



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Nathan McVeigh (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)
Kiera McDonald (Legal Advisor) (Item 1 only)

Apologies:

Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA

The meeting commenced in private session at 9.38am.

1. Integrated Schools - Legal Advice

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) regarding Positive Partnerships for Integration and a request to brief the Committee regarding as part of the inquiry into Shared/Integrated Education.

Kiera McDonald, Assembly Legal Services, provided legal advice in respect of integrated schools.

9.43am Seán Rogers joined the meeting.

9.51am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

Ms McDonald left the meeting at 10.05am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on the costs associated with nursery principals' release time.

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

- clarification as to whether any Integrated schools have been subject to discontinuation or review owing to variations in the level of minority community pupil representation;
- information on whether all Boards of Governors of Integrated schools are compliant with the relevant legislation in respect of community representation;
- clarification in respect of the Department's approach where Catholic Trustee nominations are not made to the Board of Governors of an Integrated school;
- confirmation as to whether guidance will be amended in respect of the consideration of the impact on schools of other management types of the transformation to, or establishment of, an Integrated school; and
- clarification regarding the application of Article 64 duties to different kinds of Early Years settings.

The meeting entered public session at 10.09am.

2. Apologies:

Apologies were as indicated above.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Primary Area Plans

The Committee noted correspondence from the Fermanagh Trust regarding the Western Education and Library Board's Area Plan for primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek briefings from the Committee's Special Adviser; the Education and Library Boards; CCMS and the Department in the next session on the primary school Area Plans.

3.2 Eason's Spelling Bee Competition

The Chairperson noted that Amelia McDowell, a pupil at Saint Therese of Lisieux primary school in North Belfast had recently won the All-Ireland Eason's Spelling Bee competition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the principal of Saint Therese of Lisieux, primary school to congratulate Amelia on her achievement.

10.23am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

3.3 Teachers' Statistics

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Department had recently published statistics on teachers' age profile and absence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking: clarity on the reasons for the £5m increase in costs associated with teacher substitution; and details of the actions it is taking to limit costs and provide opportunities in this regard for newly qualified teachers.

10.25am Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting.

3.4 DEL Report on Teacher Education Infrastructure

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Minister for Employment and Learning had recently launched the report on the Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to meet informally with Professor Kirk – a member of the independent review panel - to discuss the relevant aspects of the report.

3.5 Permanent Secretary

The Chairperson recorded his surprise and disappointment that despite a number of ongoing issues in the Department, the Permanent Secretary was engaged in other unrelated business.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Permanent Secretary and senior Departmental officials in September.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting of 25 June 2014.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 The Committee discussed its meeting (of 1 July 2014) regarding teacher redundancy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department:

- seeking clarification on the variation to the financial criteria for teacher redundancy and asking that DE considers a further extension of the criteria to recognise the future medium term financial situation for schools;
- calling on DE to urgently clarify the situation for those teachers (in the "91" cohort) who are not compliant with the relevant redundancy criteria;

- asking DE to set out the timescale by which all teachers (in the “91” cohort) will know the position in respect of their application for redundancy;
- asking DE to identify the schools in the “91” cohort;
- asking DE to set out the lessons learned and actions for the future in respect of communication and administration of redundancies;
- asking DE to provide copies of the relevant correspondence to teachers; schools; managing authorities sent in April, May and June; and
- asking DE to explain the 2 year payback criteria.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Minister correspondence received from a concerned teacher affected by the teacher redundancy issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would meet during the summer recess as necessary to continue its scrutiny of this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release in respect of the above

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from Sentinus enclosing a list of the schools that participated in the Big Bang event on 20 June 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the winning schools offering its congratulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include recognition of these schools during the Committee’s Sentinus STEM event on 1 October 2014.

5.3 The Committee considered its response to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) First Steps Northern Ireland report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward its response to CBI.

5.4 The Chairperson referred Members to a submission from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to the Committee’s Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include this submission in the electronic version of the Committee’s Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to NICCY regarding the submission to the Committee’s ETI inquiry.

The Committee considered the following agenda items.

6. Correspondence

6.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Job Evaluation process for Classroom Assistants - highlighting the completion of 89% of evaluations and additional payments of over £17m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking details of: the number of staff that were engaged in this process; the number who have not opted

to carry out a job evaluation; the number who have disputed their evaluation and the arrangements and costs of maintaining evaluation teams in all of the Education and Library Boards.

6.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in response to Committee queries concerning revisions to Development Proposal Guidance. Members noted that the Department is to provide an embargoed copy of the revised guidance prior to adoption.

6.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in response to Committee queries regarding sickness absence in schools. Members noted that the Department had provided details of the Efficient Discharge Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it indicates the number of staff released under the Efficient Discharge Policy since its introduction on 13 May 2014.

