



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

22 October 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
Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Ms Cara Hunter 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)

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



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1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) on Tuesday 21 October 2025.

2.2 The Committee discussed a response from the Department of Education on the work of the Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:03pm,

Agreed: The Committee to arrange an oral briefing with the Department of Education on the work of the Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, The Children's Law Centre and the Royal College of Nursing on their reasons for leaving the Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group.

2.3 The Chairperson informed the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson had met with Department of Education officials regarding oral briefings for its Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue to take evidence on the review until January 2026.

3. Declaration of Interest

Mrs Guy made a Declaration of Interest that she is the parent of pupil at Assumption Grammar school.



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4. Matters arising

The Committee noted a written briefing paper on the process for introducing a Committee Bill.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to be briefed on progress on this matter at each meeting.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 15 October 2025.

6. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:10pm.

Mr Chris Donnelly, Principal, St John the Baptist Primary School

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

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 3:16 pm.

The Committee resumed at 3:25pm.

7. SEN Policy Perspective - Oral Briefing by the Minister of Education

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:25pm.

Mr Paul Givan, Minister of Education, Department of Education

Mrs Janis Scallon, Director for SEN Reform and Inclusion Development, Department of Education



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Ms Deirdre Ward, Director for SEN Strategic Policy, Department of Education

Ms Debbie Mingout, Deputy Director for Investments and Infrastructure, Department of Education

Dr Suzanne Kingon, Acting Deputy Secretary, Policy, Delivery & Infrastructure, Department of Education

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

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 4:55pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking further information on pupils reported as unaccounted for in the school system by the Education Authority.

8. End of Session Report

The Committee discussed its draft end of session report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with its End of Session Report as amended.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted the 47th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9.3 The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People to an event for World Children's Day.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Simon Community providing research on childhood adversity and homelessness.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Simon Community on the research.



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9.5 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education providing an update on the Careers Action Plan.

9.6 The Committee noted an invitation from Live Music Now to a Musical Connections NI Event.

9.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on governance at Assumption Grammar School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Assumption Grammar School Parents Group that raised this issue with it.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking it to share the response it received from the Education Authority on this matter.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Association of Educational Psychologists regarding the Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Association of Educational Psychologists to provide it with an oral briefing on the Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.

9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

9.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on Shared Strategies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Irish-medium sector on the Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on safeguarding systems from the Department of Education and the Education Authority.

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

11. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed the SEN Capital plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office Committee seeking an update on progress of papers at the Executive.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
5 November 2025