



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

14 January 2026

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

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

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Apologies:

Mr Gary Middleton MLA



The meeting commenced at 2:02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with NACOA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the meeting papers with the Department of Education curriculum review team.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the meeting papers with the Education Authority asking that they make pupils aware of the resources provided by NACOA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the meeting papers with the Committee for Health.

The Committee discussed the Committee Bill to allow all pupils to wear trousers as part of school uniform.

The Chairperson reminded members to share any feedback on the draft report of the Committee inquiry into RSE with the Committee Clerk.

The Committee discussed recent media reporting on the draft budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education asking:

- what is his agenda for transformation within education to deliver services in the most affordable way: and
- has he identified any structural aspects of the system that can be addressed to deliver the system more efficiently.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.



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4. Matters arising

The Committee noted a briefing paper from RalSe providing an overview covering SEN statistics and service delivery.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the paper to its Committee Inquiry papers.

The Committee discussed SEN placements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education asking that he makes an oral statement to the Assembly providing an update on SEN placements.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 7 January 2026.

Ms Hunter joined the meeting at 2:15pm.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:15pm.

6. General Teaching Council Bill - Oral Briefing by the Teaching Unions

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:15pm.

Mr Justin McCamphill, NASUWT

Mr Mark McTaggart, INTO

Mr Stephen McCord, UTU

Ms Joanne Whyte, NAHT

Ms Bronagh Wright, NEU



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The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the General Teaching Council Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a further briefing with NITC on TransformED.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a further briefing with the Youth Assembly on TransformED.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) regarding the Draft Budget 2026.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual seeking to present a petition on concern about the future of Christianity and Christian ethos within Northern Ireland's education system to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond indicating that SO22 provides a mechanism for a petition to be presented by an individual Assembly Member to the Assembly.

7.4 The Committee noted an invitation from Middletown Centre for Autism to a Best Practice Day on 22nd January 2026.

7.5 The Committee noted a Ministerial Statement on the draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange oral briefings with the Department of Education and NAHT on the strategy.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education notifying it of an Oral Ministerial statement on 23 Jan 2026.



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7.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the Minister of Education's visit to Israel.

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

7.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on School Uniform.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education:

- Seeking clarification on guidance regarding pupils wearing coats to school, including restrictions on style and colour, and the provision of space for storage in schools; and
- Asking the Minister to amend guidelines to allow all pupils the choice to wear trousers.

7.9 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to attend the Blackboard Awards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend the event.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding SEAG test arrangements for November 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking if it had any authority to direct primary schools to allow their premises to be used to facilitate the transfer tests.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.



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12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
21 January 2026