



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

14 April 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
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: None

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)



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Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9:03am in open session

1. Apologies

There were no apologies

2. Chairpersons Business

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Karen Mullan MLA on her Private Members Bill on Holiday Hunger.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 23 March 2021 and 24 March 2021

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 9:05am.

Mr Bradley joined the meeting at 9:05am.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

Agreed: The Committee agreed to amend the order of its agenda at 9:06am.



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5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted a correspondence summary note.

5.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing the background and explanation for the decision to close St. Mary's High School, Brollagh.

Agreed: The Committee to write to the Department of Education seeking information on alternative arrangements for pupils currently attending St. Mary's High School, Brollagh

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department of Education on Area Planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Departments response to correspondents who had raised this matter with it.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to the original agenda order at 9:13am.

6. Mandatory Teacher Training - Oral briefing from Autism NI

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Autism NI.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 9:13am:

Ms Kerry Boyd, Chief Executive Officer, Autism NI

Ms Christine Kearney, Director of Development, Autism NI

The witnesses briefed the Committee on proposals for mandatory autism training for teachers.

Mr Lyttle made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the all-party Assembly group on autism.

Mr Butler made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the all-party Assembly group on autism.



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Mr Humphrey made a declaration of interest that he is the President of the West Belfast District Scout Council.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Minister of Education supporting the role out of mandatory interactive teacher training on autism and asking why this has been delayed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health regarding the implementation of Autism Strategy Action plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for the Economy about autism training for further education staff, and help for autistic young people and adults entering employment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Autism NI seeking information on autism training in Great Britain and statistics relating to autism and mental health issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College, Belfast seeking information how autism teacher training is carried out by them.

7. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) - Oral briefing on work of NICCY

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 10:32am:

Ms Koulla Yiasouma, Commissioner, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Ms Mairead McCafferty, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People



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Ms Niamh Devlin, Senior Policy & Research Officer, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Ms Christine Irvine, Policy and Research Officer, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The Witnesses briefed the Committee on the work of NICCY.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a committee motion on Covid-19 recovery for Children & Young People.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People thanking her for the briefing.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

8. Correspondence

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to recommendations made by the Belfast Youth Forum on Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Belfast Youth Forum.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education to concerns on the Minister's decision to withdraw approval for WJEC qualifications for first teaching in Northern Ireland schools from September 2022

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education to concerns on the Minister's decision to withdraw approval for WJEC qualifications for first teaching in Northern Ireland schools from September 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it



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8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding support for Clinically Vulnerable Individuals and their Families.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it.

8.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to issues raised regarding planning for full school restart.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it

8.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to correspondence proposing a Public Communication Announcement Strategy to help young people prepare for a return to face-to-face learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it

8.9 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to correspondence to a query regarding the decision by C2K to cease support for the virtual learning platform Fronter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Education Authority to brief it on remote learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it.

8.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to correspondence regarding the lack of provision of A Level Gaeilge by CCEA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised this matter with it

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing the Interim Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing on the Final Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement when this was released.



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8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Education regarding the launch of a series of phase reports by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Education informing the Committee that it has made a Direction - Coronavirus Act 2020 Provision of Youth Services Temporary Continuity Direction (No.3) (NI) 2021.

8.14 The Committee noted a response from the Church of Ireland on Integrated Education

8.15 The Committee noted a response from the Archbishop of Armagh on Integrated Education

8.16 The Committee noted a response from the Church of Ireland on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.17 The Committee noted a response from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.18 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.19 The Committee noted a response from Stranmillis University College on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.20 The Committee noted a response from the Archbishop of Armagh on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.21 The Committee noted a response from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on the teachers' exemption in FETO and the Certificate for Religious Education (CRE).

8.22 The Committee noted a response from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) regarding alternative examination arrangements

8.23 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding alignment between the work of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Clerk liaises with the Clerk for the Economy Committee regarding this.

8.24 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the timescale for scrutiny of Budget 2021-22 by Statutory Committees.

8.25 The Committee noted a call for evidence from the Committee for Justice on the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

8.26 The Committee noted correspondence from Parentkind on its Coronavirus Parent Survey Results.

8.27 The Committee noted correspondence from Pure Mental NI March providing a copy of the Pure Mental NI policy paper - Back to School: The Impact on the Mental Health of Children and Young People of the School Return.

8.28 The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal providing a copy of the latest Pivotal report - Retaining and Regaining talent in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a joint briefing with the Economy Committee on this matter.

8.29 The Committee noted correspondence from the Council for Irish-Medium Education seeking to brief Committee on the issues currently facing the sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Council for Irish-Medium Education.

8.30 The Committee noted correspondence from Linking Generations Northern Ireland seeking to brief the Committee on the recently completed research - An Intergenerational Approach to Improving Skills and Educational Outcomes for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with Linking Generations Northern Ireland.

8.31 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual providing their response to the Education Authority Draft Special Schools Area Planning Framework.



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8.32 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the vaccination of Teachers.

8.33 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual about appropriate uniform for girls' health, hygiene, how her complaint to a school was handled and related matters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to signpost the correspondent to relevant advice and the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) in respect of value for money concerns.

8.34 The Committee noted the Investing Activity Report for March 2021.

Mr Lyttle left the meeting at 12:15am.

Mr Sheehan assumed the role of Chairperson at 12:15am.

8.35 The Committee noted correspondence seeking a meeting with the Committee about the challenges being faced by Voluntary Sector Outdoor Centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on Voluntary Sector Outdoor Centres.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

10. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed statistics for mental health problems among people with autism.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek statistics for mental health problems among people with autism from Autism NI.



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11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 April 2021 by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm

Chris Lyttle MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
21 April 2021