



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH 2016  
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Peter Weir MLA (Chairperson)  
Sandra Overend MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Chris Hazzard MLA  
Dolores Kelly MLA  
Danny Kennedy MLA  
Trevor Lunn MLA  
Nelson McCausland MLA  
Maeve McLaughlin MLA  
Robin Newton 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 9:51am.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

**2.1 Special Schools – pre-school places**

The Chairperson noted recent press reports which referred to a Ministerial instruction to the Education Authority to review a decision to standardise patterns of pre-school attendance at Special Schools. Standardisation would have reportedly led to the conversion of all full-time pre-school places in the sector to part-time places only.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department and the Education Authority seeking clarification as to:

- the relevant decision-making process;

- the terms of reference and timing of the Education Authority review;
- the timescales and communication of a revised final decision;
- whether additional funding is to be made available for pre-school places in Special Schools;
- whether the standardisation in Special School pre-school provision is to be the prelude to similar changes in all mainstream pre-school provision.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to request an oral briefing from the Education Authority in relation to the above.

### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 2 March 2016.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

*Sandra Overend joined the meeting at 9:56am.*

*Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 9:57am.*

*Nelson McCausland joined the meeting at 9:57am.*

*The Committee revised the order of agenda items.*

### **5. Ministerial briefing on Budget 2016-17**

*The Minister and Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9:57am.*

John O'Dowd MLA, the Minister for Education; Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance; Philip Irwin, Director of Infrastructure and Investment; David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards; and Brenda Shearer, Head of the Youth and Schools in the Community Team briefed the Committee in respect of Budget 2016-17; the withdrawal of GCSE examining bodies; and the wind-up of the Youth Council; etc.

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding changes to National Insurance contributions and the impact on teachers' employers' budgets.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Department in response to Committee queries regarding the DE capital programme progress and protocols.

*Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10:03am.*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10:46am.  
Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11:24am.*

*The Minister and Departmental officials left the meeting at 11:31am.  
Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11:31am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on school budget surpluses and deficits, broken down by sector.

*Proceedings were suspended at 11:31am.*

*Proceedings resumed at 11:45am with the following Members: Peter Weir, Sandra Overend, Dolores Kelly, Danny Kennedy, Trevor Lunn, Maeve McLaughlin and Pat Sheehan.*

## **6. 2011-16 Legacy Report – written briefing**

The Committee considered the draft Committee for Education Legacy Report covering the 2011-16 mandate.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) regarding the Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its 2011-16 Legacy Report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the report on the Committee's website.

## **7. Statutory Rule: Curriculum Complaints Tribunal – written briefing**

The Committee noted a tabled copy of the following Statutory Rule: 111/2016 The Complaints Tribunal (Curriculum and Related Matters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

*Nelson McCausland rejoined the meeting at 11:50am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the following motion:

“That the Committee for Education has considered Statutory Rule 111/2016 The Complaints Tribunal (Curriculum and Related Matters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and, subject to the findings of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objections to the Rule.”

*Robin Newton rejoined the meeting at 11:53am.*

## **8. Correspondence**

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

**8.2** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister enclosing a response from the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister in respect of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD) study,

**8.3** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Special Schools Regional Plan – confirming that a year 1 action plan is to be produced by July 2016

**8.4** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the 'ICT and me' Report.

**8.5** The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education enclosing information regarding timescales etc. for political appointees of the Board of the Education Authority.

**8.6** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister enclosing a copy of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels Report November 2015 – February 2016.

**8.7** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning enclosing a copy of correspondence to the Department of Education regarding the new Careers Strategy.

**8.8** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Save the Children's 'READ ON. GET ON.' Campaign.

**8.9** The Committee noted correspondence from David Finnigan, Speech and Debate Coach, Beverly Hills High School regarding a proposal to expand secondary school Speech and Debate teams.

**8.10** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Development Proposals and grammar streams in post-primary schools.

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

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reschedule its visit to Glenveagh Special School until immediately after business had been formally conducted at its meeting on Wednesday 16 March 2016.

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

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **11. Implementation of the Marshall Report Recommendations - Departmental briefing**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:54am.*

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-being; Angela Kane, Head of the Pupil Support Team; and Brenda Shearer, Head of the Youth and Schools in the Community Team briefed the Committee in respect of the implementation of the Marshall Report recommendations.

*Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11:55am*

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

*Dolores Kelly left the meeting at 11:59am.*

*Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting at 12:01pm.*

*The officials left the meeting at 12:17pm.*

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 16 March 2016, at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:17pm.*

***Minutes agreed by correspondence 18 March 2016***