



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2014
SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin 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)

Apologies:

Jonathan Craig MLA

The meeting commenced in closed session at 9.35am.

1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School improvement Process – Written briefing – Inquiry Issues Paper

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education in response to its queries relating to scoring / weighting in respect of ETI assessments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence and for it to be published on the Committee's webpage.

Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 9.37am.

The Committee considered a paper summarising issues relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 9.55am.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 10.02am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that in order to inform its understanding of the school self-evaluation process it would undertake an appropriate school visit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to request:

- further information on schools which undertake assessment by other 3rd party organisations e.g. Investors in People etc.; and
- further information on the procurement, independence and suitability of EMQC Ltd which undertakes the customer service review of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft interim recommendations, based on the issues discussed, for the Committee's further consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revise the end date for its Inquiry to Spring 2014.

The meeting moved to open session at 10.22am.

2. Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

3. Chairperson's Business

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

Members noted with pleasure that a number of the entrants from post-primary schools in Northern Ireland received Special Awards or Category Awards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to those schools to commend them on the enthusiasm of their pupils and to congratulate them on their awards.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to give further consideration, following the "STEM is Cool" event on 29 January 2014, to STEM-related issues - including how it might help to promote the competition, particularly amongst primary schools.

3.2 The Committee noted recent media reports regarding Bloomfield Collegiate's request to change its designation from a Voluntary Grammar school to a Controlled Grammar school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on this matter including the status of the debt accrued by Bloomfield Collegiate; the ownership of school property; and revised school governance arrangements post re-designation.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification as to whether the Viability Audits (published in February 2012) are to be updated and if information relating to Voluntary Grammar Schools' financial stress is to be reported in more detail and with greater consistency in future.

3.3 The Committee noted that the Deputy Chairperson (and the Clerk) will attend the briefing on Friday 17 January 2014 on the recent OECD report on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes.

4. Draft Minutes of 8 January 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Area Based Planning - Non-Departmental Briefing

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.31am:

Professor Colin Knox, University of Ulster; Mark Baker, Sharing Education Programme, Queen's University, Belfast; and Alistair Stewart, Sharing Education Programme, Queen's University, Belfast.

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

Stephen Moutray left the meeting at 10.44am.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 10.55am.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 11.28am

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.36am.

Members noted that the Committee is due to receive a briefing from its Special Adviser on Area Planning at its meeting on 22 January 2014 along with a briefing on the PIEE shared education project.

The Committee noted that the Department had requested that the briefing on the feedback from the primary school Area Planning consultation – the consultation concluded in June 2013 - be delayed until April 2014.

Chris Hazzard left the meeting at 11.37am.

Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 11.37am.

Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11.37am.

The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

7. Departmental briefing - 2012-13: Year 12 GCSE and Year 14 A-level results

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.38am:

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards; Dale Heaney, Head of Assessment and Qualifications Team; and Gayle Kennedy, Head of Statistics and Research Team

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

Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting at 11.39am, and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

Trevor Lunn returned to the meeting at 11.43am.

Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting at 11.46am.

Maeve McLaughlin returned to the meeting at 11.53am.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.19pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further clarification on:

- the pattern of variation in GCSE and A-level performance in respect of non-grammars in different Education and Library Board areas;
- qualifications deemed to be equivalent to GCSEs and A-Levels that are included in the Year 12 GCSE and Year 14 A-Level results; and
- the number of students in the Year 12 cohort excluded by schools from the annual examination results returns for 2012-13, in particular the categories of ineligibility, why numbers have increased and the impact on the reporting of school outcomes.

8. Departmental briefing – Feedback from the Consultation on the CCEA report on the Reform of GCSEs and A-levels

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the Departmental briefing due to the late receipt of the relevant briefing paper.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Environment advising of its “Inquiry into Wind Energy – planning guidance for onshore wind turbines”.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Catholic Education in response to queries relating to the design requirements for shared education buildings.

9.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which indicated that schools from all sectors were represented in the sample.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from Newtownbreda High School, indicating its opposition to the proposed amalgamation with Knockbreda High School.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Committee queries relating to Child Protection and Safeguarding in the Curriculum.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of the Sexual Exploitation – Preventative Education Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite representatives from the NSPCC to provide a briefing on relevant safeguarding and child protection initiatives.

9.7 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Employment and Learning to stakeholder events in January 2014 regarding the review of youth training.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education in respect of a draft circular on pupil participation in schools, which included guidance on the establishment and role of School Councils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that insofar as the guidance was in line with its recommendations from its Inquiry into School Councils, it was content with the draft circular.

9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education responding to Committee queries relating to the Development Proposal procedure as applied to Ballee Community High School.

9.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers regarding its legal advice on School Starting Age flexibility.

9.11 The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of training for school pupils in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a Committee query relating to Enhanced Disclosure Certificates for music tutors; and correspondence in tabled items from AccessNI detailing the cost of disclosure, timescales for delivery, rationale for requirement, and the level of information provided by Standard and Enhanced Disclosure certificates.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask how relevant convictions, barring orders and police intelligence etc. are monitored and notified to schools or Education and Library Boards in respect of existing employees.

9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education responding to Committee queries relating to the recent OECD Report on evaluation and assessment frameworks.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that an informal working lunch with senior Departmental officials in Rathgael House is to be scheduled.

The Committee also noted that the Department of Education has asked to defer the briefing on proposed revisions to Development Proposal guidance.

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 22 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.29pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
22 January 2014