



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 6 JULY 2016  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)  
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
Carla Lockhart MLA  
Jennifer McCann MLA  
Colin McGrath MLA  
Catherine Seeley MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Cathie White (Assembly Clerk) – *item 6 only*  
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)  
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

David Hilditch MLA  
Philip Logan MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 2:05pm.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are as indicated above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

**2.1 Financial Statements**

The Committee noted that 2015-16 financial statements had been made available for: the Department for Education; the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension

Scheme; the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education; and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

## **2.2 Pre-school provision in Special Schools**

The Chairperson informed members that he had informally discussed pre-school provision in Special Schools with the Chairperson of the Education Authority. He advised Members that he had again raised the Committee's concerns in respect of this important issue.

## **2.3 Conductive Education**

The Chairperson reminded Members that following its previous meeting, the Committee had written to the Department and the Education Authority seeking clarity as to how support for conductive education was to be provided.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 29 June 2016.

## **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **5. Education Authority – oral briefing – Special Schools Pre-school Provision update**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister and from members of the Parents' Equal Education Coalition.

The Committee also noted correspondence from Unison relating to management issues in a Special School.

Witnesses joined the meeting at 2:12pm.

Gavin Boyd, Interim Chief Executive, Education Authority; and Dr Clare Mangan, Director of Children and Young People's Services, Education Authority briefed the Committee.

Witnesses left the meeting at 3:33pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking a briefing and highlighting considerable dissatisfaction in respect of the management of changes to pre-school provision in Special Schools – noting particularly the case of Fleming Fulton School - and suggesting that the Education Authority should reconsider the (temporary) conversion of any full-time places to part-time, especially where

children have complex needs or are have excessive travelling times to pre-school.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Education Authority advising of the above and seeking:

- details of the equality screening underpinning the relevant decision-making process;
- information on the membership and timescales for the consultative groups;
- a breakdown of pre-school Special School demand in terms of need;
- information on the impact of the temporary changes on a school-by-school basis including details of the expected enrolment and vacant capacity; and
- clarity in respect of pre-school places at Fleming Fulton School.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to consider – as part of its strategic planning for the next session - a formal inquiry into pre-school provision including perhaps a stakeholder event.

*The Committee moved to private session at 3:40pm.*

*The Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure replaced the Clerk to the Committee for Education for the next agenda item.*

## **6. Comhairle na Gaelscolaoichta – oral briefing - IME nurture provision**

Witnesses joined the meeting at 3:44pm.

Liam Ó Flannagáin, Interim Chief Executive; and Maire Ní hEagartaigh, Principal of Bunscoil Bheann Mhadigan and Board member of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta briefed the Committee.

*Ms Jennifer McCann left the meeting at 3.58pm.*

Witnesses left the meeting at 4:21pm.

Some Members indicated their support for further development of the Irish Medium post-primary sector.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity on the funding position for the existing 20 Signature project and 10 other Department for Education funded nurture units and it's plans to roll-out the provision across the school network as recommended in the relevant reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate and Queen's University Belfast.

*The Clerk to the Committee for Education returned for the remaining agenda items.  
The Committee moved to public session at 4.26pm.*

## **7. Correspondence**

- 7.1** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.
- 7.2** The Committee noted an invitation to Rathcoole Primary for a Quality Mark Award Presentation on 7 September 2016.
- 7.3** The Committee noted correspondence from Autism NI and the National Autistic Society seeking a meeting on the Broken Promises report.
- 7.4** The Committee noted notification of the next Joint Consultative Forum meeting.
- 7.5** The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee forwarding a copy of a letter regarding Area Planning and Anamar School.
- 7.6** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office forwarding an Assembly Research paper on outcomes based Programme for Government measures.
- 7.7** The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to visit Belfast Met.

## **8. Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an introductory briefing from Comhairle na Gaelscolaoichta following recess.

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

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 7 September 2016, at 10.00am in Tor Bank Special School.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4:31pm.*

**Barry McElduff**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education 7 September 2016**