



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

12 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant) (Item 6 only)

Ms Claire Milliken (Senior Assistant Clerk) (Item 6 only)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)



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Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

The meeting commenced at 2:01pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed members that Little Oaks Eotas will open on 20 November 2025.

3. Declaration of Interest

Mr Brooks made a declaration of interest in relation to item 7, namely that he took part in the recent visit to Israel of a delegation including the Minister for Education.

4. Matters arising

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing further governance information in relation to the DE briefing on the PAC report on Special Educational Needs (SEN).

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 5 November 2025.



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6. Proposed Committee Bill - Oral Briefing by Bill Office

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing draft guidelines for the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 2:07pm.

The Committee was provided with a briefing on the proposed Committee Bill by:

Ms Stephanie Mallon, Clerk Assistant, Northern Ireland Assembly

Ms Claire Milliken, Senior Assistant Clerk, Northern Ireland Assembly

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee moved to public session at 3:28pm.

Agreed: The Committee will discuss options for the Bill at its next meeting.

7. Minister's Visit to Israel - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:29pm.

Mr Ronnie Armour, Interim Permanent Secretary, Department of Education

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on the Department's role in the Minister of Education's visit to Israel.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education:

- Seeking the number of emails exchanged between the Department of Education and the Israeli Embassy in relation to the Minister's recent visit;
- Seeking written briefing on the customary role of departmental officials in arranging a Minister's diary, travel and other logistics for a personal visit; and
- Requesting that the Department detail whether any officials have refused to take part in planning for a future Ministerial visit to Israel, if so how many and how this will be managed.



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The Committee adjourned at 4:50pm.

Mr Brooks left the meeting at 4:50pm.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 4:50pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:58pm.

8. In-Year Monitoring, Resource and Capital Budget update - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

The Committee noted a Department of Education update on budgetary issues.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:58pm.

Mr Neil Palmer, Finance Director, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Van Houten, Acting Deputy Director of Finance, Department of Education

Mr Seamus Gallagher, Acting Grade 5 Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on budget.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Mathison made a Declaration of Interest that he is a school governor.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking:

- A breakdown of discretionary spending in the current financial year;
- A breakdown of the value of surplus school estate (PS 17:24);
- The amount spend on pilot projects.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.



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9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the lack of support for Children with Dyscalculia.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to papers for the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

9.3 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding draft school uniforms guidelines.

9.4 The Committee noted the Department of Education 24-25 Annual Report Accounts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a breakdown from RalSe of the Department of Education and Education Authority accounts.

9.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the regulation of Private Tutoring.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the correspondent who raised this issue with it.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland report on the teaching of modern languages.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's response to the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland, and invite the organisation to an upcoming event on curriculum review.

9.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education providing draft General Teaching Council Bill and accompanying Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on its interaction with Linking Generations.

9.9 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on youth provision.

9.10 The Committee noted the 49th Report Of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.



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9.11 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on SEN Placements.

9.12 The Committee noted a response from the Youth Assembly to the Department of Education's CCEA consultation.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed by the Committee.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 November 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
19 November 2025