



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

07 October 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Cathy Mason 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)

Mr Stephen Orme (Assembly Clerk) (Item 7 only)

Mr Jonathan Redpath (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) (Item 7 only)



Attended via teleconference facilities:

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Julie Middleton MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Pat Sheehan MLA and Cara Hunter MLA.

Michelle Guy MLA joined the meeting at 2.02pm

Jon Burrows joined the meeting at 2.02pm

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee discussed the non-attendance of the DE Permanent Secretary and his team to provide a scheduled budget briefing.

3. Declaration of Interest

David Brooks MLA made a declaration of interest that his wife is on the Board of Governors at Mitchell House Special School.

Cathy Mason MLA made a declaration of interest that she is the Chairperson of the Standards Committee.



4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of its meeting held on 07 October 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 2.10pm.

6. Ministerial letter withdrawing officials from the Committee – oral briefing by Northern Ireland Assembly Legal Services

The following official joined the meeting at 2.10pm

Htaik Win, Legal Services, Northern Ireland Assembly

The official briefed the Committee on the ministerial letter received by the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to notify the Committee for Finance about the non-attendance of the Permanent Secretary and other DE officials given the need to receive briefings on budget, and for factoring into its inquiry on running of NICS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary to invite him to a rescheduled budget briefing; and to advise him of the Committee's remit and s44 powers, clarify his understanding and ascertain the circumstances of his decision making re non-attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further legal advice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to express concerns that the failure to send departmental officials is preventing the Committee from performing its legislative and budget scrutiny, and that it is continuing to seek legal advice on this matter.



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Jon Burrows MLA left the meeting at 2.57pm

Jon Burrows MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.03pm

7. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – briefing from Bill Office

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.25pm

Stephen Orme, Assembly Clerk, Bill Office

Jonathan Redpath, Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk, Bill Office

The officials briefed the Committee on the Minister's amendments to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Danny Baker MLA recorded his concern regarding the lateness of the proposed Ministerial amendments to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

The Committee returned to public session at 3.40pm.

Michelle Guy MLA left the meeting at 3.40pm

7. Briefing from Permanent Secretary, Department of Education - Budget

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education and a number of items of correspondence previously considered at Committee.

The Committee noted that the Department of Education had informed it that officials would not be in attendance, following instruction from the Minister of Education.



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8. SEND Transport and Placements – briefing from Education Authority

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.45pm

Dale Hanna, Chief Operating Officer, EA

Tracy Kennedy, Director of Transport , EA

Elaine Craig, Director of SEND Statutory and Educational Psychology Services, EA

Peter Canavan, Director of SEN Capacity Programme, EA

The officials briefed the Committee on SEND transport and placements.

Michelle Guy MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.46pm

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information regarding parental payments and data collection regarding pupils on reduced timetables.

Danny Baker MLA left the meeting at 4.04pm

Cathy Mason MLA left the meeting at 4.19pm

Cathy Mason MLA rejoined the meeting at 4.24pm

9. Local Impact Teams – briefing from Education Authority

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.40pm

Gillian Cuthbert, Director SEND Support – Local Impact Teams

Ursula Garvey, Head of School Age Local Impact Teams (Southern Health and Social Care Trust) and SEND Specialist Teams

Jo Letson, Head of School Age Local Impact Teams (Northern and Western Health and Social Care Trust and Post Primary Partnership EOTAS



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Karen McElduff, Head of Early Years Impact Teams (all Trust Areas) and Getting Ready to Learn (GRtL)

The officials briefed the Committee on Local Impact Teams

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Michelle Guy MLA left the meeting at 5.00pm

Jon Burrows MLA left the meeting at 5.03pm

The Committee lost quorum before considering actions from this briefing session.

10. Correspondence

Due to loss of quorum, correspondence requiring Committee agreement was deferred until the next Committee meeting.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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 Wednesday 14 October 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.20pm.



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Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
14 October 2026