



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2014  
METHODIST COLLEGE, BELFAST

**Present:**

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Trevor Lunn MLA  
Robin Newton MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA  
Sean Rogers MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Kevin Marks (Clerical Supervisor)  
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

Chris Hazzard MLA  
Nelson McCausland MLA  
Maeve McLaughlin MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

*The meeting commenced in private session at 10.03am*

**1. Committee response to the NIAO Report on Sickness Absence in the Public Sector**

In line with its decisions at the meeting of 24 September 2014, the Committee again considered its response to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on Sickness Absence in the Public Sector.

*10.06 Trevor Lunn joined the meeting.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting concerns in respect of teaching absence relating to stress.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to embargo its overall response pending publication of a summary report by the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

*The meeting entered public session at 10.15am.*

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were as indicated above.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

**3.1** The Chairperson thanked the principal and staff of Methodist College for hosting the Committee meeting and welcomed A-Level Politics students from the College to the meeting.

**3.2** The Chairperson referred Members to a recent press article by Professor Smith, University of Ulster referring to a Department of Education Shared Education Business Plan.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the Shared Education Business Plan in question.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting on 3 December 2014.

## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising.

## **6. Departmental briefing – Pupil Health and Well-being Policy - iMatter**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.19am.*

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-being Division; Heather Mailey, Pupil Support Team; and Shirley Jones Education and Training Inspectorate briefed the Committee on the Department's pupil health and well-being policy - iMatter.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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

- seeking an update on progress to-date on the implementation of the relevant recommendations in the Marshall Report;
- seeking further information on anti-cyber-bullying guidance, support for schools, parents and children in respect of on-line safety and on-line protections for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and ;

- seeking clarity in respect of SEN capacity building and other actions DE is to take to address the 67% increase in the level of children with autism reported in the last 5 years.

*Officials left the meeting at 11.09am.*

*Proceedings were suspended at 11.09am.*

*Proceedings resumed at 11.15am.*

## **7. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education – Methodist College**

*Witnesses joined the meeting at 11.15am.*

Scott Naismith, Principal, Methodist College Belfast; Neill Jackson, Chairman, Board of Governors; Michael Humphreys, Member, Board of Governors; Reverend Dr Janet Unsworth, Member, Board of Governors; and Sir Desmond Rea, Member, Board of Governors briefed the Committee as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*12.01pm Danny Kinahan left the meeting.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 12.17pm.*

## **8. Correspondence**

**8.1** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

**8.2** The Committee noted a response from Desertmartin Primary School setting out its opposition to a proposed change of treatment in respect of Temporary Variations for some 'Other Maintained' primary schools.

**8.3** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Education and Training Inspectorate: Chief Inspector's Report 2012-14. DE indicated that the transition from Levels of Attainment to Levels of Progression precluded comparison of English and maths performance in primary schools between 2010-12 and 2012-14.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting its concerns in this regard and suggesting that the Department use data collected by post-primary schools during admission year in order to determine any variation in maths and English performance.

**8.4** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Area Planning and the effect of closure and amalgamation on the level of school financial deficit in the last 5 years.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the information with its Special Adviser.

**8.5** The Committee noted a copy of the Barnardo's report 'Living with adversity: A qualitative study of families with multiple and complex needs'.

**8.6** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding transport between schools during the school day in support of the Entitlement Framework.

**8.7** The Committee noted a copy of the EU Matters Newsletter – December 2014.

**8.8** The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to meet with Ligoniel Primary School Board of Governors on Monday 19 January 2015 at 3.30pm.

**8.9** The Committee noted an invitation from Professor Roger Austin, University of Ulster for Members to visit one of the UU e-partner schools in late February 2015.

**8.10** The Committee noted an invitation from an African Children's Choir for Members to attend a concert on Thursday 11 December 2014 in the Waterfront Hall at 7.30pm.

**8.11** The Committee noted correspondence from Glenlola Collegiate School to the Chairperson requesting an opportunity to informally discuss the impact of cuts to the educational provision for young people in Bangor.

**8.12** The Committee considered a response from the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the final report on the road accident involving school children in Cloughmills Area.

**8.13** The Committee considered correspondence from Parents Outloud offering to brief the Chairperson on School Starting Age Flexibility. The Committee also noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding a consultation on proposals to introduce flexibility in respect of school starting age in exceptional circumstances.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a Departmental briefing at the end of the relevant consultation.

**8.14** The Committee noted correspondence to the Chairperson regarding the Northern Ireland Impact Forum for Adult Education.

**8.15** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding enhanced support for youth services in the Irish Medium Education Sector.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on whether any equality screening was carried out prior to the relevant funding decision being taken.

**8.16** The Committee noted an invitation from the Field Studies Council to visit its Centre in Derrygonnelly, Fermanagh which facilitates outdoor learning.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a visit to the Centre after Easter.

## **7. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted the arrangements, timings and costs of the proposed informal meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection on Tuesday 6 January 2015 and the visit to the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2015 at the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) on Wednesday 7 January 2015.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to contact Committee staff as soon as possible to confirm their attendance.

The Committee noted that the first meeting following recess will be on Wednesday 14 January 2015 in the Ryandale Inn, Moy at 10.00am. The meeting will be followed by a visit to Moy Regional Primary School and St John's Primary School, Moy.

The Committee noted that the SEN Bill is expected to be introduced in the new year.

The Committee also noted that a briefing on the SEN Bill is scheduled for January 2015 and a Ministerial briefing on the 2015-16 Budget has been requested for February 2015.

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

## **8. Any Other Business**

The Committee noted that it has previously written to the Belfast Education and Library Board regarding reported over-subscription at Strandtown Primary School.

The Chairperson wished the Members and staff a merry Christmas and happy new year.

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 14 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Ryandale Inn, Moy, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12.28pm.*

**Michelle McIlveen  
Chairperson, Committee for Education  
14 January 2014**