



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

28 May 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr David Brooks MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
Mr Peter Martin MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

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

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Danny Baker MLA
Mr Colin Crawford MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA



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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. The Committee considered a draft motion addressing the matters under scrutiny by Concurrent Committee of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the motion to its meeting on 4 June 2025.

4.2. The Committee considered a draft motion calling for action in relation to restrictive practices.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the motion to its meeting on 4 June 2025.



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5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 21 May 2025.

6. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral Briefing by NICICTU

The Committee noted:

- A School Uniform Bill submission from NASUWT;
- A press release from UNISON on Free School Meals;
- A response from UNISON to the Department of Education School Uniform Policy Consultation;
- A response from UNISON to a review of Free School Meals and Uniform Grant Eligibility Criteria;
- A briefing paper from the Education Trade Union Group; and
- A response from the Department of Education on the Bill.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:08pm.

Ms Marie O'Shea, Northern Committee Representative, Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Ms Susan Neill, Representative, UNISON

Ms Maxine Murphy Higgins, Official, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers.

Ms Natalie Shiel, Representative, NIPSA via teleconference facilities at 2:21pm

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.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an update on access to Team Teach and alternative training.



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7. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral Briefing by NAHT

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:13pm.

Ms Jackie Bartley, NI President, National Association of Head Teachers

Dr Graham Gault, NAHT National Secretary (NI)

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

Mr Brooks joined the meeting at 3:33pm.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Martin left the meeting at 3:54pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for further information on plans to ban mobile phone use in schools.

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

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Menstruation Matters.

The Committee noted that Menstruation Matters were unable to brief the Committee at the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the briefing to its meeting on 4 June 2025.

9. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill – Oral briefing by Department of Education

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:01pm.

Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton, Director of Transport and Food in Schools, Department of Education

Mrs Shirley Sweeney, Head of School Uniform Policy Team, Department of Education



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This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Martin rejoined the meeting at 4:06pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 4:33pm.

10. School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill - Briefing by Northern Ireland Assembly Bill Office

The Committee noted:

- A memo from the Bill Clerk on amendments to the Bill;
- A Notice of Amendments tabled on 23 May 2025 for Consideration Stage; and
- A list of potential consultees.

The following witness joined the meeting at 4:33pm.

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.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 5:02pm

The Committee returned to public session at 5:03pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further advice on amendments on issues of inclusivity, around mandating who would be consulted, and in relation to Clause 2(3) of the Bill.

11. Correspondence

11.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

11.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to its role in delivering the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Committee for the Executive Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking sight of the healthy relationships forum action plan when this is published.

11.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Sure Start funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Surestart.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing with the Education Authority Admissions Team on its review of Pre-School provision.

11.4 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding Linking Generations.

11.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Finance regarding the Interim Public Sector Transformation Board.

11.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding funding for the Pathway Fund.

11.7 The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Finance regarding Budget Sustainability.

11.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on June Monitoring.

11.9 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Education Minister on Post-19 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Provision.

11.10 The Committee noted a call for evidence from the Committee for Finance on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.

11.11 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Education to the Launch of the Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum on Tuesday 3 June 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking an oral briefing on the strategic review.

11.12 The Committee noted the 40th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.



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11.13 The Committee noted a link to the consultation on the Private Members Bill on Holiday Hunger; the Bill Sponsor, Danny Baker MLA, gave a brief introduction and invited members to engage with the consultation.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed a draft forward work programme.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 5:11pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Open University seeking initial written advice on learning from the Why Riot research project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

13. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Tuesday 3 June 2025 at 4:00pm in Room 29 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:21pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
4 June 2025