



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2015  
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Paul Stitt (Assistant Clerk)  
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)  
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

None

*The meeting commenced in public session at 9:38am.*

**1. Shared Education Bill – Departmental briefing**

The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned principal relating to school compliance with the Levels of Progression as a criterion for participation in the Shared Education Signature Project.

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9:40am.*

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice and Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education and Community Relations Team briefed the Committee on the Shared Education Bill.

*Danny Kennedy joined the meeting at 9:42am*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Sandra Overend joined the meeting at 9:53am.*

*Nelson McCausland joined the meeting at 9:53am.*

*Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10:10am.*

*Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 10:10am.*

*Danny Kennedy left the meeting at 10:25am.*

*The officials left the meeting at 10:47am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting urgent clarification in respect of concerns raised by schools regarding reported inconsistent advice from the Education Authority and differing treatment of schools which are said to be not complying with the Levels of Progression but are seeking to participate in the Shared Education Signature Project.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward, to the approved list of stakeholders, correspondence inviting submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish a press advertisement inviting submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

*The meeting moved into private session at 10:50am.*

*Robin Newton left the meeting at 10:51am.*

## **2. Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill – Committee Stage – Consideration of Report**

The Committee noted correspondence:

- from the Department of Education relating to the proposed Committee amendment in respect of a child's right to present evidence to SENDIST hearings; and
- from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) in relation to the proposed amendment which would require RQIA to oversee co-operation between the Education Authority and Health Trusts.

*The meeting moved into public session at 11:09am.*

The Committee considered a draft version of the report of the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a number of minor changes to the wording of the draft Report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider rescinding its previous decision in respect of the insertion of new Clause 8A which was to ensure that

children would always have the right to present evidence to a SENDIST hearing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it that its views on all of the provisions in new Clause 3A relating to co-operation between education and health bodies may alter subject to further consideration of the implications of the passage of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Steven Agnew MLA seeking his views on the potential overlap between the Committee's proposed amendments to the SEND Bill and the provisions of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill (NIA 44/11-16).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking early sight of any correcting or alternative amendments to the SEND Bill, prior to Consideration Stage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the final version of its Report on the SEND Bill at its next meeting.

*The meeting was suspended at 11:13am.*

*The meeting recommenced at 11:20am with the following Members: Peter Weir, Sandra Overend, Chris Hazzard, Trevor Lunn, Maeve McLaughlin, Seán Rogers and Pat Sheehan.*

### **3. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **4. Chairperson's Business**

#### **4.1 Support for the 16-19 Age Group**

The Chairperson referred Members to a recent written answer where the Minister for Education indicated that he had tasked officials, working with the Department for Employment and Learning, to produce "a joint statement on the range of policies and programmes that the two Departments deliver to support young people in the 16-19 age group, including identifying any gaps and actions required."

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking sight of the joint statement, when available.

### **5. Minutes of previous meeting**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 21 October 2015.

## **6. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

*Nelson McCausland rejoined the meeting at 11:21am.*

## **7. Free School Meals Entitlement & School Funding - Special Adviser Final Report**

*The Committee's Special Adviser joined the meeting at 11:22am.*

Dr Ian Shuttleworth, Special Advisor to the Committee, briefed on his final report regarding Free School Meal Entitlement and school funding.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 11:29am.*

*Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting at 11:38am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish Dr Shuttleworth's final report on its webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the need for a plenary debate on the report.

*The Committee's Special Adviser left the meeting at 11:44am.*

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 11:45am.*

*Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11:47am.*

## **8. Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill – Departmental briefing**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:48am.*

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-being and Alan Boyd, Head of Pupil Behaviour Management briefed the Committee on the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 12:05pm*

*The officials left the meeting at 12:18pm.*

The Committee noted that the Assembly Education Service and Assembly Research Service are undertaking focus group studies with school children on the subject of bullying. The Committee also noted that it is anticipated that the focus group findings will be presented as part of the Committee Stage report for the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward, to the approved list of stakeholders, correspondence inviting submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill, following the introduction of the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish a press advertisement inviting submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill, following the introduction of the Bill.

## 9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the consultation on the Teachers' (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department of Education following the conclusion of the consultation.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence - including advice reportedly from the Education Authority - from a concerned individual regarding proposals to cap the total value on exit payments for public sector employees.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel, for its information.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking clarity on the advice which had been provided to the concerned individual.

9.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding redundancies.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on reported reductions to CASS support and again seeking clarity as to how corporate risk associated with 300 redundancies in the Education Authority is to be managed.

9.5 The Committee noted a request from the Global Learning Programme for a meeting with the Chairperson.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to undertake the meeting, diary permitting.

**9.6** The Committee noted correspondence from the Controlled Schools Sectoral Support Body Working Group enclosing a copy of its 10<sup>th</sup> Newsletter.

**9.7** The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding the consultation on the Teaching Appointments Scheme and Scheme for the Management of Controlled Schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an explanation in respect of Controlled Schools with partially delegated budgets and clarity in respect of guidance to schools on would-be governors who are also disbarred directors.

**9.8** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in relation to disbarred directors becoming school governors.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this response to the concerned individual who raised the issue.

**9.9** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education indicating that the Minister is not to consult on significant revisions to the Home to School Transport policy in this mandate.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Education Authority indicating that it is to update the Committee on its consultation on gate-to-gate Home to School Transport provision in March 2016.

**9.10** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister including information on the Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme.

**9.11** The Committee noted correspondence from the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland enclosing a copy of the Capital Activity Report for the Department of Education – October 2015.

**9.12** The Committee noted an invitation from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to attend a conference entitled: Creating First Job Opportunities in Northern Ireland on Wednesday 18 November 2015 in the Dunmisk Suite, Stormont Hotel.

**9.13** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing a copy of guidance for parents in respect of School Starting Age.

**9.14** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in relation to the Special Schools Area Planning draft report.

The Committee noted that the report had been published on Tuesday 3 November 2015 and that the Department is to brief on this subject on 9 December 2015.

**9.15** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to correspondence from the Retired Teachers' Association (RTA) highlighting

reported Data Protection issues effecting the development of the RTA's membership list.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Retired Teachers' Association, for information.

**9.16** The Committee noted a Departmental response to Committee queries in relation to Entitlement Framework non-compliance.

**9.17** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority to Committee queries in relation to over-subscription at Strandtown Primary School.

**9.18** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in relation to the Department's Drugs and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) guidance to schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking feedback from the 2015-16 Education and Training Inspectorate review into primary school compliance in respect of the requirement to have an RSE policy.

**9.19** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in relation to the implementation of the Department of Education's Autism Strategy.

**9.20** The Committee noted an invitation from Eco-Schools to attend the Eco-Schools reception in the Long Gallery at 7.00pm on 12 November 2015.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend and co-host this event, diary permitting.

**9.21** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education on its November Monitoring Round returns.

## **10. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reschedule the Children's Bureau NI briefing and arrange additional meetings in order to accommodate the anticipated Committee Stages of the Shared Education Bill and the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that Members would attend the BT Young Scientist event in Dublin in January 2016 and that the visit should include meetings with other relevant stakeholders.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking information as to how it promotes participation by schools in Northern Ireland in the BT Young Scientist competition and event.

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

## **11. Any Other Business**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker indicating that next week's Committee meeting coincides with the Assembly's Remembrance event in the Great Hall.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that proceedings at the meeting on 11 November 2015 will be suspended at 10:45am and recommence at 11:10am in order to allow Members to attend the Remembrance event.

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 11 November 2015, at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:34pm.*

**Peter Weir**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**11 November 2015**