



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 8 MAY 2013  
NORTHERN IRELAND SCIENCE PARK

**Present:**

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA  
Chris Hazzard MLA  
Michelle McIlveen MLA  
Sean Rogers MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)  
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

Michaela Boyle MLA  
Trevor Lunn MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02 am.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

**2.1** The Chairperson thanked the Northern Ireland Science Park for facilitating the Committee meeting.

**2.2** Members noted the new format of meeting packs.

**3. Draft minutes of 1 May 2013**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

The following matters were considered:

**4.1** The Committee considered its draft response to the Early Years: Learning to Learn consultation

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward its response to the Learning to Learn consultation to the Department.

**4.2** The Committee considered its draft response to the Departmental consultation on proposed potential short-term changes to A-levels.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that, subject to confirmation by Members by correspondence, it would submit a revised response to the Departmental consultation.

#### **5. STEM Background**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Clerk regarding the Success through STEM Strategy and related papers.

The Committee noted a letter from the Department setting out how it promotes STEM through staff development.

#### **6. Briefing from the Northern Ireland Science Park**

*Witnesses joined the meeting at 10.12 am.*

Dr Norman Apsley, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Science Park; Steve Orr, Director of NISP Connect; and Dr Joanne Stuart, STEM Ambassador briefed the Committee on the work of the Northern Ireland Science Park and STEM in schools issues.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 11.10 am.*

*Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 11.29am*

*Jo-Anne Dobson declared an interest relating to a family member who had benefited from a STEM-related internship.*

*Witnesses left the meeting at 12.02 pm.*

## **7. STEM in Schools**

*Witnesses joined the meeting at 12.03 pm.*

Dr Angela McKeown, Royal Society of Chemistry; Lesley Hunter, AstraZeneca Science Teaching award winner (2012); and Michelle Ryan, Association of Science Education briefed the Committee on STEM in schools.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 12.12 pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee noted significant concerns in respect of the limited science content of the World Around Us module in the primary school curriculum and the level of difficulty associated with CCEA's science thematic unit at Key Stage 2. The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking its views on the following proposals:

- that CCEA set out a science baseline with which schools would be obliged to comply by the end of Key Stage 2;
- that science be a core compulsory subject at primary schools;
- that CCEA develop resources for primary schools which enhance enquiry-based scientific learning;
- that CCEA improve its Continuing Professional Development support for teachers in respect of science particularly at primary schools; and
- that GCSE science be a compulsory subject for all pupils.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking information on STEM choices by pupils at pre-GCSE and suggesting that guidance in respect of work placements for post-primary students be amended to encourage placements in STEM-related businesses and organisations.

*Witnesses left the meeting at 12.41 pm.*

## **8. Correspondence**

- 8.1.** The Committee noted a memo from the Committee for Enterprise Trade and Investment and an attached Assembly Research Paper regarding Public Sector Renewable Generation Uptake.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Assembly Research paper to the Department for information.

8.2. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the appointment of political representatives for membership of the ESA Board.

8.3. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Efficient Discharge Scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking to be kept updated in respect of developments linked to a revised Efficient Discharge Scheme.

8.4. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding new build capital projects and the Investing Activity Report 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to indicate that the Investing Activity Report appears to include only two active projects and reiterating its request that progress on current and pending projects should be published.

8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the College of Occupational Therapists.

8.6. The Committee considered correspondence from Friends of Clontifleece Primary School and Orangefield High School.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to BELB to seek clarification on the relocation of pupils from Orangefield High School.

**Agreed:** As there were relevant policy issues, the Committee also agreed to facilitate informal meetings with Friends of Clontifleece Primary School and with Orangefield High School.

8.7. The Committee noted correspondence from Colin Early Intervention Community regarding a request to brief the Committee.

8.8. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding plans to fund additional Nurture Units.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the funding of existing and additional Nurture units and the terms of reference of the planned evaluation of Nurture provision.

8.9. The Committee noted correspondence from Dunclug College regarding controlled post-primary provision in Ballymena.

8.10. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding action to ensure recognition of Northern Ireland qualifications in the Republic of Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to determine the impact of the recently proposed changes to A-levels on the recognition of these qualifications by universities in the Republic of Ireland.

- 8.11. The Committee noted correspondence from Parents Outloud commenting on the absence of an appeals process for parents who wish to defer the beginning of compulsory education.
- 8.12. The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development regarding Area Planning issues in rural areas.
- 8.13. The Committee noted a memo from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the Public Service Pensions Bill 2013.
- 8.14. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the number of pupils in reception and composite classes in primary schools in 2012/13.
- 8.15. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding amendments to the Education Bill.
- 8.16. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the visit by the UK Minister of State for Europe.
- 8.17. The Committee noted correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding research seminars.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

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

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 May 2013 at 10:00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.47 pm.*

**Mervyn Storey**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**15 May 2013**