



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 1 May 2013
The SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Trevor Lunn 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)
Caroline Perry – Assembly Research Officer (Items 5 and 6 only)

Apologies:

Brenda Hale MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.09 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1. The Chairperson referred Members to the Committee meeting with school principals which took place on 24 April 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for clarification as to whether NINAs and NILAs were to be withdrawn in September 2013 and replaced with other Computer Based Assessments.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department suggesting simplification of the approval process for statutory Early Years provision so as to bring it into line with the approach used for private provision.

Trevor Lunn joined the meeting at 10.11 am.

2.2. The Chairperson asked Members to note the tabled information relating to the planned visit to CCEA in the afternoon.

Michaela Boyle joined the meeting at 10.14 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to avoid arranging further informal meetings and visits on Wednesday afternoon where possible, to enable more Members to attend.

Agreed: The Committee agreed an amended draft press release for issue.

2.3. The Chairperson noted that papers for the weekly Committee meeting were now being made available electronically via SharePoint.

2.4. The Chairperson referred Members to the Committee's previous discussion on the topic for a possible Inquiry. Members discussed Inquiries into: the School Improvement process and the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate; and into Integrated or Shared education.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.19 am.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 10.23 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare background papers on both of the subjects for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 10.29 am

3. Draft minutes of 24 April 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Prompt Payments - Assembly Research Briefing

Assembly Research joined the meeting at 10.30 am.

A representative of Assembly Research Services briefed the Committee on the progress of the Department and its Arms Length Bodies in improving the prompt payment of invoices.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Danny Kinahan rejoined the meeting at 10.43 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for an update on the resolution of software adoption issues at certain ELBs and for clarification on the invoice payment process and the role of the ELB payment centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward relevant papers to a prompt payment correspondent.

6. Early Years Framework - Assembly Research Briefing

A representative of Assembly Research Services briefed the Committee on the Early Years provision in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions and on other related issues including educare and the school starting age.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Jo-Anne Dobson rejoined the meeting at 10.58 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification as to whether nurture groups are to be included within the provisions of the Early Years Framework.

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 10.59 am.

Assembly Research left the meeting at 11.01 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft a response to the Early Years – Learning to Learn consultation for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request Assembly Research to provide further information on the later school starting age in the Republic of Ireland and how this effectively managed by schools.

7. Departmental Briefing on the A-Level Consultation

Officials joined the meeting at 11.10 am.

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards, DE; Dale Heaney, Head of Qualifications and Assessments Team, DE; and Roger McCune, Qualifications and Skills Accreditation and Policy Manager, CCEA, briefed the Committee on responses to its consultation on potential short-term changes to GCE A-Level examinations.

Sean Rogers rejoined the meeting at 11.24 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Michelle McIlveen rejoined the meeting at 11.27 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA for further information on the number of pupils who will be affected by the proposed limit on resits and the removal of the January re-sit option.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 11.56 am.

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 12.06 pm.

Michaela Boyle rejoined the meeting at 12.13 pm.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 12.25 pm.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 12.27 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft a response to the consultation on potential short-term changes to A-Levels, for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

8. Correspondence

- 8.1.** The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA on its survey on GCSEs.
- 8.2.** The Committee noted a newsletter update from the Controlled Schools Sectoral Support Body Working Group.
- 8.3.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Fortnight Educational Trust including an article entitled: The Right to Integrated Education.

Jo-Anne Dobson rejoined the meeting at 12.31 pm.

- 8.4.** The Committee noted an invitation from the Minister to a reception to celebrate outstanding and very good schools and pre-school providers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to suggest that consideration be given to an appropriate celebration for those schools which have been assessed as improved or much improved.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to congratulate Omagh High School on achieving an 'Outstanding' rating from the Education and Training Inspectorate.

- 8.5.** The Committee considered a response from the Department on the provision of rural-proofing training for its staff involved in Area Planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing its disappointment that rural-proofing training had not been provided for staff involved in Area Planning.

- 8.6. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on Special Education Needs (SEN) issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on the SEN pilot schemes.

- 8.7. The Committee noted an invitation from the Early Years organisation to its Annual Conference and AGM.

- 8.8. Members noted the April 2013 E-Zine from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

- 8.9. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the Legionella bacteria outbreak at Hillcroft school.

- 8.10. The Committee considered correspondence from Donacloney Primary School on the rejection by the Department of a recent Development Proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on the Development Proposal process including the additional information and deciding factors that were used in this case.

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12.37 pm.

- 8.11. The Committee noted an invitation from the Minister to a BIC-sponsored briefing on Early Years issues on 8 May 2013.

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

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

10. Any Other Business

The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to a written question from Trevor Lunn regarding the Heads of Agreement and the Education Bill.

Michaela Boyle rejoined the meeting at 12.44 pm.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 May 2013 at 10:00 am in the Northern Ireland Science Park.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.47 pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
8 May 2013