



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2013
SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mervyn Storey MLA, Robin Newton MLA and Jo-Anne Dobson MLA

The meeting commenced in private session at 10.01am.

1. Procedural Advice

Members considered a request in respect of a proposed confidential submission to the Committee's Inquiry on the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process.

Stephen Moutray joined the meeting at 10.04am.

Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 10.04am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content in this instance to accept a confidential submission to its Inquiry. The Committee agreed that it would keep confidential any details of the submission which might identify the relevant witnesses.

The meeting moved to public session at 10.05am.

Sean Rogers joined the meeting at 10.05am.

2. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 The Deputy Chairperson noted and welcomed new Members of the Committee: Stephen Moutray MLA and Robin Newton MLA.

3.2 The Deputy Chairperson referred Members to press reports regarding the extension of Free School Meals to all children in England in their first 3 years of education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and seek clarity as to whether:

- the announcement in England will lead to extra money for education in Northern Ireland;
- the extension of Free School Meals to all children in their first 3 years of education will be adopted in Northern Ireland;
- any extension of Free School Meal entitlement in Northern Ireland will have implications for the Common Funding Scheme; and
- the PEDU action plan for school catering will be published and implemented prior to any changes in Free School Meal entitlement.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek the views of Professor Tony Gallagher on the benefits or otherwise of the extension of Free School Meal entitlement to all pupils in their first 3 years of education and on possible alternative uses for additional education funding.

3.3 The Deputy Chairperson referred Members to the recent General Teaching Council report on Levels of Progression, and the press statement from the Minister of Education released on Monday 16 September 2013.

Members noted that the Committee had previously agreed to support the implementation of Levels of Progression on the understanding that:

- the portfolio sample size for smaller schools / smaller class sizes would be reduced;
- primary schools would be exempt from formal moderation in 2012-13.
- CCEA would engage with schools with a view to addressing the concerns set out in the Shadow Year Evaluation Report;
- CCEA would enhance its support for schools in the development of tasks and to improve the task approval process;
- CCEA would issue specific and detailed guidance as to how tasks are to be delivered so as to ensure consistency of approach among schools; and
- CCEA would work towards reducing moderation timescales so that in future the timetable would allow for assessments to be carried out in the summer term.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and seek clarification on the way forward for Levels of Progression and to ask if the Committee's previous requirements in respect of Levels of Progression will be met.

4. Draft Minutes of 11 September 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Briefing from Assembly Research on GCEs/GCSEs in other jurisdictions

A representative of Assembly Research joined the meeting at 10.12am.

Caroline Perry, Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee on her paper regarding the shared qualification arrangements across England, Wales and Northern Ireland; current practice and plans for the reform of qualifications in these jurisdictions, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland; and the maintenance of standards at Key Stage 4.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the following further information from Assembly Research:

- details of the use of linear examinations in other European countries;
- the portability of qualifications obtained during secondary education in countries other than the UK and then used to secure tertiary education places within the UK;
- a summary of the House of Commons' Committee for Education recent consideration of qualifications, including input received from employers' organisations like the CBI; and
- an update on the Secretary of State for Education's plans for qualification reform.

Ms Perry left the meeting at 10.30am.

7. Briefing from the Association of Science Education on issues relating to STEM in Schools.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.31am:

Ms Michelle Ryan, Field Officer, Association of Science Education; Ms Lesley Hunter, Teacher, Creavery Primary School, Antrim; and Mr Ciaran Kinney, St John's Primary School, Carnlough.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Witnesses left the meeting at 11.22am.

Chris Hazzard left the meeting at 11.22am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express its support for:

- the introduction of a statutory baseline for the teaching of STEM subjects in primary schools;
- enhanced Continuous Professional Development for teachers in respect of science teaching leading to the development of subject leaders and science cluster groups; and
- the re-instatement of science as a core curriculum subject within the Revised Curriculum.

Seán Rogers left the meeting at 11.23am.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11.23am.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to determine whether the number of students choosing multiple science subjects at A-Level has declined and seeking information as to how the Education and Training Inspectorate inspects science in primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the National Science Learning Centre to determine the uptake of its courses and resources by teachers in Northern Ireland.

8. Briefing from the Department on the Public Service Pensions Bill

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.25am:

Mrs La'verne Montgomery, Director of Education Workforce Development, Department of Education; Mr Ian Gallagher, Head of Pay Remit and Pensions Policy Team, Department of Education; and Mr Seamus Gallagher, Teachers' Negotiating and Pensions Policy Team, Department of Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 11.34am.

Seán Rogers returned to the meeting at 11.34am.

Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting at 11.35am.

Witnesses left the meeting at 12.12pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and ask for information on the impact that the proposed introduction of Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) arrangements may have on different categories of teaching staff; and for further information on the re-valuation of accrued pension contributions.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the Primary Integrating Enriching Education (PIEE) Project.

9.2 The Committee noted an invitation from the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland to the Celebration of European Day of Languages on 26 September 2013 and launch of Opportunity Europe and Beyond 2013 on 22 and 23 October 2013.

9.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance and Personnel setting out the impact of the Department of Education's non-compliance with the central monitoring of Savings Delivery Plans

9.4 The Committee noted an invitation to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Chairperson's Reception and Awards Launch on 26 September 2013.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Belfast Education and Library Board regarding the funding of Minor Works through the June Monitoring Round.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board regarding the closure Orangefield High School.

9.7 The Committee noted an invitation from Playboard to its 2013 Conference on 8 and 9 October 2013.

9.8 The Committee noted a response from the Western Education and Library Board providing information on the impact which the revised cabotage guidelines will have on existing transport services provided to schools in the WELB area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to WELB to seek clarification as to whether the vehicles used by sub-contractors providing services in Northern Ireland but based in another jurisdiction will be required to be compliant with the vehicle testing regime applied to sub-contractors based in Northern Ireland.

9.9 The Committee noted a report from the Advisory Group on Alleviating Hardship, published by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and seek feedback on the relevant recommendations, specifically the measures to improve numeracy and literacy.

9.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel referring to completion rates for Post Project Evaluations.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Yumpod Group regarding an educational online gaming platform.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding the finalisation of its recommendations relating to its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Northern Ireland.

9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning indicating that it would support the Education Committee's event scheduled for 29 January 2014 on STEM in schools.

9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Western Education and Library Board relating to the provision of the school uniform grant to former students of Lisnaskea High School.

9.15 The Committee noted tabled correspondence from NI4Kids regarding Integrated Education.

The Deputy Chairperson reminded Members that, before the summer, the Committee had considered new proposals from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education entitled "A Positive Pathway to Integration" and had pressed the Department for a response; and that the Committee has also agreed to undertake an Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education later in this session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the query from NI4Kids, highlighting the above, indicating that the Committee certainly supports more sharing in education and that its record is one of encouraging reform in a changing educational landscape.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

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

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 September 2013 at 10:30 am in Room B305, South Building, University of Ulster, Cromore Road, Coleraine.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.19pm.

**Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
25 September 2013**