



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2013
The BALL ROOM, EBRINGTON

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Jonathan Craig MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.35 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Chairperson noted with pleasure that this week's Education Committee meeting was held in the 2013 UK City of Culture.

2.2 The Committee considered the House of Commons Education Committee's Report on 2012 GCSE English Grading Problems.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the House of Commons Education Committee to express the Committee's concerns regarding the proposed ending of the 3 country examination regulatory arrangements and the potential impact on the transportability of GCSE / A-Level qualifications.

2.3 The Committee considered the Minister's statement to the Assembly on the revised Common Funding Scheme dated 11 June 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking that the consultation period be extended and seeking a briefing on the revised Common Funding Scheme including details of Departmental modelling of school finances and the source of the additional £30m funding to be targeted at socially deprived pupils.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to arrange an informal stakeholder briefing event relating to the revised Common Funding Scheme.

Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 10.55am

2.4 The Committee considered a recent informal briefing event organised by the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on the work of the Replay Theatre Company.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and to the Belfast Education and Library Board to seek information on their policy on Arts projects in schools and in particular Special schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding the actions it would take following the informal briefing event.

2.5 The Committee considered the recent refusal of a Development Proposal to increase the capacity at Christ the Redeemer Primary School, Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information in respect of the particular Development Proposal and clarification regarding flexibility in respect of enrolment levels at popular schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to seek its understanding and views on the levels of oversubscription in the Catholic Maintained sector.

3. Draft Minutes of 5 June 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Briefing from Foyle College

Witnesses joined the meeting at 11.05 am.

Patrick Allen, Principal of Foyle College; and Robin Young, Chairperson, Foyle College Board of Governors briefed the Committee..

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Western Education and Library Board to seek an update on Foyle College's new build project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Foyle College to seek information on the concerns it has regarding the Department's Building Handbook and to seek clarification regarding VAT on new build projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the review of the Building Handbook.

Brenda Hale joined the meeting at 11.47am

Officials left the meeting at 11.56am

6. Briefing from the Foyle Learning Community

Officials joined the meeting at 11.57am

David Funston, Principal, Lisneal College; Jack McCauley, Principal, St Patrick's and St Brigid's College Claudy; Fionnbar Madden, Principal, St Columb's College; and Jill Markham, Principal, Oakgrove Integrated College briefed the Committee on the Foyle Learning Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Foyle Learning Community to seek information on transport issues within the Area Learning Community.

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 12.26pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on how it facilitates the sharing of best practice across different Area Learning Communities.

Officials left the meeting at 12.35pm.

7. Written briefing – Computer Based Assessments (CBA)

The Committee noted the following:

- the Gateway Healthcheck report (April 2013) on CBA;
- the Education and Training Inspectorate report on the value and usefulness of CBA; and
- the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's report on the technical problems associated with CBA.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted a copy of a letter from the Committee for Enterprise Trade and Investment to the Minister regarding the Knowledge Economy Index Report.

8.2 The Committee considered correspondence from Jim Wells MLA, Chairperson of the All-Party Group on Visual Impairment, regarding a request for stakeholders to brief the Committee on educational services for the visually impaired.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the relevant stakeholders to arrange a briefing for 3 July 2013.

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister regarding the independent review of the Common Funding Scheme.

8.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Ulster Teachers' Union.

8.5 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding the proposed amalgamation of Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal Grammar School, Enniskillen.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister regarding his response to a Committee query on *Together, Building a United Community*.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its response to a Committee query on the status of the Controlled Schools Sectoral Support Council and other sectoral bodies following the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from concerned parents regarding proposals for post-primary education in Craigavon.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its response to a Committee query relating to PEDU Action Plans.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister including Secretary of State Gove's letter on the future of the three country examination regulation arrangements.

9. Forward Work Plan

The Committee considered the arrangements for an informal Committee briefing event to be held on Wednesday 19 June 2013 at 6pm to discuss Area Planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members could nominate further primary schools to take part in the event.

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 19 June 2013 at 10:00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.37pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
19 June 2013