



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

26 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)

Ms Claire Milliken (Senior Assistant Clerk) (Item 6 only)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



## Northern Ireland Assembly

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

### **1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Committee noted that the General Teaching Council Bill and Explanatory Memorandum, and that the Second Stage of the Bill is scheduled for Tuesday 2nd December 2025.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education (DE) notifying it of the Minister's intention to issue a written statement on the response to Storm Amy.

### **3. Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **4. Matters arising**

The Committee noted correspondence from SENCOs who briefed it at its meeting on 15 October and a SENCO workload survey results. The Committee noted that the Department of Education had asked that it share these documents and that the witnesses are content to share these.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the papers with the Department of Education.

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

The committee noted a response from the correspondent who initially contacted the Committee regarding the regulation of private tutoring.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it awaited a response from the Department of Education and the Department of Health on this matter.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share correspondence with the Committee for Health.

### 5. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 19 November 2025.

### 6. Proposed Committee Bill

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 2:06pm.

The Committee discussed options for a Committee Bill in relation to school uniforms.

Ms Hunter joined the meeting at 2:11pm via teleconference facilities

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:11pm via teleconference facilities

The Committee moved to public session at 2:21pm.

The Committee considered a range of options and parameters. Some members advised that they would prefer a wide-ranging bill addressing not only trousers for girls but also affordability objectives; other members advised that they didn't see the need for any bill to proceed at this time but would not stand in the way of a single-issue Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to proceed with a Committee Bill around a single objective, namely to mandate the right for girls to wear trousers (rather than skirts) as part of regulation school uniform.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## **7. Educational Underachievement - Oral Briefing by the Phoenix Education Centre**

The Committee noted a briefing paper and presentation from Phoenix Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:22pm.

Ms Emma Shaw, Executive Director, Phoenix Education Centre

Mr Malaki Beggs, Young Person, Phoenix Education Centre

Ms Victoria Black, Young Person, Phoenix Education Centre

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the work of the centre.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority highlighting systemic barriers to organisations working in schools, and seeking permission for schools to work in partnership with external organisations.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking what flexibility can be built into the system to allow funding to follow pupils from one setting to another; for information on pathways back to education for children excluded from schools; and how it could be made less costly for external pupils to sit exams.

The Committee adjourned at 3:22pm.

The Committee resumed at 3:31pm.

## **8. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – Oral Briefing by Education Authority Officials on Oral Briefing by EA Officials on Local Impact Teams’**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:31pm.

Dr Tomas Adell, Chief Transformation Officer, Education Authority



## Northern Ireland Assembly

Ms Gillian Cuthbert, Interim Assistant Director SEND Support /Local Impact Teams, Education Authority

Ms Ursula Garvey, Assistant Senior Education Officer, Local IMPACT Teams, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on Local Impact Teams’.

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 children receiving one-to-one support broken down by service;
- the caseload per person for Lit teams; and
- Information on the number of RFI referrals being accepted, the referral system and the number of children accepted for pathway 3.

### 9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Committee correspondence seeking the Committee’s views on Clause 11 of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it is content with Clause 11 as drafted.

9.3, 9.4, 9.8 to 9.11, and 9.13 to 9.18

The Committee noted correspondence in relation to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with Dr Victoria Graf.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

9.5 The Committee noted an invitation to an event from the Integrated Education Fund.

9.6 The Committee noted an invitation from OECD Global Parliamentary Network to an online seminar 'Supporting Novice teachers – Insights from TALIS 2025'.

9.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists providing its response to the Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to a stakeholder event on curriculum review.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual in response to the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision providing a freedom of information response from the EA and highlighting safeguarding concerns.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking a response to the issues raised.

9.19 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the credentials of an individual.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the individual named.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it had no role in the matter.

9.20 The Committee noted correspondence regarding its Outdoor Learning motion.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond thanking the correspondent for their assistance.

9.21 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education announcing new SEN Regulations and offering to provide the Committee with a briefing on these.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education requesting sight of regulations at earliest opportunity.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on the Regulations.

#### **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**

The Committee discussed the transfer of school estate that is no longer being used.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education for information on the processes involved in transferring school assets that are no longer used.

#### **12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 3 December 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm.

**Nick Mathison MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**3 December 2025**