



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

16 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Jon Burrows MLA
- Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
- Mrs Cathy Mason MLA
- Mrs Julie Middleton MLA

In attendance:

- Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
- Ms Claire Milliken (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
- Mr Jonathan Lamont (Assistant Clerk)
- Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
- Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
- Ms Aisling Willighan (Clerical Officer)

Attended via teleconference facilities:

Mr Danny Baker MLA



Northern Ireland Assembly

Mr David Brooks MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No Apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a press release from the Department of Education regarding revised guidance on school uniforms.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding guidelines for school uniforms.

The Committee also considered correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee (emailed) about the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the legislative process of its School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill should continue; and to advise the Ad Hoc Committee accordingly and assist it to continue deliberations and conclude its Committee Stage report.

David Brooks MLA joined the meeting at 2.09pm

The Committee noted further correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update to guidelines for school uniforms.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to establish the cost of school uniforms and for detail on how data on uniform costs is gathered.

Jon Burrows MLA joined the meeting at 2.11pm

The Committee considered the issue of changes to the school curriculum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefings from a number of stakeholders on a range of curriculum subjects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CCEA for a written and oral briefing on recent reforms including changes to the November examination series.

The Committee considered the Department of Education Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education regarding grant funding streams.

The Committee considered the issue of phone pouches pilot scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education for clarification on the cost of pouches, and to schedule an oral briefing.

The Committee considered the issue of the termination of Minor Works List.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to establish the next steps for the organisations on the Minor Works List.



Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Declaration of Interest

None.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered the SEN Review report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to the draft SEN Review Report at next week's meeting.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 01 July 2026.

6. Early Learning and Childcare Strategy - Briefing from Book Trust NI

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.47pm

Julie Hayward, Director of Partnerships

Kathryn Anderson, Senior Partnerships Manager

The representatives of Book Trust delivered a briefing on its work and the importance of funding for books in DE's Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.

Pat Sheehan MLA left the meeting at 2.48pm

David Brooks MLA left the meeting at 2.49pm

This was followed by a question and answer session.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Pat Sheehan MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.11pm

Michelle Guy MLA left the meeting at 3.13pm

Michelle Guy MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.17pm

7. Education Inspections Bill – Briefing from NITC

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.25pm

Mark McTaggart, INTO

Jon Bleakney, UTU

Maxine Murphy Higgins, NASUWT

The officials provided the Committee with a briefing on the Education Inspections Bill.

Julie Middleton MLA left the meeting at 3.26pm

Julie Middleton MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.29pm

Jon Burrows MLA left the meeting at 3.45pm

This was followed by a question and answer session.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

8. Correspondence

1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

2 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding Supply Teacher Register, EBSNA, EOTAS & Mobile Phone Pouch Pilot Scheme.

3 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Education regarding the Committee Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the reply to the Ad Hoc Committee on the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill for information.

4 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Education regarding the joint Health and Education Oversight Group meetings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Education for further information.

5 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding PTE and PTM impacts on Individual Education Plan for SEN students.

6 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Education regarding SENCO workload.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Education Authority to include this issue.

7 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding Northern Ireland Statutory Nursery School Principals.

8 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding school uniform policy.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

9 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding SEN Summer School schemes.

10 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding DE's Review of Behaviour Policy.

11 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Education regarding funding for the Strule Shared Education Campus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to establish overall cost figures including projected spend, assurance that funding is in place and a date for completion of the construction work.

12 The Committee noted a reply from the Department of Education regarding NSPCC safeguarding material in schools.

13 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Education regarding the Budget briefing on 01 July 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue at the briefing with the Permanent Secretary on 07 October.

14 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education providing a Written Ministerial Statement regarding the Temporary Variation Policy Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a written briefing on this issue.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education to the City of Armagh High School regarding review of the Religious Education Core Syllabus.

16 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education to Department of Finance regarding Executive Budget 2026 – 2027.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue at the briefing with the Permanent Secretary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask DE for a copy of DoF's reply to this letter.

17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing a Written Ministerial Statement regarding funding for Irish-medium education.

18 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding reform of the NI Curriculum 2028.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a departmental briefing on this issue.

19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing a Written Ministerial Statement regarding Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme Administrative Data Publication.

20 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education providing notification of an oral statement regarding Pre-School Admissions Consultation.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education for further information on the criteria for eligibility.

21 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the public consultation on Measures to Support Mobile Phone Free Schools in Northern Ireland.

22 The Committee noted the Written Ministerial Statement from the Department of Education regarding integrated education.

23 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education reporting on the implementation of Relationships and Sexual Education in grantaided schools.

24 The Committee noted an oral statement from the Minister for Education regarding pre-school admissions consultation.

25 The Committee noted a written ministerial statement from the Minister for Education regarding PISA 2025, Confronting Decline, Raising Ambition.

