



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

18 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

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Glenda Doherty (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Mr Colin Crawford MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA



The meeting commenced at 2:02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin Crawford, Cara Hunter and Cathy Mason.

As it did not have a decision-making quorum, the Committee moved to agenda item 3.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson advised members that additional submissions on the Uniforms Bill had been received from Resource NI, NIPSO, the Presbyterian Church and CARE, would be added to the bill folder and proposed several amendments to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

Ms Brownlee joined the meeting at 2:02pm.

Mr Martin joined the meeting at 2:02pm.

The Committee returned to agenda item 2



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2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a draft Committee media statement in relation to racial violence and its impact on young people in school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the statement.

The Committee discussed the launch of the NAHT 'Effective Early Intervention for Nursery and Early Years: What children, parents and schools require' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on the report.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 11 June 2025.

6. School Curriculum Review - Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum - Oral Briefing

The Committee noted:

- The terms of Reference for the Curriculum Review; and
- The Northern Ireland Curriculum Review report and appendices.

The following witness joined the meeting via teleconference at 2:08pm.

Ms Lucy Crehan, Educational Consultant, Review of the NI Curriculum.

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on the Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Martin left the meeting at 3:14pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to engage further with Ms Crehan on the Northern Ireland Curriculum Review.



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

The Committee noted that departmental officials were not available to brief the Committee.

Mr Martin rejoined the meeting at 3:19pm.

The Committee expressed concerns about the Department of Education's engagement on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education noting concerns about delays providing the Committee with information and sight of guidelines.

The Committee adjourned at 3:31pm.

The Committee resumed at 3:42pm.

The Committee moved to closed session at 3:42pm.

8. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral Briefing by Bill Office

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Bill Clerk and advice from Legal Services.

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:42pm.

Mr Stephen Orme, Assembly Clerk, Bill Office.

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 4:46pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:56pm in public session



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The Chairperson proposed:

“That the Committee commission an amendment which would dictate that guidelines should bar policies from any restriction on school uniform items on the grounds of sex or gender”.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4; Noes 2; Abstain 0.

Ayes

Mr Nick Mathison MLA

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Noes

Ms Cheryl Brownlee MLA

Mr Peter Martin MLA

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the draft amendment be prepared.

The Committee moved to closed session at 4:58pm.

9. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill - Informal Clause-by-Clause Deliberation

The Committee considered the Clauses of and proposed amendments to the Bill.

Mrs Guy left the meeting at 6:01pm

The Committee moved to public session at 6:19pm.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

10.2 The Committee noted correspondence from an Individual addressing discrimination within the education system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent signposting the ECNI complaints process.



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10.3 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Education Authority regarding its inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services.

10.4 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Special Educational Needs.

10.5 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding Access NI checks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Correspondent who originally raised this matter with it.

10.6 The Committee noted an invitation to the Annual Baroness May Blood Memorial Lecture 2025.

10.7 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Young People and Rioting, Racism and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent referring them to its statement on this matter and indicating that it intended to take evidence from Ulster University on its report 'Learning from why riot? Addressing the 'whys' beneath youth violence'

10.8 The Committee noted a briefing paper on the work of Nacoa.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with Nacoa.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from National Children's Bureau on the project, 'Our Minds, Our Future' capturing the lived experiences of children and young people with mental health services across Northern Ireland.

10.10 The Committee noted correspondence from NICCY regarding the use of restrictive practices.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise NICCY of the Committee motion on this matter.

10.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education on its Strategy for Integrated Education 2025 to 2030.



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10.12 The Committee note correspondence from HERe NI regarding the organisation's disapproval of a Committee member's line of questioning of a witness.

10.13 The Committee noted a briefing paper from Stranmillis University College on TransformED.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on this matter and seek expert witnesses.

10.14 The Committee noted correspondence from Mark Durkan MLA asking it to arrange a meeting with NW Counselling on its work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NW Counselling for further information.

10.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy supporting a joint motion.

10.16 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on addressing the healthcare needs of children with special needs.

10. 17 The Committee noted a submission from CARE on the Uniforms Bill.

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

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

12. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed Special Educational Needs placements and noted that it would receive a briefing on this matter from the Education Authority at its next meeting.



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13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Tuesday 24 June 2025 at 4:00pm in Room 29 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
25 June 2025