



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 7 May 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin 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)
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 9.31am

1. Apologies

Apologies were as recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Elective Home Education

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) is consulting on a new Elective Home Education policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the SELB to seek a briefing on the feedback to the consultation following its conclusion in June before considering its views on the matter.

3. Draft Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

9.33am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

5. Special Educational Needs – Access to Health Services for School Children

The following officials joined the meeting at 9.34am.

Dr Eddie Rooney, Chief Executive, Public Health Agency; Mrs Michelle Tennyson, Assistant Director Allied Health Professions and Personal & Public Involvement, Public Health Agency; Mrs Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-Being, Department of Education; Dr Clare Mangan, Chief Executive, Belfast Education and Library Board; Tony Rodgers, Acting Director of Social Care and Children, Health and Social Care Board; and, Kieran McShane, Social Care Commissioning Lead, Health and Social Care Board.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

9.36am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

10.03am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting

10.04am Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

10.32am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

10.37am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

10.42am Robin Newton left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

10.51 Seán Rogers returned to the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

10.53am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

Mrs Gillan and Dr Mangan remained at the table for the next briefing while the other officials left the meeting at 10.57am.

6. Special Educational Needs – Support for Children with Learning Difficulties

The following officials joined Mrs Gillan and Dr Mangan at 10.58am:

Frances Curran, Special Education Team, Access, Inclusion and Well-being Directorate, Department of Education; and Ms Bernie Dorrity, Special Needs Advisor, North Eastern Education and Library Board.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.01am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

11.03am Pat Sheehan returned to the meeting.

11.37am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

11.38am Maeve McLaughlin returned to the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 11.40am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the Review of Allied Health Professionals and the Review of Multi-Disciplinary Support Teams, in particular how these reviews would affect:

- the existence/development of regional Memoranda of Understanding or Service Level Agreements between the ELBs and the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs);
- improved communication with parents of children with SEN so as to enhance access to ELB/HSCT support services;
- capacity development of schools to interface more effectively with the SEN statement process and to exploit existing inter-agency connectedness; and
- the provision of therapy services (including occupational, speech and others) and Educational Psychology services.

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

- an update on the timescale for the introduction of proposed SEN legislation;
- the Terms of Reference of the proposed Health and Education Strategy Liaison Group, and an update on the establishment of the group;
- sight of the Education and Training Inspectorate Report on SEN Transitions including progress against the recommendations in the previous ETI report published in 2008;
- clarification on the SEN capacity building budget;
- information on attainment targets for SEN children and the numbers of young people with SEN who find themselves not in employment, education or training (NEET);

- information on the levels of SEN in Early Years settings and across all educational phases for each academic year starting from 2009/10 until the present.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward relevant papers to the Committee for Employment and Learning to inform its current Inquiry into Post-School Special Educational Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding storage of spare asthma inhalers by schools. DHSSPS have confirmed that schools currently cannot maintain a stock of spare inhalers and that the views of both DE and the Committee will be sought in the Medicine and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) consultation prior to the amendment of the relevant legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to request sight of its response to the relevant MHRA consultation.

11.47am Seán Rogers returned to the meeting.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education indicating that the Terms of Reference for the Expert Group for the Fundamental Review of GCSEs and A-Levels will be shared once agreed.

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), indicating that CCEA is to scope the overlap between PISA and the Revised Curriculum and that further discussions with NITC are planned on classroom observation.

7.4 The Committee noted an invitation from MindWise New Vision to attend a Ministerial launch of the Young People (13-25) Strategy 2014-2019, on Thursday 15 May 2014 at the MAC building.

7.5 The Committee noted an invitation from NAHT to the Chairperson to attend the Annual NAHT Conference, on Thursday 15 May 2014 at the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle.

7.6 The Committee noted the monthly Department of Education Investment Strategy Northern Ireland (ISNI) Capital Report for April 2014.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from SELB regarding the Elective Home Education Consultation.

Agreed: As indicated above, the Committee agreed to write to SELB to request a briefing following the conclusion of the consultation in June 2014.

7.8 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education on the Common Funding Scheme. Members noted that the Department had again declined to provide a spreadsheet showing the breakdown of the impact of the CFS changes at individual school level.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a copy of the relevant spreadsheet showing limited information on school allocations and to seek details of the Common Funding Formula elements that were used to make the relevant allocations.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Early Years Fund - advising that the Fund is to continue in 2014-15.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence and tabled items from the Department of Education regarding appointments to Boards of Governors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Ballysillan Primary School for information.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the indicative timeline for Monitoring Rounds.

7.12 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Free School Meals and the Special Educational Needs Register.

7.13 The Committee noted a response from the Chair of the Home to School Transport Review Panel following the Committee's request for a briefing on the interim findings of the Home to School Transport Review.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted details of the British Council - World in your Classroom event scheduled for 27 May 2014 in the Long Gallery.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the information to the other statutory Committees and to invite Members to attend the event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to rearrange its visit to ESaGS.tv so as to allow Members to attend the DE Very Good/Outstanding schools recognition event in the Long Gallery at 2pm on Wednesday 28 May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into Shared/Integrated Education at its next meeting.

Members noted that an informal meeting with Drumragh Integrated College was arranged for lunchtime on Tuesday 13 May 2014.

Members noted that Brookeborough Primary School and St Mary's Primary School Brookeborough are due to visit Parliament Buildings on Monday 12 May 2014 as part of their shared education programme, and that a photograph with Members of the Education Committee had been requested.

Agreed: Members agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee moved into closed session at 11.52am

10. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Consideration of Draft Report

Members considered a draft report of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, and suggested amendments.

11.53am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

12.13pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should amend the draft report in line with Members' comments and that the final report should be available for consideration at its next meeting.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 14 May 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.21pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
14 May 2014