



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 24 March 2021

Video Conference

Present by Video Conference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Mr Justin McNulty MLA
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Apologies: Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

In Attendance: Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9:34 am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairpersons business.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 10 March 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a plenary debate on Tuesday 23 March 2021 about a Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Communities seeking an update on the work of the expert panel on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) with a view to receiving an oral briefing at a future date.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to amend the order of its agenda.

Mr McCrossan joined the meeting at 9:47am

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education indicating that FETO is the legislative responsibility of the Executive Office (TEO) and that any amendments to the legislation are a matter for it to address. The Committee noted that it had written to the Executive Office about this matter.

5.3 The Committee noted a response from the Governing Bodies Association indicating that it believes that the FETO exemption is no longer required.

5.4 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education about teaching and coding. The Department indicates that it has previously responded to the original correspondent and provides a copy of its response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and write to the individual who raised this matter with it confirming that they are content with the Department's response.

5.5 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education on integrated education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Integrated Education Fund seeking its views on the Department's response.

5.6 The Committee noted a response from the Methodist Church providing its view on integrated Education.

5.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee providing a copy of response from the Education Authority about St. Mary's High School, Brollagh.

5.8 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding St. Mary's High School, Brollagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent indicating that it has written to the Education Authority about this matter.

5.9 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual about St. Mary's High School, Brollagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent indicating that it has written to the Education Authority about this matter.

5.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group forwarding a letter from the Committee for Justice on concerns about the Executive's decision to allow a condensed Committee Stage of the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

5.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Parentkind seeking to brief the Committee on its survey recent survey of parents on: Supporting learning from home; Psychological wellbeing of parents and young people; and Returning to school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an early copy of the report with a view to arranging a formal briefing on the survey in due course.

5.12 The Committee noted a response from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council to the Committee's action on Seclusion and Restraint.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft Committee motion on Seclusion and Restraint at its next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed reply indicating the action it was taking on this matter.

5.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Northern Ireland Forest Schools Association providing a link to an article on forest schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Forest Schools Association thanking them for its correspondence and indicating that the Committee has agreed to visit a forest school site when possible.

5.14 The Committee noted correspondence from a local councillor about the challenges being faced by Voluntary Sector Outdoor Centres.

5.15 The Committee noted correspondence from Sperrinview Special School providing the most recent minutes on the Inspection of school building.

5.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Apple seeking to brief the Committee informally on its work in education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with Apple.

5.17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement and agreed to hear oral evidence on its research alongside Parentkind in due course.

5.18 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education responding to correspondence from Omagh Learning Community regarding funding for the Engage programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and write to the Omagh Learning Community confirming that they are content with the Department's response.

5.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding notices made under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

5.20 The Committee noted a response from the Chairperson of the Education Authority about Social media posts by a board member about Conversion Therapy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Health.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme as amended.

7. General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) - Oral briefing from GTCNI

The Committee noted a briefing paper from GTCNI and a record of an informal meeting with NITC.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 10:10am:

Mr Sam Gallaher, Registrar/Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr Gallaher briefed the Committee on governance issues at the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council to brief the Committee along with other relevant council members.

Agreed: to write to GTCNI thanking the Registrar/Chief Executive for candid briefing and seeking the Minutes of recent council meetings.

8. General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) - Oral briefing from Department of Education

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Department of Education.

The following officials joined the meeting by video conference at 11:26am:

Ms Alison Chambers, Director of Promoting Collaboration and Tackling Disadvantage, Department of Education

Mr Alan Boyd, Head of Teacher Education Team, Department of Education.

Officials briefed the Committee on governance issues at the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Humphrey left the meeting at 11:59pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing concern at the length of time taken to address issues in GTCNI, urging the Department to act urgently in this matter and seeking:

- The remit of both the legislation and the effectiveness reviews;
- A flowchart setting out the current processes in cases of teacher misconduct showing the stages at which the removal & barring service, PSNI and Social Services become involved;
- A breakdown of the 59 outstanding cases according to safeguarding risk, completion, and action taken including the exact number of teachers removed from the register;
- A flowchart setting out the current processes in cases of teacher misconduct showing the stages at which the removal and barring service, PSNI and Social Services become involved; and
- Details of action taken to protect staff and council members in response to allegations of bullying in the Council.

Mr Butler left the meeting at 12:42pm

9. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA): Centre Determined Assessments - Oral briefing from CCEA

The Committee noted:

- A CCEA presentation;
- GCSE, AS and A Level Awarding Summer 2021 Alternative Arrangements and revised Arrangements;
- A record of an informal meeting with CCEA on 23 March 2021;
- A record of an Informal Committee Meeting with NITC and ASCL on 16 March 2021;
- An NEU Briefing Paper; and
- Details of the current CCEA Council Membership.

The following officials joined the meeting by video conference at 12:42pm:

Mr Justin Edwards, Chief Executive, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Tommy O'Reilly, Chairperson, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Ms Margaret Farragher, Director of Education, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

Officials briefed the Committee on governance issues at the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 1:06pm.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA welcoming its engagement with stakeholders and:

- Asking it to urgently provide details of appeals arrangements; and
- Asking if on balance, in its judgement, the five-step process and revised guidance to heads of centres represent the best effort to secure pupils' future prospects at this time.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education asking what monitoring is being carried out on the extent of controlled assessment being carried out, and who is responsible for this.

10. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 April 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40pm

**Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
14 April 2021**