26 The Committee noted a reply from the Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service regarding a recent ministerial briefing to Committee.

27 The Committee considered a reply from the Department of Health regarding the Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the reply to Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for information.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

28 The Committee noted the July News provided by Angel Eyes Northern Ireland.

29 The Committee noted a reply from the Education Authority regarding SEN postprimary placements.

30 The Committee considered correspondence from Mill Strand Integrated Primary School and Nursery regarding funding and sustainability.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Education Authority asking to be included in the reply to Mill Strand Integrated Nursery.

31 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office regarding governance, accountability and oversight of the Voluntary Grammar and Grant-maintained Integrated sectors.

32 The Committee noted the correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office regarding the Landscape Review of Education Authority.

33 The Committee noted the press release from the Education Authority regarding progress on SEN school places.

34 The Committee considered the reply from the Department of Health regarding recommendations from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the reply to Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists for information.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- 35 The Committee noted the invitation from Northern Ireland Fiscal Council to the Annual Conference.
- 36 The Committee noted correspondence from Outscape regarding Outdoor Education Programme assessment.
- 37 The Committee noted correspondence from Outscape regarding a new Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 38 The Committee noted an invitation from Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce to the Sea Across Society event.
- 39 The Committee noted the June update from the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
- 40 The Committee noted a reply from Brain Body Balance Northern Ireland.
- 41 The Committee noted a reply from the Education Authority regarding clarification of Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties.
- 42 The Committee noted correspondence from UCAS regarding June 30 deadline data.
- 43 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People regarding the Education Inspections Bill.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the paper in the Education Inspections Bill folder.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish papers on the website once received.

44 The Committee noted the July Investment Activity Report for Department of Education from Strategic Investment Board.

45 The Committee noted correspondence from Department for the Economy regarding Cyberfirst update.

46 The Committee noted correspondence from Angel Eyes NI regarding a charity hike.

47 The Committee noted correspondence from the Mental Health Foundation providing updated statistics for Northern Ireland and United Kingdom.

48 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding Armagh High School.

49 The Committee considered correspondence from Politics in Action NI regarding citizenship education in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask for a written briefing paper on the issues raised.

50 The Committee noted an invite from the Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

51 The Committee noted the Strategic Investment Board August Investment Activity Report for the Department of Education.

52 The Committee noted the summer update from the Youth Assembly.

53 The Committee considered a submission from NI Humanists to the Education Inspections Bill

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the paper in the Education Inspections Bill folder.

54 The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal regarding 'Running out of Time - the Performance of the Northern Ireland Executive in 2026'.

55 The Committee considered a reply from Northern Ireland Statutory Nursery School Principals to the Department of Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Northern Ireland Nursery School Principals.

56 The Committee noted the invite to the Chairperson from Northern Ireland Childminding Association to speak at its conference.

57 The Committee considered correspondence from Northern Ireland Maths Teachers' Association regarding changes to the November examination series.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Department of Education to reply to Northern Ireland Maths Teachers' Association copying in the Committee to its reply.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

58 The Committee noted the 71st report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. Danny Baker MLA left the meeting at 4.23pm

59 The Committee considered correspondence from the Irish National Teachers Organisation regarding Northern Ireland Teachers Council dispute resolution.

Agreed: The Committee noted that given the sensitivity of negotiations, the scheduled briefing today prioritised instead the Education Inspections Bill.

60 The Committee noted the 72nd report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

61 The Committee considered correspondence from EBSNA/ABSA Parent Support Group NI regarding EBSNA alternative provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Education Authority and the Department of Education asking for comments.

62 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding City of Armagh High School.

63 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Economy regarding the Renewable Electricity Generation Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

64 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the 2026-2027 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

65 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

66 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Charities (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

67 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

68 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Housing (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

69 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

70 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Section 59 / Section 7 Authorisation Letters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue at the briefing with the Permanent Secretary.

71 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the ITE Bursary Scheme.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

72 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a freedom of information request regarding release of restraint data.

73 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding an enhanced support model for anaphylaxis, statements and funding loops.

74 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Bangor Grammar School inquiry.

75 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a SEN student sitting SEAG.

76 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding issues with SEN statementing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update with individual.

77 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Education (Inspections) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Education Inspections Bill papers.

78 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the exclusion of modern languages from the new TransformEd curriculum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this issue in the Modern Languages briefing session to be scheduled.



Northern Ireland Assembly

79 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding home to school transport arrangements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update with individual.

80 The Committee agreed considered correspondence from an individual regarding Larne and Inver Primary School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education for clarification.

81 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding referral processes for children with SEND.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this to the Committee for Health for consideration.

82 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the failure of central educational governance.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Minister for Education.

11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 September 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.38pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
23 September 2026