



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE 2015  
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Peter Weir MLA (Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Chris Hazzard MLA  
Nelson McCausland MLA  
Maeve McLaughlin MLA  
Robin Newton MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA  
Seán Rogers MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

**In Attendance:**

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

**Apologies:**

Danny Kinahan MP MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

*The meeting commenced in public session at 9.38am without a decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum, the running order of the agenda was amended.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are as indicated above.

**2. June Monitoring Round – Departmental briefing**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9.40am.*

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance; Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure; La'Verne Montgomery, Director of Workforce Development, and Gavin Patrick, Deputy Finance Director, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the Department of Education's priorities for the June Monitoring Round 2015.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department providing an update on teaching and non-teaching redundancy. The Committee also noted correspondence from the Education Authority on the delayed payment of pay increases to Education Authority employees.

*9.50am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting, a decision- making quorum was established.*

*9.59am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.*

*10.04am Sandra Overend joined the meeting.*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Peter Weir declared an interest as a member of the Boards of Governors of a number of primary schools.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education indicating its support for the Department's June Monitoring bids but noting the absence of bids for Sentinus, the Booktrust Bookstart programme and the Primary Modern Language Programme.

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

- further detail on planned teaching and non-teaching staff redundancies;
- information in respect of the Department's changing staff profile and its plans for staff voluntary severance;
- clarification on the new Early Years Pathway, in particular the relevant timescales and status of organisations funded under the Early Years Fund;
- information on arguments relating to the retention of the Primary Modern Language Programme;
- sight of the recommendations from the recent reviews of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE);
- an update on the review of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS);
- an update on the business case for the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC); and
- regular updates on the progress of the Schools Enhancement Programme.

*Officials left the meeting at 10.40am.*

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

#### **3.1 Area Planning Position Paper**

The Chairperson thanked Members for their contributions to the plenary debate on Monday 1 June 2015 on the Committee's Area Planning position paper.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking a formal response to the recommendations contained within the position paper.

### **3.2 Marshall Report – tackling child sexual exploitation**

The Chairperson reminded members that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety had recently issued an implementation plan for the Health and Social Care aspects of the Marshall Report which dealt with child sexual exploitation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking an update on the recommendations made by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in respect of schools and youth settings as part of the Marshall Report.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 27 May 2015.

## **5. Matters Arising**

### **5.1 SEND Bill**

The Committee noted further submissions from concerned parents to the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the submissions on its webpage and add them to its report on the Committee Stage of the SEND Bill.

## **6. The World Around Us – Department of Education / Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) briefing**

*The following officials joined the meeting at 10.46am.*

Noelle Buick, Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate; David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards, Department of Education; Fiona McArthur, Education and Training Inspectorate; and Nicola Byrne, Education and Training Inspectorate briefed the Committee on the ETI Report entitled "An Evaluation of the Implementation of The World Around Us".

*10.48am Nelson McCausland joined the meeting.*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*11.02am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.*

*11:21am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.*

*The officials left the meeting at 11.57am.*

*11.57am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a formal response to the recommendations in the report and an Action Plan for their implementation. In particular, Members sought clarity as to the additional actions that are to be undertaken:

- by the Department in order to encourage and support school leadership in the promotion of the teaching of science in primary schools;
- by the Department in order to ensure schools gain better access to existing curricular support and other assistance for primary science teaching;
- by ETI in order to better promote the sharing of good practice in primary schools in respect of science teaching; and
- by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in the production of additional resources to support primary science.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.00pm*

*The meeting resumed at 12.07pm with Peter Weir, Jonathan Craig, Robin Newton, Sandra Overend, Seán Rogers and Chris Hazzard.*

## **7. Committee Stage – Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill - Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance (CDSA)**

*Witnesses joined the meeting at 12.08pm.*

Alan Sheeran, Director, National Deaf Children's Society; Rachel Hogan, SENDIST Representative, Children's Law Centre; Heather Larkin, Education and Policy Officer, Special Educational Needs Advice Centre; and Kathryn Stevenson, Head of Legal Services, Children's Law Centre briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs Disability Bill.

*12.09pm Nelson McCausland re-joined the meeting.*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*12.50pm Robin Newton left the meeting.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 12.59pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Health and Social Care Board and the Education Authority asking that during their joint SEND briefing on 10 June they provide commentary on:

- reports that 81% of delays in the processing of statements of Special Educational Needs are a result of health advice not being provided in good time;
- the Education Authority's reported failure to provide a sufficient level of specificity in statements of Special Educational Needs in respect of support to be provided to children;
- suggestions that the most significant delays in the statementing process are associated with limited availability of Educational Psychology services; and
- whether the Education Authority intends to review its SEN policies in order to ensure that there is no differential adverse equality impact on Section 75 groups.

## **8. Correspondence**

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

**8.2** The Committee noted a request from Young Enterprise Northern Ireland (YENI) to meet with the Chairperson.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to meet with YENI, diaries permitting.

**8.3** The Committee noted an invitation from Carnegie UK to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to attend a barbecue on Wednesday 10 June 2015 at the Crumlin Road Gaol from 5.30pm which will follow the 'Towards a Well-being Framework- Taking the Next Steps' conference.

**8.4** The Committee noted a request from Ross McVittie – Member of the Youth Parliament to meet with the Chairperson and the Committee to discuss the 'Make your Mark – The UK's Largest Youth Consultation' Campaign.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to organise an informal meeting with Ross McVittie, diaries permitting.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to forward, with its endorsement, the relevant campaign letter to all post-primary schools, via C2K.

**8.5** The Committee noted correspondence from Dominic Bradley MLA - the Chairperson of the All Party Group (APG) on Autism - to the Committee seeking details of the Committee's action in respect of autism provision following receipt of the Parents Education as Autism Therapists (PEAT) petition.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the APG on Autism relevant correspondence from the Department of Education and Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

**8.6** The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for Members to attend the Inaugural NI Human Rights Commission Lecture and Reception on Tuesday 9 June 2015.

**8.7** The Committee noted an invitation from the Education Authority to Members to attend the meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum – Consultation Event for the Education Authority’s draft Equality Scheme on Thursday 25 June 2015.

**8.8** The Committee deferred consideration of a response from the Education Authority to Committee queries regarding the reported possible planned changes to provision at Strandtown Primary School and/or its feeder schools.

**8.9** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in respect of the Education and Training Inspectorate’s (ETI) role in Development Proposals.

**8.10** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in respect of funding for the Regional Vision Resource Base (RVRB) in 2015-16 – funding has been cut by 13%.

**8.11** The Committee noted an invitation from Stranmillis College to attend the Computing at School NI Conference on Friday 19 June 2015.

**8.12** The Committee noted an invitation from the Consul General of the People’s Republic of China to the Chairperson to attend an event on 8 June 2015.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend this event, diaries permitting.

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

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an informal meeting with Women’s Aid to discuss budget issues, scheduled for Tuesday 16 June 2015 at 1.00pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed, subject to Members’ availability to hold its next meeting either in the Field Studies Council’s outdoor learning centre in Derrygonnelly or in the Senate Chamber.

**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 Committee will meet again on Wednesday 10 June 2015 at 10.00am.

The location of the next meeting will be determined, as indicated above, by Members' availability.

*The meeting was adjourned at 1.06pm.*

**Peter Weir  
Chairperson, Committee for Education  
10 June 2015**