6.4 The Committee noted ongoing correspondence between a former principal and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

6.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the new arrangements for European Liaison Officers.

6.6 The Committee noted a response from NSPCC regarding its briefing on 'Safeguarding Work in the Education Sector'.

6.7 The Committee noted a response from CCEA regarding industrial action relating to TOIL. Members noted CCEA's confirmation that this summer's CCEA examinations will not be adversely affected.

6.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the timeline for Capital Projects / School Enhancement Programme.

6.9 The Committee noted a response from C2K regarding the ICT transformation process.

6.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the RTU, Emotional Health and Well Being Study.

6.11 The Committee noted correspondence enclosing the June 2014 Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask if the economic appraisals previously developed for Glenwood Primary School and Edenderry Nursery School, Belfast are to be utilised and to seek confirmation in respect of the timing of the announcement regarding capital works relating to schools in the Shankill area.

6.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding capital works involving Knockbreda and Newtownbreda High Schools.

7. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

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

8. General Teaching Council Northern Ireland SL1s- Departmental briefing

Officials joined the meeting at 10.33am:

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice, Department of Education; Miriam Miskelly, Head of Teacher Education Team, Department of Education; and Sam Dempster, Teacher Education Team, Department of Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10.34am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

10.42am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 10.49am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to make the proposed statutory rule:

*The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Constitution)
(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, pending an oral briefing from the GTCNI, it would defer consideration of the proposed statutory rule:

*The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Registration of
Teachers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.*

9. Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) – Departmental Briefing

Officials joined the meeting at 10.51am:

Diarmuid McLean, Director of Area Planning, Department of Education; and Roy Stevenson, Area Planning Policy Team, Department of Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.28am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

11.33am Robin Newton left the meeting.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 11.35am.

Some Members indicated that they believed that the criteria for Shared Education Campuses should align with the recently revised Capital Works protocol which includes factors such as Free School Meal Entitlement and Special Educational Needs levels.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification in respect of the revised Capital Works protocol – in particular whether the protocol would be applied retrospectively to projects which had already been advanced in planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on the weighting which was applied to each of the essential criteria used to select Shared Education Campus projects. The Committee further agreed to seek clarity on the revised criteria which are to be applied to the next Shared Education Campuses competition.

11.36am Robin Newton rejoined the meeting.

11.38am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

10. Committee Inquiry – Shared / Integrated Education – Update on Shared Education – Departmental Briefing

Officials joined the meeting at 11.39am:

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice, Department of Education; Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education and Community Relations Team, Department of Education; and Eve Stewart, Head of Irish Medium and Integrated Education Project Team, Department of Education.

11.48am Maeve McLaughlin rejoined the meeting.

11.48am Stephen Moutray rejoined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

12.13pm Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

The meeting entered private session at 12.26pm.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 12.39pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department suggesting that it thoroughly explores all options for collaboration and synergy between the three Delivering Social Change funding streams and projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a copy of the draft guidance being prepared by officials to promote Shared Education including the sharing continuum information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the SEUPB as part of the consultation on Peace IV:

- indicating its support for the encouragement of Shared Education across all educational phases;
- urging SEUPB to encourage programmes which capitalise on learning from previous Shared Education projects including the PIEE project and the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education partnerships; and
- suggesting that the relevant Peace IV projects should support the development of guidance which helps schools to get involved with Shared Education.

11. Committee Inquiry – Shared / Integrated Education – Terms of Reference

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into Shared/Integrated Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amended Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into Shared/Integrated Education as follows:

- Review the nature and definition of Shared Education and Integrated Education across all educational phases – including consideration of the need for a formal statutory definition and an obligation in statute to facilitate and encourage Shared Education;
- Identify the key barriers and enablers for Shared Education and Integrated Education;
- Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of policy interventions and programmes;
- Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve sharing and integration – including the effectiveness of the relevant parts of the CRED policy; the need to engage more effectively with parents/carers; and the role of Special Schools; and

- Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendations by Spring 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to all schools and relevant stakeholders inviting them to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry.

The meeting entered public session at 12.45pm.

12.45pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

12. Any Other Business

The Chairperson noted press reports regarding problems associated with controlled assessments in the OCR GCSE in Computing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA seeking information on how many pupils (if any) in Northern Ireland have been affected by the reported problems.

Jo-Anne Dobson thanked current and past Members of the Committee for their support during her time as a Member of the Committee. Mrs Dodson also indicated her continued support for the Dickson plan and her opposition to any proposed changes.

13. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

Pending confirmation of the date of a further emergency meeting during summer recess relating to teacher redundancy issues, the Committee will meet again on Wednesday 3 September 2014 at 10.30am in Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.47pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
3 September 2014