it did not require any further formal Departmental briefings, but that it was content to consider evidence and responses already received.

*The Chairperson suspended the meeting at 12.10 pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 10.04 am in private session on Wednesday 13 March 2013 in Room 21.*

*The following members were in attendance: Mervyn Storey, Michaela Boyle, Jonathan Craig, Jo-Anne Dobson, Chris Hazzard, Michelle McIlveen, Sean Rogers and Pat Sheehan.*

## **5. Briefing from the Assembly Bill Office**

An official from the Assembly Bill Office briefed the Committee on the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Education Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*The meeting moved into public session at 10.12 am.*

## **6. Chairperson's Business**

**6.1.** The Chairperson welcomed Sean Rogers back to the Committee after a brief period of illness.

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 10.15 am.*

*Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 10.15 am.*

**6.2.** The Chairperson referred Members to the recent stakeholder briefing session on the Review of the Common Funding Scheme. He also advised Members that a record of the proceedings at the event had been produced and would be circulated.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to indicate that it would not be in a position to respond on the Review of the Common Funding Scheme until after Easter.

**6.3.** The Chairperson also referred Members to the stakeholder briefing session from representatives of various sporting organisations on the Curriculum Sports Programme.

*Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 10.17 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for comment on various issues raised by stakeholders at the briefing session, and for information on its plans to review the Curriculum Sports Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Minister for Employment and Learning to suggest that formal coaching qualifications should be incorporated into teacher training courses.

**6.4.** The Chairperson reminded Members of the on-going work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in the drafting of Action Plans for learners with Special Educational Needs; and of correspondence received from CCEA on its review of barriers to learning for SEN learners.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on policy developments in respect of Special Educational Needs.

**6.5.** The Chairperson drew Members' attention to the change of ownership of Northgate Managed Services Ltd.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ascertain if the change of ownership would impact on the delivery and maintenance of services provided by Northgate to schools in respect of ICT.

## **7. Departmental briefing on Education Maintenance Allowance**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.22 am.*

Anne Tohill, Head of Participation and Parenting Team, Department of Education, and John Neill, Head of Student Finance Branch, Department for Employment and Learning, briefed the Committee on the outcome of the recent consultation and the reform of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

*Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting at 10.32 am*

*Pat Sheehan rejoined the meeting at 10.32 am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education for clarification on the budget realignment associated with DE's recurrent support for EMA bonuses.

*Departmental officials left the meeting at 11.04 am.*

## **8. Education Bill**

As previously agreed at agenda item 4, the Committee did not receive a Departmental briefing on the Education Bill.

The Chairperson expressed the Committee's gratitude to Departmental officials who had provided oral evidence to the Committee on a considerable number of occasions.

Members noted that the Department had not responded to a request for information on:

- the dedicated governor support service to be provided to ESA; an updated Business Plan for ESA;
- the completed EQIA, or the original screening document, for the Education Bill;
- the policy position in respect of the provision of training and support to schools;
- and the availability of Irish medium teachers.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted CCEA's response in relation to its work with commerce, industry and the professions, and agreed to pursue this issue further during a planned visit to CCEA after Easter.

## 9. Correspondence

9.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the work of the OECD Review Team and the associated costs.

9.2. The Committee noted the report of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on its Inquiry into Maximising the Potential of the Creative industries.

9.3. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence to the Minister from a concerned parent on admissions procedures for a local primary school.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a copy of the Minister's response to the parent and to seek information on the existing provision within the area.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department for clarification on how Boards of Governors set admissions criteria and what guidance is issued to them by the Department in this regard.

9.4. The Committee considered a response from the Department on the comparative spending on ICT in urban and rural schools, and on the Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for further information on current broadband coverage and speeds for rural schools and on any planned upgrades for schools.

9.5. The Committee considered a response from the Department on funding for Nurture Units.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for information on Nurture Units to be funded under the Delivering Social Change Signature Project.

9.6. The Committee noted an Investing Activity Report for February 2013 for the Department of Education.

9.7. The Committee noted an invitation from the RSPB to an event in the Long Gallery on 10 April 2013.

9.8. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Regional Development on its 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 list of queries to the Department of Education for response, as requested.

- 9.9. The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA on learners with Special Educational Needs.
- 9.10. The Committee noted a briefing paper from VolleyballNI on sport in schools.
- 9.11. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development on the impact of school closures in rural communities.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to determine whether support and guidance in respect of rural-proofing has been sought from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

- 9.12. The Committee noted a letter of thanks from Knockevin Special School in response to its expression of concern on the recent road accident.
- 9.13. The Committee considered a response from the Minister on the potential presence of horse meat in school meals.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note this response pending the outcome of a meeting of the catering and procurement managers from the five Education and Library Boards. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department for an update on its Food in Schools policy.

- 9.14. The Committee noted a report from the National Children's Bureau, *Investigating Young People's Attitudes to Sectarianism*.
- 9.15. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme.

*Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 11.28 am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on this Review. The Committee also agreed to schedule a subsequent Departmental briefing.

- 9.16. The Committee noted an invitation from Sentinus to its 'Smart Gear' event on 21 March 2013.

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

*Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11.31 am.*

## **10. Forward Work Programme**



The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that its formal Clause by Clause scrutiny of the Education Bill would be carried out at its meetings on 19 and 20 March 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would meet during Easter Recess, on 4 April 2013, to review and agree its report on the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content to receive only an electronic copy of the Bill Report on 29 March 2013, and that hard copies of the report would be tabled at its meeting on 4 April 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reschedule a Ministerial briefing on Area Planning to 9 April 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content to consider SR 2013/54, The Teachers' Superannuation (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, at its next meeting without a further Departmental briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to hold a meeting, which would include consideration of matters relevant to the locality, in the City of Culture on 12 June 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to the Forward Work Programme as amended.

## **11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **12. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 19 March 2013 at 9:30am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.41am.*

**Mervyn Storey**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**19 March 2013**