



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2016  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)  
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
David Hilditch MLA  
Carla Lockhart MLA  
Jennifer McCann MLA  
Colin McGrath MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)

**Apologies:**

Phillip Logan MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA  
Catherine Seeley MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 10:08am.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were as indicated above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

**2.1 Programme for Government**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had scheduled a Programme for Government stakeholder event on Wednesday 19 October 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that if the draft Departmental PfG Action Plans are issued for consultation on or before Monday 17 October 2016, the event will go ahead as planned. Otherwise, the

Committee agreed that the event will be re-scheduled for 16 November 2016.

## **2.2 Informal meeting – St. Mary’s University College**

The Chairperson briefed Members on a recent informal meeting with Professor Finn, the principal of St. Mary’s University College.

*Mr Barry McElduff made a Declaration of Interest that a family member was a student at St. Mary’s University College.*

- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking:
- sight of the teacher training approved enrolment policy;
  - information on the level of demand predicted by the Teacher Demand Model;
  - clarification as to the levels of initial teacher education recruitment which the Department is to set for 2017-19 for each institution; and
  - clarification on DE’s policy in respect of continuous professional development for teachers including additional training and mentoring support for principals.

## **2.3 Public Sector Voluntary Exit Scheme**

The Chairperson referred Members to the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on the public sector Voluntary Exit Scheme and the reported limited access to the scheme for Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspectors.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification as to the minimum number of professional inspectors required to discharge ETI’s duties, as set out in legislation.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking further information on new arrangements in respect of the Curriculum Advisory Support Service.

## **2.4 West Belfast Partnership Board**

The Chairperson referred to recent informal contacts with the West Belfast Partnership Board

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to meet with the West Belfast Partnership Board and a delegation of education inspectors from Bulgaria on Monday 17 October 2016.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 5 October 2016.

## **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**5. Department of Education – oral evidence - Special Educational Needs Framework**

Departmental witnesses joined the meeting at 10:18am.

Caroline Gillan, Director of Inclusion and Well-being; Sharon Lawlor, Head of Special Education and Inclusion Review Team; and Jan Matthews, Special Education and Inclusion Review Team provided oral evidence to the Committee.

*Mr David Hilditch joined the meeting at 10:30am.*

Witnesses left the meeting at 11:14am.

**6. Minister for Education – oral evidence - Pre-School Special School Review / Post-Primary Transfer**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department and the Education Authority regarding pre-school provision in Special Schools.

The Minister and Departmental witnesses joined the meeting at 11:15am.

Peter Weir MLA, Minister for Education; Caroline Gillan, Director of Inclusion and Well-being; and David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards provided oral evidence to the Committee.

The Minister and Departmental witnesses left the meeting at 12:33pm.

*The order of agenda items was altered.*

**7. Department of Education - oral evidence - Special Educational Needs Framework**

The Committee resumed the evidence session on the Special Educational Needs Framework.

Departmental witnesses re-joined the meeting at 12:33pm.

Caroline Gillan, Director of Inclusion and Well-being; Sharon Lawlor, Head of Special Education and Inclusion Review Team; and Jan Matthews, Special Education and Inclusion Review Team resumed their oral evidence to the Committee.

*Mr David Hilditch left the meeting at 12:34pm.*

Departmental witnesses left the meeting at 12:39pm.

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

- information on the current level of provision in respect of the Educational Psychology Service including details of any gaps in provision and plans to enhance the Service;
- information on statutory SEN assessments including the definition of a valid exception to the statutory timescales, an update on the number of statements provided outside of the statutory timescales and a breakdown of the associated reasons and the additional time taken; and
- clarification in respect of reported limits on the number of hours Special Educational Need support provided to schools and DE/EA's plans and timescales to revise this practice.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- sight of the Engagement Strategy for the review of pre-school provision in Special Schools; and
- an update and an explanation in respect of the 2016-17 demand for pre-school provision in Special Schools including pupil teacher ratios.

*Mr David Hilditch rejoined the meeting at 12:44pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking clarification both as to the policy basis for his decision in respect of changes to post-primary transfer policy and in respect of the delayed publication of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD) report.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Executive Office seeking sight of the ILiAD report and an explanation in respect of the delays in its publication.

## **8. Correspondence**

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

**8.2** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding educational provision for children and young people in the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre and other centres.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to this matter following its visit to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre on Wednesday 26 October 2016.

**8.3** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the effect of Brexit on EU-funded Educational Programmes.

**8.4** The Committee noted a response from the Minister regarding issues discussed at the North South Ministerial Council in education sector format on 21 September 2016.

**8.5** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the effect of Brexit on student mobility.

**8.6** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the timescale for the publication of the Childcare Strategy.

**8.7** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its Home to School transport policy. The Department is to provide oral evidence on this subject on 9 November 2016.

**8.8** The Committee noted correspondence from the Field Studies Council seeking a meeting with the Committee on the benefits of outdoor learning.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Field Studies Council to an informal meeting.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to schedule a visit to the Field Studies Council centre in Derrygonnelly together with a visit to shared education projects in Fermanagh, later in the session.

**8.9** The Committee noted correspondence from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick seeking to provide a briefing to the Committee on its report entitled 'Children's Independent Mobility on the island of Ireland'.

**Agreed:** Owing to pressure of business, the Committee agreed to decline the briefing.

**8.10** The Committee noted a copy of correspondence regarding De La Salle College.

**8.11** The Committee noted correspondence from the Buddy Bear Trust.

**8.12** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the inclusion of the teaching of sustainability issues in School Development Plans.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Global Learning Programme.

**8.13** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project.

**8.14** The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual regarding poor careers advice provided to a student seeking a university place.

**8.15** The Committee noted a response from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment providing information on GCSE entries and resources for the study of Ulster Scots.

**8.16** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office including a research paper on Non-EU UK Treaty Obligations.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reschedule the evidence session on the Children and Young People's Strategy for 30 November 2016.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that, if necessary, it would reschedule evidence sessions on 19 October 2016 in order to receive a Departmental briefing on the Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to undertake training on effective questioning on 11 January 2017.

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

## **10. Any Other Business**

The Committee noted that that a BT schools coding initiative may be launched shortly and that this may provide a suitable precursor for a Committee visit to the coding laboratory in Stranmillis University College.

## **11. Date, Time, Place of next meeting**

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 19 October 2016, at 10.00am in St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls, Belfast.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:56pm.*

**Barry McElduff**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**19 October 2016**