



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 29 MAY 2013
SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Sean Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

Apologies:

Jonathan Craig MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Committee considered the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister's strategy document entitled "*Together: Building a United Community*". The Committee noted that the document refers to a buddy scheme for nursery and primary schools as well as the development of age appropriate anti-sectarianism resources for teachers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek: its view on the overall impact of the strategy document on education and information on how

the buddy scheme is to be developed and the anti-sectarianism resources are to be produced.

2.2 The Committee noted that Trevor Lunn MLA had met informally with the Department to discuss the insurance arrangements for schools contracting transport privately. The Committee noted that Mr Lunn would correspond with the Department with a view to a change to Departmental guidance to schools and the provision of standardised specimen contracts for schools.

2.3 The Committee considered concerns from some Members regarding the teaching notes on the Key Stage 3 English with Media Education module associated with the book "*Bog Child*".

Agreed: The Committee agreed, subject to unanimous agreement by correspondence, to write to CCEA to seek further information on: its policy in respect of the inclusion of sensitive material in the curriculum; the development of teaching notes and supporting information; and how it ensures balance and appropriate context is provided. The Committee also agreed to seek information on the relevant full list of reading materials for schools.

3. Draft minutes of 22 May 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

The following matters were considered:

4.1 The Committee considered a paper from the Department setting out feedback from schools on the roll-out of the Levels of Progression.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to primary and post-primary schools to seek their views on the outworking and usefulness of the Levels of Progression.

5. Briefing from the Department on the draft Food in Schools Policy

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.31 am.

Anne Tohill, Head of Participation and Parenting Team; Jill Fitzgerald, Deputy Head of Participation and Parenting Team; and Jennifer McBratney, Food In Schools Co-ordinator, Southern Education and Library Board briefed the Committee on the draft Food in Schools Policy.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 11.40am.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11.55am.

Chris Hazzard left the meeting at 11.55am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content in respect of the policy intent of the draft Food in Schools policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on the guidance it provides to schools in respect of pupils with eating disorders. The Committee also agreed to seek clarification as to elements of the general Initial Teacher Education curriculum which cover whole school healthy eating policies and nutritional standards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Environment to seek an update on the development of “buffer zones” around schools wherein the operation of fast food outlets is limited or prevented.

Officials left the meeting at 11.56 am.

6. Briefing from Northern Ireland Bursary Student

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer this briefing to a later date.

7. Briefing from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools on the Teachers' Certificate in Religious Education

Witnesses joined the meeting at 11.57am.

Jim Clarke, Chief Executive, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Eugene O'Neill, Head of HR, Finance and Corporate Governance, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools briefed the Committee on the Teachers' Certificate in Religious Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting at 12.24pm.

Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting at 12.32pm.

Sean Rogers declared an interest as a member of a Board of Governors of a Catholic Maintained School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to seek details of the mitigating measures in respect of which it was to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment and to also seek feedback on the outcome of the EQIA.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 12.56pm.

Witnesses left the meeting at 1.00pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister querying as to whether OFMDFM was to bring forward

legislation to remove of the exception for teachers in the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

8. Correspondence

- 8.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Prompt Payments.
- 8.2. The Committee noted correspondence from a member of the public regarding an Assembly Research Paper on Prompt Payments.
- 8.3. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding EU funding for Education Programmes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek additional information on the Peace IV framework and the opportunities for funding of education-related projects.

- 8.4. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the equality implications of the Education Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and seek an explanation as to why the initial Trustee/Transferor appointments to the ESA Board will not comply with the code of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

- 8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the University of the First Age regarding the Young People's Leadership Awards.
- 8.6. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding Nurture Units and Early Years provision.

Agreed: As the Department had not clarified as to whether Nurture Units form part of Early Years provision, the Committee agreed to write again to the Department seeking clarity on this matter.

- 8.7. The Committee noted correspondence from the Rural Community Network regarding its publication on the Future of Education in Rural Communities.
- 8.8. The Committee considered correspondence from an unemployed teacher regarding the Delivering Social Change Signature Project and additional temporary teaching posts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and seek information on the appointment of Signature Project teachers and clarification in respect of the 2010 cut-off for newly qualified teachers.

- 8.9. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding Post Project Evaluations.
- 8.10. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister regarding Computer Based Assessments.

- 8.11. The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding the Ministerial decision to decline a Development Proposal from Christ the Redeemer Primary School.
- 8.12. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding suicide prevention strategies.
- 8.13. The Committee noted correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding the third annual conference of the Queen's University Autism Research and Treatment Forum.
- 8.14. The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education regarding the Committee's invitation to brief the Committee on integrated pre-school provision and new transformation options.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and seek more information regarding the lack of integrated pre-school provision.

- 8.15. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding childcare provision at the University of Ulster.
- 8.16. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding an update on the Department's Review of Teacher Training.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and seek an update on its work on enhancing the professional development of teachers and the timeline for the consultation on the new Teacher Education Strategy.

- 8.17. The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding Area Planning in Craigavon.
- 8.18. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the revision of retention times for child protection information by schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to suggest that it should give urgent consideration to increasing retention times for child protection records held by schools in-line with best practice in other jurisdictions.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a guidance note from its Special Adviser regarding its Area Planning event on 19 June 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the guidance note to relevant stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Fermanagh Trust to attend the Area Planning Event.

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for a Committee Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following Terms of Reference:

The Committee will:

- Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;
- Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs;
- Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;
- Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency; and
- Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendations by January 2013.

The Committee noted background information relating to a Replay Theatre event organised by the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on Tuesday 4th June 2013.

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

10. Any Other Business

The Committee considered concerns raised by the parents of students with dyslexia regarding the new marking criteria at GCSE relating to spelling and punctuation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA seeking clarity on the new marking criteria and mitigating arrangements for students with dyslexia.

The Committee noted that Sean Rogers MLA was to host an informal event involving representatives of Burrenreagh Primary School.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 June 2013 at 10:00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.14 pm.

**Danny Kinahan
Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Education
5 June 2013**