



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

30 April 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
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason 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 Peter Martin MLA

Apologies:

Mr Colin Crawford MLA



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

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Colin Crawford MLA.

2. Chairperson's Business

2:1 The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with departmental officials on restraint and seclusion in educational settings on 8 April 2025

2:2 The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with the Royal College of Nursing on restraint and seclusion in educational settings on 29 April 2025.

2:3 The Committee noted correspondence from Next Step Transitions (NST) regarding support for young autistic people as they transition from school to the next phase of their education, training or employment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the Education Authority.

3. Declaration of Interests

Mr Mathison made a declaration of interest that his wife is employed by Angel Eyes NI.

Mr Brooks made a declaration of interest that his wife is a member of the Board of Governors for Mitchell House School.



4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from Cubbie regarding its sensory hub.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 9 April 2025.

6. Special Educational Needs - Oral Briefing by the Special Schools Strategic Leadership Group

The Committee noted papers provided by the Special Schools Strategic Leadership Group.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:06pm:

Mr Colin Ward, Chairperson Special Schools Strategic Leadership Group

Ms Roz McFeeters, Vice Chair of the Special Schools Strategic Leadership Group

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

7. Operational aspects of SEN Transformation - Oral Briefing by EA Officials

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:02pm:

Mr Dale Hanna, Director of Children & Young People's Services, Education Authority

Ms Clar McKenna, Interim Assistant Director Special Schools and Specialist Provisions, Education Authority

Ms Elaine Craig, Interim Asst Director, SEND Statutory Support Services, Education Authority



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Ms Gillian Cuthbert, Interim Assistant Director SEND Support Services, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health seeking regular updates on the Public Health Agency review of medical support in special schools.

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

- An update on Capital investment in new special schools, including locations and timelines;
- An update on the proposed outcomes framework for monitoring and evaluation of the delivery plan;
- An update on DE medicine in schools guidance;
- An update on proposed revised SEND legislation and justiciability of the graduated response framework;
- Information on cradle to grave progression pathways for special educational needs students once placed; and
- Information on resourcing for Local Impact Teams.

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

- Information on the findings of the Education Authority's review of optimal pupil numbers in special schools;
- An outline of estate proposals to return special schools their surrendered space and in general to remedy the detriment to regulation caused by incompatible school environments;
- An update on how, pending the outcome of the review of nurses, they can provide additional staffing support in special schools for pupils with medical needs currently catered to by teachers and learning support assistants.

8. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral Briefing by the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The briefing was postponed to the Committee meeting on 7 May 2025.



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The Committee adjourned at 4:19pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:25pm.

9. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral Briefing by RalSe

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:26pm.

Ms Gillian Kane, Research Officer, NIA Research Office

Mr Nathan Mulholland, Research Officer, NIA Research Office

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the research paper.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking further information on the issues raised in the research paper.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

10.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on training provided by Angel Eyes NI to support children with visual impairment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Angel Eyes NI.

10.3 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the use of Restraint and Seclusion in educational settings.

10.4 The Committee noted the 37th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

10.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding a joint briefing from the Assembly Education Service and Speakers for Schools.

10.6 The Committee noted correspondence from Outscape regarding a webinar.



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10.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland about its Classroom RevivR programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on the RevivR programme.

10.8 The Committee noted additional information provided by the Economic and Social Research Institute following an oral briefing on 2 April 2025.

10.9 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts for the Department of Education Teachers' Pension Scheme.

10.10 The Committee noted an invitation from the Open University to the launch of a report 'Learnings from Why Riot? Addressing the whys beneath youth violence'

10.11 The Committee noted a response from Minister of Finance providing an update on digital transformation proposals.

10.12 The Committee noted correspondence from INEQE Safeguarding Group about Safer Schools NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written briefing on Safer Schools NI.

10.13 The Committee noted Correspondence from Angel Eyes NI regarding the School Uniforms Bill.

10.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing additional information following a briefing on the capital programme on 5 March 2025.

10.15 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding concerns about AccessNI checks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the correspondent who raised the matter.

10.16 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding the Scoil Spreagtha Scheme.

10.17 The Committee noted an invitation from the Minister of Education to a TransformED School Leaders Conference.

10.18 The Committee noted a copy of the Minister of Education's oral statement on the NSMC Education sector meeting on 2 April 2025

10.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) regarding the School Uniforms Bill.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with NICCY on the School Uniforms Bill.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Education to provide written briefings on TransformED, and legislative proposals to extend school leaving age.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold additional weekly meetings to consider the School Uniforms Bill.

12. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed education on the United Nations Rights of the Child and Global Citizenship.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ascertain the timings of its curriculum review exercise so such considerations may be reflected in a timely manner.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 2:00pm.



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The meeting was adjourned at 5:04pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
7 May 2025