



Northern Ireland Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)
James Stewart (Assembly Research – item 6 only)

Apologies:

Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.05am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to alter its agenda and consider its response to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on employee absence in the public sector in closed session at the end of the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson and Members of the Committee extended their thanks to Mervyn Storey MLA for his contribution as Chairperson to the Committee for Education.

Members also welcomed Michelle McIlveen MLA to the Committee in her role as the new Chairperson.

2.1 School Bus Accident near Castleberg

The Chairperson brought to Members' attention recent press reports regarding a school bus accident in the Castleberg area on Monday 22 September 2014.

The Chairperson noted with relief that none of the school children involved were seriously injured. The Chairperson also noted that despite this serious and worrying incident, school buses remain the safest mode of school transport.

2.2 DE/DEL Careers Review

The Chairperson informed the Committee that several Members attended an informal meeting with Brian Ambrose - Chairperson of the independent DE/DEL Careers Panel yesterday, to discuss the panel's report on careers education information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek sight of the final report of the independent panel when it is produced.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings of 17 September 2014.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry

Agreed: The Committee noted that additional inquiry submissions had been added to SkyDrivePro and was content for the submissions to be published on the website.

5. Nurture Units - Departmental Briefing

Departmental Officials joined the meeting at 10.12 am.

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-being, Department of Education; and Alan Boyd, Head of Pupil Behaviour Management Team, Department of Education briefed the Committee on Nurture Units.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Departmental Officials left the meeting at 10.53 am.

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

- the Education and Training Inspectorate's review report on Nurture Unit practice;
- the interim and final reports of the independent research/evaluation on the effectiveness of nurture provision; and
- the DVD produced by the Department on Nurture Units.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department suggesting that consideration be given to the flexible use of Extended Schools funding in order to deal with a potential gap in Nurture Unit funding following the conclusion of the Signature Programme in June 2015.

Agreed: The Committee further agreed to arrange to visit Delivering Social Change, Signature Project, Nurture Units during the current Assembly session.

6. Assembly Research Oral Briefing

Assembly Research joined the meeting at 10.55am.

James Stewart, Assembly Research and Information Services, briefed the Committee on primary science teaching time; enquiry-based learning; and Continued Professional Development for science teachers.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Assembly Research left the meeting at 11.16am.

7. Education Committee 2013-14 End of Session Report- written briefing

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the final draft of the Education Committee 2013-14 End of Session Report to be published.

11.17am Robin Newton left the meeting.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel providing information on the completion of Post Project Evaluations by Departments.

8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Management Side held on Thursday 26 June 2014.

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from Patsy McGlone MLA, Chairperson of the All Party Group (APG) on Construction, highlighting concerns in respect of the information provided in respect of the Department of Education's Capital Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department on the undertakings it had given in February 2014 in respect of improving the communication of capital works progress.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward the relevant correspondence to the APG on Construction for information.

8.4 The Committee noted correspondence from Parents' Education as Autism Therapists (PEAT) enclosing a paper on autism and Applied Behaviour Analysis.

8.5 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to attend the Southern Education Library Board Area Learning Communities: Broadening Horizons 2014 event, on Tuesday 14 October 2014 in the Armagh City Hotel.

8.6 The Committee noted an invitation from the Prince's Trust to Members to attend its Celebrate Success event on Tuesday 2 December 2014 in Titanic Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting concerns raised by Members that qualifications obtained through the Prince's Trust were not being recognised by schools and to ask how the Department is to encourage schools to address this problem.

8.7 The Committee noted an invitation from YouthAction Northern Ireland inviting Members to attend the launch of the Partnership Youth Work Plan (2014-2016) for the Newry and Mourne area on Thursday 16 October 2014 in the Merchant Quay Hotel, Newry.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts & Leisure regarding a proposed Shared Sports Campus for Loughside Park.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Tapestry of Colours Education resource. The correspondence set out the role of the Community Relations Equality and Diversity policy and indicated that the Department does not fund or promote the Tapestry of Colours Education resource.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding a Public Petition on Elective Home Education introduced by Mervyn Storey MLA.

8.11 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Shared Education Campus Programme. The Department indicated that the revised criteria are under consultation and a further call for projects is expected to be made at the end of September.

8.12 Members noted correspondence from the Minister for Education in respect of his scheduled briefing to the Committee on Accelerated Passage for the Education Bill.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Investment Strategy Implementation Report (June 2014) .

8.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 Progress Reports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Regional Development seeking further information on its PfG project to promote walking or cycling to school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister seeking further information on the timing of the proposed PfG summer school/camp pilots in 2014.

8.15 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding exemptions from examination statistics and progression routes for school leavers.

8.16 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Community Use of School Premises. The Department indicated that it did not believe that insurance costs are a barrier to community access to schools and declined to consider a change to its guidance to schools in this respect.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this response to the North Eastern Education Library Board (NEELB) for its information.

8.17 The Committee noted a response from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) regarding the communication of examination results to schools and pupils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to CCEA to:

- seek clarity in respect of the A2C system as to whether all A-level examination results regardless of the Examining Board will be available to students on 1 webpage;
- seek clarity as to whether all GCSE examination results regardless of the Examining Board will also be available to students on a single webpage; and
- ask if the new arrangements would allow schools to simply print-off a single full summary set of all results for each pupil on results day.

8.18 The Committee noted an invitation from the Education and Training Inspectorate to the launch of the Chief Inspector's Report 2012-2014 on Thursday 6 November 2014.

8.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly EU Affairs manager enclosing a copy of the monthly newsletter on European issues.

8.20 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson from the Arts Council Northern Ireland to attend the 51st Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queen's University, Belfast.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting entered private session at 11.25am.

Proceedings were suspended at 11.25am.

Proceedings resumed at 11.30am with the following Members present:

Michelle McIlveen, Danny Kinahan, Maeve McLaughlin, Robin Newton, Sandra Overend and Pat Sheehan.

11. NIAO Report on employee absence in the Public Sector- draft Education Committee response

11.38am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

The Committee noted Departmental correspondence relating to measures designed to enhance teachers' emotional health and well-being.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its report on the relevant aspects of the NIAO Report on sickness absence in the Northern Ireland public sector, subject to feedback from the NIAO and/or the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

Agreed: The Committee further agreed that it would embargo its report pending final agreement.

12. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on 30 September at 12.45pm in the Senate Chamber.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.42 pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
30 September 2014