



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 28 May 2014  
GREENMOUNT AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

**Present:**

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Trevor Lunn MLA  
Seán Rogers MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)  
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)  
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

Chris Hazzard MLA  
Maeve McLaughlin MLA  
Stephen Moutray MLA  
Robin Newton MLA

*The meeting commenced in private session at 10.00am.*

**1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Agreement of Inquiry Report**

**Agreed:** The Committee noted a further confidential submission to the inquiry and agreed that as it did not affect any of the findings or recommendations, it would not be included in the report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for an extract from the minutes of the meeting of 28 May 2014 to be included in the appendices of the inquiry report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the inclusion of Appendices 1 to 7 in the inquiry report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the report would be the Fifth Report of the Education Committee to the Assembly for the current mandate.

**Agreed:** The Committee ordered the report to be printed.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to submit the following motion to the Business Office:

*‘That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process [NIA 132/11-15] and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report’*

*The meeting entered public session at 10.04am.*

## **2. Apologies:**

Apologies were as indicated above.

## **3. Chairperson’s Business**

### **3.1 Drumragh Integrated College**

The Chairperson reminded Members of a recent legal judgement relating to a Development Proposal for enrolment expansion at Drumragh Integrated College.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking: an explanation, at the briefing of 4 June 2014, as to the basis upon which the Drumragh Integrated College decision is to be “retaken” and an explanation in respect of the revised Development Proposal guidance referenced in the judgement.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek legal advice from Assembly Legal Services regarding the Drumragh Integrated College judgement and related matters.

### **3.2 Closure of Ballee High School**

The Committee noted the recent announcement of the closure of Ballee High School.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting that in future it be advised prior to the announcement of school closures and seeking an explanation of the reference (in the relevant press release) to the greater use of area-based Development Proposals.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking comment on the way forward for the proposed redesignation of Clintyclay Primary School.

### **3.3 Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) 2012-13 Annual Report**

The Chairperson advised Members that the BELB 2012-13 Annual Report had been laid in the Business Office.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request sight of the PwC Report entitled 'School Governors: The Guardians of our Schools'.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to BELB requesting details of the completed actions from the PEDU review of Home to School Transport and School Catering.

### **3.4 Nursery Principal Release Scheme**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an update on Nursery Principal Release Time.

### **3.5 Classroom Assistants - Job Evaluation**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an update regarding the job evaluation process for classroom assistants.

## **4. Minutes of previous meeting**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the Committee meeting of 14 May 2014.

## **5. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted a draft response to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHPRA) consultation regarding asthma inhalers in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its response and agreed to forward it to MHPRA.

The Committee noted draft correspondence to the Department from the Committee regarding the NIAO report on sickness absence in the public sector.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- an update on the new Efficient Discharge policy;
- the timeline for the development of the composite absence strategy;
- a timeline for inclusion of VG and other schools in the absence forum;
- a breakdown of teacher absence; and
- clarification as to whether the new Education Bill will allow for the unification of teaching and non-teaching HR systems.

The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to the Committee's proposed Inquiry into Integrated and Shared Education.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to defer further consideration of the Terms of Reference pending the receipt of further information from the Department on the Shared Education issues raised by the Minister in his statement of 23 October 2013

*The Committee elected to consider its correspondence as the next item of business.*

## 6. Correspondence

- 6.1 Members noted responses from the University of Ulster (UU); the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB); the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); and the Minister of Health Social Services and Public Safety regarding vision issues and visually impaired school children.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further responses from other ELBs. The Committee also agreed to arrange a visit or briefing with the Vision Science Research Group at UU in respect of its work on vision issues among school children.

- 6.2 Members noted an Invitation to the Green Investment Bank Workshop on Tuesday 6 June 2014 from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

- 6.3 Members noted correspondence forwarded by Danny Kinahan MLA on behalf of AQR promoting “Mental Toughness” in support of teachers and improved attainment at school.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an informal briefing on this subject.

- 6.4 Members noted correspondence from the Department of Education in response to a query from a parent relating to the extension of Free School Meals to all young school children in England.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Department’s response to the concerned parent.

- 6.5 Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the proposed Private Member’s Bill regarding rates exemptions for amateur sports clubs.

- 6.6 Members noted an invitation to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson from the Minister for Education to attend the “Delivering Social Change” reception on 5 June 2014 in the Great Hall.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to attend the event – diaries permitting.

- 6.7 Members noted correspondence from the ELBs regarding their quarterly policy Screening Outcome Report.

- 6.8 Members noted correspondence from the Department of Education and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding changes to Irish Medium Education Early Years funding.

- 6.9 Members noted correspondence regarding the Tapestry of Colours Education brochure.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to decline the offer of an informal briefing on this subject.

6.10 Members noted the Alternative Manifesto for Education document from the Integrated Education Fund.

6.11 Members noted an invitation to the Northern Ireland launch of the BT Young Scientists and Technology Exhibition, on Wednesday 4 June 2014, in the Canada Room, QUB.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to attend the event and to alter its meeting place and time accordingly.

6.12 The Committee noted a response from St Mary's University College (SMUC) regarding the enhancement of primary school teacher confidence during Initial Teacher Education in respect of the delivery of STEM.

6.13 Members noted an invitation to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson from the Early Years organisation to the Early Years International Conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June in Templepatrick.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to attend the conference – diaries permitting.

6.14 Members noted correspondence from the Rt. Hon. Jeffrey Donaldson MP regarding Levels of Progression and funding concerns in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that Levels of Progression were to be the subject of a Departmental briefing in the immediate future.

6.15 Members noted correspondence from Professor Graham from the Scottish STEM Education Committee (STEMEC).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a school visit with Professor Graham and colleagues as part of its consideration of STEM issues.

6.16 Members noted correspondence from GL Assessment enclosing a case study regarding the use of CAT in Holy Family Primary School.

6.17 Members noted an invitation from Co-operation Ireland to attend 'Our Human Rights in Action' event in the Ulster Hall on 3 June 2014.

6.18 Members noted correspondence from the Ulster Bank inviting the Committee to participate in a Money Sense for Schools event.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to participate in the schools-based event during the next session of the Assembly.

## 7. Monitoring Round – June – Departmental Briefing

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.32 am.*

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance, Department of Education; and Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the June Monitoring Round.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*10:59am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.*

*Departmental officials left the meeting at 11.21am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking:

- further information including a breakdown of the June Monitoring Round bid relating to Area Planning;
- further information on expenditure (previous and planned) to support the Entitlement Framework including details of how this is allocated among school sectors;
- a breakdown of the £10m of additional savings planned by the Department in 2014-15; and
- clarification in respect of expenditure relating to severance in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

## **8. EU and other Funding for Schools – British Council NI**

*The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11.24am:*

David Alderdice, Director, British Council NI; and, Jonathan Stewart. Deputy Director, British Council NI.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*11:49am Sean Rogers left the meeting. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum, proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 11.52am.*

*11:53am Sean Rogers rejoined the meeting. The Committee regained its decision-making quorum.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- information on its International Education Programme;
- an update on education-related projects funded under Peace IV; and

- an explanation as to how the Department plans to disseminate Erasmus+ information from the steering group to schools and sectoral organisations.

## **9. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

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

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next Education Committee meeting will take place at 9:30am on Wednesday 4 June 2014 at Queen's University Belfast.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11.58am.*

**Mervyn Storey**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**4 June 2014**