



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 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

**In Attendance:**

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

**Apologies:**

Pat Sheehan MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 9:45am with the following Members present: Peter Weir (Chairperson), Jonathan Craig, Trevor Lunn and Nelson McCausland. In the absence of a decision-making quorum, proceedings commenced in line with Standing Order 49(5).*

**1. Apologies**

This item of business was deferred.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

This item of business was deferred.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting**

This item of business was deferred.

**4. Matters Arising**

This item of business was deferred.

## **5. Shared Education Bill – Committee Stage - Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 9:47am.*

Gerry Lundy, Deputy Chief Executive, CCMS; and Michael Graham, Senior Education Adviser, CCMS briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

*Sandra Overend joined the meeting at 9:49am. The Committee achieved a decision-making quorum.*

*Robin Newton joined the meeting at 9:57am*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Danny Kennedy joined the meeting at 10:02am*

*Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10:02am*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 10:23am*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools seeking further information on alternative governance models for CCMS schools.

*Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 10:24am*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to proceed with a revised agenda.

## **6. Shared Education Bill – Committee Stage - Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (EC) and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 10:25am.*

Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, EC; Eileen Lavery, Head of Advice, Compliance and Legal, EC; David Russell, Deputy Director, NIHRC; and Fiona O'Connell, Researcher, NIHRC briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 10:30am*

*Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 10:54am*

*Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11:00am*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 11:06am*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission seeking information as to how it monitors compliance by the Department of Education in respect of the provision of the cultural rights of school children in line with the relevant international rights conventions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission seeking their views on the 'reasonable numbers' provisions within the Shared Education Bill and the extent to which these provisions comply with the requirements of equality / human rights legislation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek its views on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's assertion that the Bill was not compliant with human rights legislation.

## **7. Shared Education Bill – Committee Stage - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young (NICCY)**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 11:07am.*

Mairéad McCafferty Chief Executive, NICCY and Natalie Whelehan Senior Policy and Research Officer, NICCY briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

*Seán Rogers joined the meeting at 11:20am*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Maeve McLaughlin rejoined the meeting at 11:24am*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 11:29am*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on discussions (if any) with the Department for Employment and Learning in respect of its inclusion in the listed bodies in Clause 2 of the Shared Education Bill.

## **8. Shared Education Bill – Committee Stage - Rural Centre for Shared Education**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 11:30am.*

Lauri McCusker, Director of the Fermanagh Trust; and Catherine Ward, Shared Education Programme Advisor, Fermanagh Trust briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

*Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting at 11:40am*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 11:59am*

## **9. Shared Education Bill – Committee Stage – Transferors’ Representative Council (TRC)**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 12:00noon.*

Dr Peter Hamill, TRC; Gavin Norris, TRC and Rev Colin McClure, TRC briefed the Committee as part of the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Chris Hazzard left the meeting at 12:16pm*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 12:20pm*

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 12:20pm*

## **10. Apologies**

Apologies are as indicated above.

## **11. Chairperson’s Business**

### **11.1 Drugs Policy**

The Committee discussed recent press reports in respect of the availability of illegal drugs to school children.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on drugs-related incidents, exclusions or disciplinary action in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Police Service of Northern Ireland seeking information on drugs-related incidents in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Translink seeking information on drugs-related incidents, involving school-children, in Translink premises and seeking also clarification as to Translink’s responsibility in respect of preventative action.

### **11.2 Early Years Pathway**

The Chairperson advised Members that in written answers, the Department of Education had advised that applications to the new Early Years Pathway (which is to replace the Early Years Fund) are to be invited from early 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a Departmental briefing on the Early Years Pathway in January 2016.

### **11.3 Global Learning Partnership**

The Chairperson advised the Committee of an informal meeting with the Global Learning Partnership (GLP) on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

## **12. Minutes of previous meeting**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 25 November 2015.

## **13. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **14. Correspondence**

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

**14.2** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of changes to school inspection. The Committee also noted a response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers providing some feedback on the implementation of the Committee's inquiry recommendations in respect of school inspection.

**14.3** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of Education Authority redundancies.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on any planned reductions in the Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) and confirmation of the claims made recently in this regard by the National Association of Head Teachers. The Committee also agreed to seek information on the CASS assistance provided to schools in Formal Intervention in the past 1-2 years.

**14.4** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding a public consultation on proposals for a successor to DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework 2011-15

**14.5** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Elective Home Education.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Home Education Northern Ireland, for its information.

**14.6** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the legacy costs of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write again to the Department seeking an explanation of the RPI(x) reference and the impact on unitary payments of an increase in RPI. The Committee also sought information on the levels of community use of PFI schools; how this activity is monitored; and whether the use of schools by the community formed part of PFI contracts.

**14.7** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing further information on the resourcing of preventative education and details of related programmes for youth provision.

**14.8** The Committee noted an invitation from Stranmillis University College, Belfast to attend an exhibition and presentation on 'Newcomer Students' Education Rights: From Theory to Practice' on Thursday 10 December in Stranmillis.

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

**14.9** The Committee noted an invitation from the Education Authority to attend its Christmas concert in the Ulster Hall on Wednesday 9 December at 7.30pm.

**14.10** The Committee noted an invitation from the Ulster Teachers Union to attend the UTU Annual Conference 2016 in the Slieve Donard Hotel on Thursday 10 and Friday 11 March 2016.

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

**14.11** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to the cost of school uniforms.

**14.12** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance Personnel regarding the November monitoring round.

**14.13** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) regarding EU Priorities for 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee to consider its response to COFMDFM at a subsequent meeting.

**14.14** The Committee noted correspondence from COFMDFM enclosing the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels report for the period July – October 2015.

**14.15** The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) regarding the proposed cap on public sector exit payments.

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

## **15. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to meet at the earlier time of 9:30am on 9 December 2015.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department on the 2016-17 budget at its meeting on 16 December 2015.

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

## **16. Shared Education Bill – Informal Deliberations Table**

The Committee noted a table which summarised the commentary and possible amendments to the Shared Education Bill based on the written and oral submissions from stakeholders.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in response to Committee queries on the Shared Education Bill.

## **17. Any Other Business**

*Danny Kennedy declared an interest as his spouse is an employee of Markethill High School.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an oral briefing on its capital programme and the protocols it uses in selecting and approving capital builds.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment seeking clarification in respect of the reported removal of the GCSE History study component 'Northern Ireland and its Neighbours, 1965-85' from the curriculum.

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 9 December 2015, at 9.30am in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:38pm.*

**Peter Weir**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**9 December 2015**