



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2014  
SENATE CHAMBER

**Present:**

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
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:** None

*The meeting commenced in public session at 10.04am*

**1. Common Funding Scheme – Committee’s Response to Consultation**

The Committee considered a draft response to the consultation on proposed revisions to the Common Funding Scheme (CFS).

*10.14am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a number of minor amendments to the draft.

Some Members set out their views in respect of the importance of Targeting Social Need considerations in the proposed revised CFS.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the draft should be further revised in this regard and that acceptance of the final draft would be sought from Members by email.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the final response should be forwarded to the Minister along with the summary of the Committee's stakeholder event held in November 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the final response on its webpage, and to forward it to those who attended the stakeholder event in November 2013 for information.

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

- clarity on future arrangements for consulting on proposals to revise the Common Funding Scheme;
- details on its obligations in respect of consulting on the Common Funding Scheme; and
- information on the role of, and most recent response from the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Steering Group.

## **2. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

### **3.1 Report on Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes**

The Committee noted a debate held in plenary on Monday 17 February 2014 regarding the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister's report on "Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes", which made reference to the literacy and numeracy programme and nurture programme both of which are administered by the Department of Education.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek commentary on the relevant report and the eligibility criteria for participating schools in the Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes including levels of Free School Meal Entitlement.

### **3.2 Shared Education**

The Committee noted that, when responding to a Private Members' Motion in plenary on Monday 17 February 2014, the Minister of Education made reference to a new shared education programme to be announced in Spring 2014.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the new shared education programme.

### **3.3 Nourishment in Schools**

The Committee noted that, when responding to a Private Members' motion in plenary on Tuesday 18 February 2014, the Minister of Education appeared to

indicate that the Department would undertake research into the effectiveness of Breakfast Clubs.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on its research into Breakfast Clubs.

### **3.4 Associate Assessors**

The Chairperson reminded Members about the Committee's briefing event with Associate Assessors due to take place that evening as part of the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

## **4. Draft Minutes of 12 February 2014**

**Agreed:** The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising**

### **5.1 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process**

Members noted a further submission from Parents' Outloud amending previous information relating to the frequency of school inspections; and a response from the Department on the question of independence for the Education and Training Inspectorate.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the relevant papers and agreed that they should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

Members noted correspondence from the Department identifying schools in Belfast judged by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) as being adept at self-evaluation.

### **5.2 Consultation on the CCEA report on the review of GCSEs and A-Levels**

Members noted a draft Committee response to the Department on the consultation on the review of GCSEs and A-Levels, following the briefing from officials at the meeting on 12 February 2014.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to endorse this response and that it should be forwarded to the Department.

## **6. Non- Departmental Briefing NI Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre – Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Resource (RADAR) Project.**

*The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.41am:*

Paul Bardon, Senior Project Manager, NI Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre Project (NISLEC); Stanley Bentley, Assistant Group Commander, NI Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS); Patrick McMeekin, Senior Economic Advisor, Strategic Investment Board (SIB); and Ian Jeffers, NI Director, Princes Trust.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of the NI Policing Board.*

*Pat Sheehan declared an interest as a member of the NI Policing Board.*

*Robin Newton declared an interest as a member of the NI Policing Board.*

*Seán Rogers declared an interest as a Member of a Board of Governors in a rural school in South Down.*

*11.22am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.*

*11.04am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.*

*11.30am The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.*

*11:30am Chris Hazzard left the meeting*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 11.39am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification in respect of its involvement with the RADAR project, and the proposed NI Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre; and to ask if consideration had been given to including interaction with RADAR as part of the teacher training curriculum.

## **7. / 8. Departmental Briefing – Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – Next Steps; and Departmental Briefing - Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report on Evaluation and Assessment.**

*The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.40am.*

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

The Departmental officials provided a briefing on agenda items 7 and 8, and this was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*11.55am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting*

12:16pm Trevor Lunn left the meeting

The Departmental officials left at 12.29pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 - Next Steps briefing, to request a response to questions which remained unanswered; and to also request a response to concerns regarding the teaching of science within primary schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the OECD Report on Evaluation and Assessment to request a response to questions which remained unanswered; and to also request commentary on the GTCNI response to the OECD Report.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to give further consideration to another oral briefing on both agenda items pending receipt of written answers to its questions.

## 9. Correspondence

**9.1** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the most recent Spring Supplementary Estimates.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting that it in future provide its submissions to DFP in respect of: the Spring Supplementary and the Main Estimates; and monitoring rounds.

**9.2** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel including the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on Sickness Absence in the Public Sector.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek an oral briefing from the Department on this matter.

**9.3** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department announcing a Call for Evidence for its "Review of Home to School Transport".

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek a briefing on the findings of the review when available; and to also request clarification on whether the review is intended to:

- address or reduce the relatively large number of pupils that travel long distances to school, for example to Belfast from the NEELB and other board areas;
- address inflexibility associated with sessional tickets and consider linking payments to Translink to actual pupil use;
- consider the relevant PEDU action plan recommendations; and
- consider the pilot transport sharing arrangements in Dungannon.

**9.4** The Committee noted an invitation to a meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum on Wednesday 26 February 2014, which included a report of the previous meeting held on 23 October 2013.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to, write to the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) and seek an explanation for the reference within the report to the absence of assistance from the Department to the Education and Library Boards in order to “balance their books in 2013-14”; and for further information on the development of a new teacher redundancy package for August 2014, also referenced in the report.

**9.5** The Committee noted a response from the Department to queries raised regarding support for pupils with learning difficulties, their pupils/carers and schools, and regarding careers advice provided to a pupil with learning difficulties.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an oral briefing in respect of these issues.

**9.6** The Committee noted a Departmental response in relation to its queries regarding a proposed change of designation for Bloomfield Collegiate from a Voluntary Grammar School to a Controlled Grammar School.

**9.7** The Committee noted the iMatter Programme: Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools, previously issued to Members.

**9.8** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding European Union and PEACE IV Funding which made reference to the work of the British Council in delivering programmes on behalf of the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the British Council to brief Members on its work prior to the proposed event on 27 May 2014.

**9.9** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) regarding the drawdown of EU Competitive Funding.

**9.10** The Committee noted correspondence from COFMDFM regarding the Barroso Task Force Desk Officers’ Report: October – December 2013, including briefing information for organisations seeking European Union (EU) Funding.

**9.11** The Committee noted a response from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) regarding the use of Curriculum Complaints Tribunals.

**9.12** The Committee noted a letter of thanks from the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) following the Committee’s correspondence recognising the achievement of students from the College at the recent BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition event in Dublin.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to meet informally with Dr Pasi Sahlberg on Tuesday 25 February 2014 in respect of the Finnish education system.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended.

Members noted that OneNote training would be available on 26 February 2014 and on Tuesday 13 March 2014.

## **11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **12. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 February 2014 at 10.00am at the West Belfast Partnership Board, 218 - 226 Falls Road, Belfast.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.37pm.*

**Mervyn Storey**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**26 February 2014**