



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

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:

The meeting commenced in public session at 9.40am.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Asthma UK Northern Ireland – Inhalers in Schools

The Committee noted correspondence, received previously from Asthma UK Northern Ireland, regarding its campaign for a change in legislation to allow every school to maintain a supply of inhalers for children with asthma.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to seek clarification as to whether the review of medicines legislation which is being undertaken by the Medicine and Healthcare Regulatory Agency applies in Northern Ireland; whether legislation in Northern

Ireland currently prevents the practice for which Asthma UK Northern Ireland is campaigning; and if DHSSPS is to participate in the relevant consultation.

2.2 School Sporting Success

The Chairperson on behalf of the Committee extended his congratulations to schools following their recent sporting success.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Methodist College (Rugby Schools Cup) St Patrick's College Maghera (GAA MacRory Cup) and De La Salle College (Football Senior Belfast Cup).congratulating them on their recent success in their respective sporting competitions.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the losing sides: Sullivan Upper; Christian Brothers Grammar School, Omagh;and St. Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School to congratulate them for reaching the finals in their competitions.

3. Draft Minutes of previous meeting

3.1 Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

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

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Common Funding Scheme

The Committee noted that the revised Common Funding Scheme and 2014-15 budget allocations for schools have been issued.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department:

- highlighting its concerns about the continuing use of 3 Free School Meal Entitlement bands (rather than 5) for the allocation of TSN support;
- expressing its concern about the allocation of all additional post-primary TSN funding to Band 3 schools only;
- seeking clarification on the Department's view on the inclusion of a sharing factor within the Common Funding Scheme; and
- seeking a revised spreadsheet showing allocations per school and a breakdown of the impact of the additional £15.8m, the additional £10m allocated for TSN and the changes to the Warnock factor.

9.45am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

9.47am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

4.2 Computer Based Assessment

The Committee noted that, in his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 11 March, the Minister of Education made reference to the independent review of Computer Based Assessment (CBA).

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

- an oral briefing on the timeline for the next steps for CBA and the progress of the current pilot;
- clarification as to why none of the reviews to-date appear to have dealt with access to CBA for hearing and vision impaired children; and
- an explanation of the issues raised in the report in respect of the security of information held in connection with CBA.

4.3 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

The Committee noted a press article, sent by the General Teaching Council NI, which referred to a recent report by the Policy Exchange on school inspection in England.

9.51am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

5. SR 2014/70 NI Teachers' Pension Scheme - Departmental Briefing

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9.52am:

Seamus Gallagher, Deputy Head of Pensions Policy Team; and Brian Quinn, Pensions Policy Team.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following motion:

“That the Committee for Education has considered: SR 2014/70 The Teachers’ Superannuation (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, and has no objection to the rule.”

The officials left the meeting at 9.54am.

The Committee agreed to take agenda item 9 as its next item of business.

6. Correspondence

6.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department about possible planned research into the effectiveness of Breakfast Clubs.

6.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure to the Department of Education regarding its Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities.

6.3 The Committee noted a Public Petition relating to a Shared Education proposal in Crumlin, laid in the Assembly on 10 March 2014 by Danny Kinahan MLA.

6.4 The Committee noted Departmental correspondence regarding DE's involvement with the RADAR project and the Northern Ireland Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre.

6.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel to the Western Education and Library Board and the Southern Education and Library Board regarding its Inquiry into Flexible Working in the NI Public Sector.

6.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the evaluation being carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate on the "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs" guidance.

6.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) regarding schools which are defined as "no longer financially viable".

6.8 The Committee noted an invitation from the Committee for Employment and Learning to co-host a Belfast Rotary Club – Technology Tournament Event in the Long Gallery on Tuesday 18 November 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to accept the invitation to co-host the event.

7. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its final Area Planning event until June 2014.

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

The Committee agreed to take agenda item 6 as its next item of business.

8. Sickness Absence in the Public Sector - Briefing by Northern Ireland Audit Office

The following Northern Ireland Audit Office officials joined the meeting at 9.58am:

Neil Gray, Value for Money Audit Director; David Murdie, Audit Manager; and Richard Emerson, Assembly Liaison Officer.

9.58am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10.01am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10.18am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting

10.29am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

The NIAO officials left the meeting at 10.32am

The Chairperson suspended the meeting at 10.32am.

The meeting resumed at 11.32am with the following Members present:

Mervyn Storey, Jonathan Craig, Chris Hazzard, Trevor Lunn, Robin Newton, Stephen Moutray, Seán Rogers, Pat Sheehan

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

- a briefing on how the Department is to improve its analysis of teaching and non-teaching staff absence in schools, including the breakdown of long and short-term absence, gender differentials, the high levels of absence in special schools, and actions it is to take to tackle mental health issues among staff; and
- an update on how the findings arising from the 2002 NI Teachers' Health and Wellbeing Survey have been addressed.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Regional Training Unit to seek an update on its Emotional Health and Well-being pilot study for pupils and teachers.

9. Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) - Departmental Briefing.

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.35am

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards; Barbara Ward, Curriculum Entitlement Team; and Russell Welsh, Head of Curriculum Development Team.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.59am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

Barbara Ward left the meeting at 12.13pm, while the other officials remained for the next Departmental briefing.

10. STEM in Schools - Departmental Briefing

The previous Departmental officials were joined at 12.13pm by:

Ruth Kennedy, Business Manager, Curriculum Assessment and Reporting, CCEA; and Niall Brown, Curriculum Development Team, DE.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

12.15pm Maeve McLaughlin returned to the meeting.

12.16pm Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

12.26pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

12.27pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

12.58pm Trevor Lunn left the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 1.06pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the funding and level of school engagement and pupil contacts for the Business Education Partnerships and the Young Enterprise initiative.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to suggest that the draft Terms of Reference for the Department of Education/Department for Employment and Learning Joint Careers Review be amended to include consideration of:

- how the sharing of good CEIAG practice among schools can be better promoted;
- the inclusion of a statutory requirement for the provision of careers advice in primary schools;
- the views of business can be better incorporated into the development of CEIAG support in schools; and
- the recent CBI recommendations regarding: the provision of a CEIAG facilitation service between businesses and schools and a mandatory requirement for summer work placements to be undertaken by all post-primary pupils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Association of Science Education to seek comment on the views expressed during the briefing session; and the Education and Training Inspectorate's review of "the World Around Us".

Agreed: The Committee noted that the oral briefing had not included an adequate update on the Department of Education's progress in implementing the "Success through STEM" strategy. The Committee therefore agreed to write to the Department to request further information in this regard.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 26 March 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.09pm

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
26 March 2014