



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Ad Hoc Committee on the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 15 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29

Present:

Aoife Finnegan MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Deborah Erskine MLA

Andrew McMurray MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

John Stewart MLA

Apologies: None.

In Attendance:

Marie Austin, Clerk

Jessica Jacques, Senior Assistant Clerk

Oliver Bellew, Assistant Clerk

Lisa Chestnutt, Clerical Supervisor

Damien Brown, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 1:05pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2026.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Declaration of Interests

None.

5. School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill - Oral Evidence Session with the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

The following members of the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly joined the meeting at 1.07pm:

Isabella Cooper

Isabella Coughlan

Jonathan Fogarty

Zoë Gaines

Ethan Wilson

The witnesses gave oral evidence on the Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1.26pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Youth Assembly to formally thank its members for the thoughtful, well-structured, and highly informative evidence they provided on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to highlight to the Bill Sponsor that the Youth Assembly is strongly of the view that the right of all pupils to wear trousers as part of their school uniform should be enshrined in primary legislation.

6. School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill - Oral Evidence Session with the Department of Education

The following officials joined the meeting at 1:26pm:

Margaret-Rose McNaughton	Director of Transport and Food, Department of Education
Shirley Sweeney	Deputy Director, Teaching and Learning Excellence, Department of Education

The officials gave oral evidence on the Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Andrew McMurray left the meeting at 2.02pm

The witnesses left the meeting at 2.05pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of the Bill Sponsor on the written evidence that was submitted by the Department of Education.

The Committee noted the Department of Education's recent publication of revised school uniform guidelines, which will require all schools to offer girls the option to wear trousers as part of their school uniform, including for PE and games, from 2027/28.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Committee for Education (Bill Sponsor) whether it intends to proceed with the Bill to enshrine, in primary legislation, the right of all pupils to wear trousers as part of their school uniform.

Agreed: After considering the departmental evidence on the Bill, and specifically in relation to the use of the term 'leg coverings', the Committee agreed to invite the Bill Clerk to brief the Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2026.

7. Correspondence

None.

8. Chairperson's Business

None.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 22 September 2026 at 1.00pm in Room 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.09pm.

Aoife Finnegan MLA

Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill

22 September 2026