



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 8 JANUARY 2014
SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton 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)
Jacqueline Holt (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.01am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Chairperson wished Members and staff a Happy New Year.

2.2 The Chairperson advised Members that he, along with Seán Rogers and Chris Hazzard, will be attending the 50th BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition on Thursday 9 January 2014 in Dublin.

The Chairperson also advised Members that in his capacity as Chairperson, he had been invited by a TD to visit a school in Tallaght, Dublin.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to accept the invitation and visit the school in his capacity as Chairperson of the Committee.

3. Draft Minutes of 11 December 2013

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

4. Matters Arising

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.03am.

Robin Newton joined the meeting at 10.04am.

The Committee noted the following submissions relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process:

- a response from the Department to Committee queries relating to the inspection of Irish Medium Education schools and a copy of the Management and Reporting System (MARS) template;
- an Assembly Research paper on immersion education; and
- a submission to the Inquiry from a retired teacher.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on the Irish language fluency of its Irish Medium Education inspectors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the submissions should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

5. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from Parents Outloud and Sir Robert Salisbury

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.05am:

Dr Liz Fawcett, Northern Ireland Representative, Parents Outloud; Roisin Gilheany, Parents Outloud; and Sir Robert Salisbury, educational consultant.

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

Stephen Moutray joined the meeting at 10.08am.

Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 10.11am.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.40am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

- an update on a reported new parental questionnaire process which is said to be under trial by ETI;
- a breakdown of ETI's financial and personnel resources in respect of the sectors which it inspects;
- the number and nature of specialist inspectors in ETI;
- clarity on the information and paperwork requirements that ETI requests from schools prior to an inspection; and
- an estimate of the uptake of self-evaluation among schools.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek its views on the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for ETI from the Department in-line with other jurisdictions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to produce a paper setting out governance arrangements for OFSTED and Education Scotland and also describing the governance of inspection arrangements in Finland.

6. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Oral Evidence from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11.47am:

Terry Murphy, Head of Education Standards, CCMS; and Malachy Crudden, Senior Education Advisor, CCMS.

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

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.34pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCMS to seek a copy of the guidance it provided to Catholic Maintained schools on the self-evaluation process.

The Committee noted that at its next meeting it was to consider, in private session, an issues paper on the Inquiry. It was further noted that the requirement for further evidence sessions or possible Committee visits would be considered at that time.

7. Rescinding a Committee decision - Amended Terms of Reference for Special Adviser to undertake research on a measure of educational underachievement

The Committee noted that at the meeting of 11 December 2013, it had agreed to give consideration to rescinding its earlier decisions in respect of the Terms of Reference for a Special Adviser to undertake research linked to educational underachievement and Free School Meals Entitlement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to rescind its decision of 16 October 2013 in respect of the Terms of Reference for the Special Adviser.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following revised Terms of Reference for the Special Adviser:

- To review the feasibility of the development of a measure of educational underachievement in schools based on a combination of:
 - Measures of prior educational attainment undertaken by schools; and
 - Free School Meal Entitlement;

Also making use of as appropriate:

- the Special Education Needs Register;
 - Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures;
 - Other area-based census information including e.g. rurality, unemployment, local authority housing, level of lone parenthood, numbers of Travellers and number of large families etc.; and
 - PISA / TIMSS & PIRLS information including e.g. maternal education.
- To advise on the benefits / shortcomings / sensitivities of such a combined measure as a basis for funding educational interventions as compared with other approaches based solely on FSME or e.g. the New Zealand decile measure etc.
 - To comment on how a measure of educational underachievement compares with FSME as a means of directing funding to schools.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of the Environment regarding community planning pilots and DE guidance on enhancing the Community Use of Schools.

8.2 The Committee noted an invitation to a 3 day practitioner workshop at QUB on 25-27 February 2014 on Aggression Replacement Training in Schools.

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from Save the Children entitled "Too Young to Fail".

8.4 The Committee noted an invitation from National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) to the Chairperson to attend its conference in Brighton on 18-21 April 2014.

8.5 The Committee noted correspondence regarding School Vision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Michael Gilson to seek further details of the School Vision programme.

8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of the Green Investment Bank and energy efficiency projects in schools.

8.7 The Committee noted an invitation from Derry City Council to the launch of the Legacy Commitments event on 19 December 2013.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding Post Project Evaluations.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Committee queries in respect of the North Eastern Education and Library Board's Annual Accounts 2012-13.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek sight of: the Savings Delivery Plan verification report; the report of the Education and Library Board Regional STEM group; and the Extended Schools Annual Report 2012-13.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting a summary of the Education Committee's scrutiny of the European Commission Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond, indicating a nil return but highlighting the Committee's scrutiny of relevant EU funding programmes.

8.11 The Committee noted a response from the Special EU Programmes Body in respect of EU Funding.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the British Council regarding a proposed event showcasing EU educational opportunities for schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare a paper on the proposed event.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting feedback on its report on the Signature Projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on reported delays relating to equality issues in respect of the literacy and numeracy project

8.14 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding a note reportedly sent home with pupils from the Board of Governors of a school regarding a sensitive issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek clarity on the Department's guidance to schools on the communication of sensitive issues to parents.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Educational and Community Village Consensus Armagh (ECVCA) regarding responses from parents and the Board of Governors of Markethill High School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with ECVCA.

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland regarding the December 2013 update on the Department of Education's capital programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ascertain why much of the information in the update relating to on-going capital works is over 45 days old.

8.17 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education in respect of Development Proposals.

8.18 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education to the Committee's queries regarding the discontinuation of funding for the establishment of new sectoral bodies.

8.19 The Committee noted a response from the Western Education and Library Board indicating that 3 Republic of Ireland contractors are carrying out WELB transport contracts for a period of 1 school year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DVA and seek clarity as to whether these Republic of Ireland operators are being made subject to the NI vehicle licensing regime.

8.20 The Committee noted correspondence from GL Assessment requesting an informal meeting with the Chairperson.

8.21 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to a Committee query regarding the funding of additional STEM buses/trucks.

8.22 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Education for Members to attend the OECD briefing event on 17 January 2014 in Stranmillis College.

8.23 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee of Finance and Personnel regarding the 2015-16 budget process.

8.24 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding her son's International GCSE in Spanish.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA to ask for comment on related policy issues.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that an informal evening event with ETI Associate Assessors has been scheduled for 19 February 2014 and considered a draft invitation letter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to issue the invitation letter to the ETI Associate Assessors.

The Committee noted that it is to receive evidence from Professor Gardner at its meeting on 5 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to meet the relevant travel and accommodation expenses for Professor Gardner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet at the earlier time of 9.30am on 15 January 2014 so as to consider the Inquiry issues paper.

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

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 January 2014 at 9.30am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.44pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
15 January 2014