



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

25 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Danny Baker MLA
Ms Cheryl Brownlee MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
Mr Peter Martin 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:

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Apologies:

Mr Colin Crawford MLA



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

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Crawford.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted a transcript of the Committee's informal briefing with the Schoolwear Association on Tuesday 17 June 2025 regarding the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the transcript in the papers for the Bill.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee seeking information in relation to its review of Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a draft response should be prepared for consideration following recess.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 17 June 2025 and 18 June 2025.



6. Learning for Life and Work - Oral briefing by the Youth Assembly

The Committee noted a Youth Assembly Education Committee report on Learning for Life and Work.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:05pm.

Mr Harrison Kerr, Member of Youth Assembly, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Mr Daniel McGucken, Member of Youth Assembly, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Lucy Wong, Member of Youth Assembly, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Willow Sachno, Member of Youth Assembly, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Weronika McNulty, Member of Youth Assembly, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the report on Learning for Life and Work.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter made a declaration of interest that she does an hour of work each month on AI ethics with an AI firm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education seeking his views on the recommendations in the report and encouraging him to meet with the Youth Assembly on this matter.

The Committee adjourned at 2:58pm

The Committee resumed at 3:01pm

7. Special Educational Needs Placements - Oral briefing by the Education Authority

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority.



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The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:01pm.

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

Mr Peter Canavan, Programme Director SEND Capacity Project, Education Authority

Mr Seamus Bradley, Head of Service - Shared Education and Sectoral Support, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on placements.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on the number of SEN pupils receiving placements on time compared to non-SEN pupils.

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

- A clear view of the Minister's powers to direct schools in regards to SPIMs and what action he intends to take;
- Full details of the SEN reform agenda;
- Information on an inclusive policy and how this would operate in regard to finding placements for all pupils;
- Clarity on when the investment for special schools will be released; and
- Sight of the operational plan for SEN provision.

The Committee adjourned at 4:30pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:39pm.

8. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

The following witnesses joined the meeting via teleconference at 4:39pm.

Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton, Director of Transport and Food in Schools, Department of Education



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Mrs Shirley Sweeney, Head of School Uniform Policy Team, Department of Education

There was a question and answer session.

9. Formal Clause-by-Clause consideration of the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

The Committee noted that Formal Clause-by-Clause consideration of the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill would take place on Tuesday 1 July 2025.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

10.2 The Committee noted a copy of a response from the Education Authority to the Committee for Health Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services.

10.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Think 1265 campaign on teacher workload.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Think 1265 indicating that a briefing would be arranged as soon as possible.

10.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman regarding the School Uniforms Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to papers on the Bill.

10.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland regarding the School Uniforms Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to papers on the Bill.

10.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education providing the 'Careers Action Plan 2025-2028'.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to revisit the wording of the draft motion on post-19 education in light of this development.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an oral briefing from the Department of Education on the action plan.

10.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for the Economy on engagement with Young Enterprise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Young Enterprise.

10.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing a breakdown of funding and progress on SEN projects.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.10 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.11 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.12 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.13 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision..

10.14 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education asking how he plans to engage across the Executive and particularly with the Minister for Health and the Minister for the Economy on transition planning.

10.15 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the School Uniforms Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to papers on the Bill.



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10.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Millisle Primary School on an assessment of the 'Boots and Books' intervention which provides a joined-up approach to Literacy, Health and Wellbeing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the author of the assessment.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 5:34pm.

10.17 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding School Patrol Crossing issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with St Francis Primary School, Lurgan who raised this matter with it.

10.18 The Committee noted correspondence from individual regarding School Inspections.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the ETI for a response to the issues raised.

10.19 The Committee noted correspondence from Phoenix Education Centre on the work of the centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on the work of the centre.

10.20 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.21 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.22 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.

10.23 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding post-19 SEN provision.



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11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee discussed carrying out a time-limited inquiry into the provision of Special Educational Needs services.

Agreed: The Committee provisionally agreed to hold an inquiry into the provision of Special Educational Needs services and to consider the scope and terms of reference for this following recess.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Minister of Education.

12. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Tuesday 1 July 2025 at 9:15am in Room 29 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
2 July 2025