



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 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
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 Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Maeve McLaughlin MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.05am

1. Apologies

Apologies were as recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Careers Review

The Chairperson advised Members of the Minister for Employment and Learning's statement on Monday 31 March 2014 regarding the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the joint DEL/DE review of careers. Members noted that the Committee's request that the ToRs be extended to cover careers education in primary schools was not referenced in the statement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request confirmation that the ToRs for the review include consideration of careers education for primary

schools and to also request that the Committee is kept up to date on the progress of the review.

10.06am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

2.2 Holy Family Primary School Choir

Members offered their congratulations to the pupils of Holy Family Primary School, Ballymagroarty on their achievement in winning the under-12s Barnardo's UK and Ireland Choir of the Year in March.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Holy Family Primary School Choir to perform in the Great Hall on Tuesday 8 April at 12.30pm.

3. Draft Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School improvement Process

The Committee noted further Departmental correspondence with regard to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to its Inquiry report and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers.

5. Area Planning- Primary School Consultation Departmental Briefing

Members noted a briefing paper from the Department which had been tabled along with additional papers provided by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.10am

Diarmuid McLean, Director, Area Planning, Department of Education; Lorraine Finlay, Head of Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education; and Gavin Boyd, Interim Chief Executive Southern Education and Library Board.

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

10.19am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10.46am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

11.11am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

11.27am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

11.37am The officials left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone a briefing with its Special Adviser given the unexpected delay to the publication of the revised Area Plans for Primary Schools. The Committee also agreed to forward to Professor Gallagher recent correspondence from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding the financial viability of schools.

11.37am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone its planned final stakeholder event on Area Planning given the unexpected delay to the publication of the revised Area Plans for Primary Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write each of the ELBs to seek information as to how the needs of the Controlled Sector are determined in their areas and in particular whether a Controlled Sector sub-group which includes locally elected representatives is in operation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request sight of the Special Schools Area Planning report which is to be produced by the Chief Executive of the Belfast Education and Library Board.

11.39am Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

6. Learning to Learn and the Early Years Fund – Departmental Briefing

Members noted that, along with the other briefings for the meeting, the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister had forwarded information regarding the Executive's Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare - Bright Start.

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.39am.

Linda Wilson, Director of Families and Communities; Cathy Galway, Head of Early Years & Learning to Learn Team; Alison McCaw, Early Years Team; and Briege Lyttle, Education and Training Inspectorate, Early Years Inspector.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.40am The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

11.41am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

11.48am The Chairperson returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair.

11.56am Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting.

12.03pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

12.13pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the future of the Early Years Fund.

The Committee agreed to take agenda item 8 as its next item of business.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Youth Council NI entitled 'Barriers to Participation - a framework for effective interventions with young people not in education, training or employment'.

7.2 The Committee noted an invitation from Volunteer Now to "Talking Europe: Active Citizenship and Youth Volunteering", to be held in the Senate Chamber on Friday 8 April 2014.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Acting Principal of De La Salle College relating to the Minister of Education's statement on Tuesday 11 March 2014 on evaluation and assessment.

7.4 The Committee noted correspondence in respect of GCSE and A Level grading in different jurisdictions from the Department and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the Terms of Reference of the Fundamental Review Expert Group, once available.

7.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department following an oral briefing on 19 February 2014 on the OECD Report on evaluation and assessment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to its Inquiry report, and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department: to express its dissatisfaction at the content of the oral briefing and the subsequent written response; to seek clarification on whether extensive engagement with the wider education system in respect of the OECD report will also include consultation with parents; and to invite DE officials to brief Members again on the Department's response to the OECD report later in the current session.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department to its queries following an oral briefing on 19 February 2014 on PISA 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department: to express its dissatisfaction at the content of the oral briefing; highlighting some surprise at DE's assertion that the performance of pupils is not related to the curriculum; and requesting that action is taken to address the apparent misunderstanding by schools of DE guidance in respect of classroom observation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a further oral briefing on PISA 2012 was not required.

7.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of its queries regarding the Home to School Transport policy for non-selective grammars.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Department regarding the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill and the potential cost implication to the Department of Education of provisions outlined in new Clause 10A.

7.9 The Committee noted information regarding the Society of Biology Survey which had been highlighted by Danny Kinahan MLA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Education to seek information on how it is promoting the understanding of Bio Science in schools.

7.10 The Committee noted an invitation to meet with Adam Baacke, Assistant City Manager and Director of the Division of Planning and Development for the City of Lowell, MA.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

12.21pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft report of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process at its meeting on 9 April 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to its itinerary for a proposed visit to Fermanagh on 18 June 2014.

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

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12.23pm The Committee moved into closed session.

10. Status of DE Guidance to Schools on Transfer Testing

A representative from Assembly Legal Services joined the Committee at 12.23pm.

Alice McKelvey, Assembly Legal Services, provided legal advice regarding the status of DE Guidance to schools on transfer testing.

Ms McKelvey left the meeting at 12.35pm.

11. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 9 April 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.35pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
9 April 2014