



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

5 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Danny Baker MLA
Mr David Brooks MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA



The meeting commenced at 2:00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson reminded members that as part of its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda the Committee would be holding a stakeholder event in the Long Gallery on Tuesday 11 November 2025 from 5 to 7pm.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:04pm.

The Committee discussed the Minister of Education's visit to Israel and the use of departmental resources.

Mr Brooks made a declaration of interest that he took part in the visit to Israel being discussed.

Ms Hunter proposed the following motion:

'The Education Committee records a vote of no confidence in the Education Minister as a result of his trip to Israel last week and education stakeholders' concerns for departmental political neutrality'.

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 3; Abstain 0.

Ayes

Mr Nick Mathison MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Mr Danny Baker MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Noes

Mr David Brooks MLA
Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education seeking:

- an oral briefing on this matter;
- sight of his report on the visit.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters arising

The Committee considered an Evaluation report on the impact of the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA); an Assembly Research and Information Service (RAISE) paper on outdoor education; a record of the informal meeting with NIFSA; a Queens University Belfast review of outdoor learning; and a draft Committee motion on Outdoor Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the motion as drafted.

The Committee considered a RAISE Paper on decoding phonics.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with academics on the impact on literacy of TransformED.

The Committee agreed the draft Terms of Reference for a proposed committee legislation on school uniforms.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on proposed legislation in closed with the Assembly Bill Office.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee discussed the Education Authority's power to prosecute parents of children with Special Educational Needs for non-attendance of their child at school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an oral briefing from the Educational Welfare Service.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 22 October 2025.

6. Curriculum Review - Oral Briefing by Reclaim the Enlightenment

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Reclaim the Enlightenment and a report 'Is Our Education System Failing Our Children?'

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:33pm.

Mr John Gray, Chair, Reclaim the Enlightenment

Ms Helen Armstrong, counsellor and coach

Mr Jim Curran, teacher and literacy advisor

Ms Ann Marrion, educational psychologist

Mr James Ward, lecturer

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 3:55pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:02pm.



Northern Ireland Assembly

7. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda - Briefing by Education Authority officials

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority and a press release from the Education Authority on savings measures.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:02pm.

Mr Dale Hanna, Chief Operations Officer, Education Authority

Mr Tomas Adell, Chief Transformation Officer – SEN, Education Authority

Mr Robbie McGreevy, Chief People Officer, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on SEN provision.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 5:00pm.

Mrs Guy left the meeting at 5:02pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority regarding its press release and seeking:

- a written briefing on proposed savings and the impact of these on Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) settings; and
- a written briefing on the operation of Local IMPACT Teams (LITs).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Infrastructure to establish whether there is any correlation between taxi regulation and high costs to education of suitable transport for SEN pupils.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted the 48th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.



Northern Ireland Assembly

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure seeking the Committee's views on the Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Education Authority for policy information on the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) on the school estate.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education iro the Parental School Admission Survey.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) who raised this issue with it, seeking its views.

8.5 The Committee noted an invitation from the Evangelical Alliance to an event 'Igniting the response to the Lost Boys' crisis'.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Partnership for Inclusive Education providing a response to the SEN Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan 2025 2030.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing with the Partnership for Inclusive Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

8.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Teaching Council Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a visit to the General Teaching Council.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education regarding a Written Ministerial Statement in relation to a Judicial Review on Reasonable Numbers.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a Commissioning Note for a December Monitoring Round.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing an Analysis of 2025-26 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.



Northern Ireland Assembly

8.11 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with correspondents that had written to it on this matter.

8.12 / 8.13/ 8.45 The Committee noted Correspondence from Individuals regarding comments by Mr Burrows at its meeting on 22 October 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session to discuss the issues raised at 5:31pm.

The Committee returned to public session at 5:36pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondents summarising its discussions on this matter and signposting them to the Assembly Commissioner for Standards.

8.14 to 8.28, and 8.42 – 8.44, 8.51 The Committee noted written submissions to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the written submissions to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the correspondents to attend its stakeholder event on Tuesday 11 November 2025.

8.29/ 8.31/8.32/8.37/8.50 The Committee noted correspondence from individuals raising concerns regarding the Minister's visit to Israel and associated communications.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the correspondents indicating the action it has agreed to take on this matter.

8.30 The Committee noted an invitation to a Launch of Education Access in Ireland Report 25th November, Mansion House, Dublin.

8.33 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a complaint regarding transportation for a school pupil.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent indicating that its remit is not to engage on individual complaints and seeking their views for its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

8.34 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association providing a briefing paper on aligning the curriculum with the needs of industry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Curriculum Review Taskforce.

8.35 The Committee noted the Education Authority 2024-25 Annual Report and Account.

8.36 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding SEN provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the response to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

8.39 The Committee noted Correspondence from Jonathan Buckley MLA on behalf of a constituent recommending his participation in the SEN Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda and invite the individual's participation.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 5:51pm

8.40 The Committee noted correspondence from the British Heart Foundation NI on the Assessment of the provision of CPR training in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange oral briefings from the British Heart Foundation NI and the Department of Education on this matter.

8.41 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the consultation on the Future of CCEA Qualifications.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on this matter.

8.46 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health on the work of the Department of Health supporting Children attending SEN schools.



Northern Ireland Assembly

8.47 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing additional information following its governance update briefing on the recommendations of the PAC report into Special Educational Needs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this at its next meeting.

8.48 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority providing updates on four areas of SEN Support.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Mrs Mason rejoined the meeting at 5:55pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the forward work programme as drafted.

11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed by the Committee.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 November 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
12 November 2025