



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

26 May 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 9:13am in closed session

1. Privilege – Northern Ireland Assembly Legal Services Briefing

The Committee was briefed on how Assembly privilege applied to Committee meetings.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 9:18am.

The Committee meeting moved to public session at 9:37am.

2. Apologies

No apologies were received.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Informal Meeting with Colin McGrath MLA and the British Heart Foundation.

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Colin McGrath MLA and the British Heart Foundation on his Private Member's Bill to place a duty on the Department of Education for the mandatory provision of CPR training in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.

3.2 Informal Meeting with Apple.

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with the Apple Education team.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Department of Education asking what proportion of students in Northern Ireland have access to appropriate devices on a one device per child basis.

3.3 Committee motion on Seclusion and Restraint

The Committee noted press coverage of the Committee motion on Seclusion and Restraint

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 19 May 2021.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) - Oral Briefing from GTCNI Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr McCrossan made a declaration of interest that he employs a former Chair of GTCNI as an advisor.

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) Chair and Vice-Chair and copies of correspondence between the GTCNI Chair and the acting Chair of the GTCNI Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:42am:

Mr Brendan Morgan, Chair, General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland



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Ms Siobhan McElhinney, Vice Chair, General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

The witnesses briefed the Committee on governance at GTCNI.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

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

- asking that the Department urgently progress legislation given public admissions by GTCNI that a deficient regulatory framework means children and young people are at risk;
- Seeking further information on the roadmap out of special measures for GTCNI; and
- Asking for a copy of the GTCNI whistle-blowers report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to GTCNI:

- Inquiring what role it plays in determining equivalence and registration eligibility for teachers from outside countries including the Republic of Ireland;
- Asking that it detail the changes to referral handling policy agreed at its 26 March Council meeting; and
- Asking for the number of referral files which are being maintained despite the fact that GTCNI have no authority to deal with those specific files.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a Committee motion on this matter in due course.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release on this matter.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

7. General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) - Oral Briefing from GTCNI Chief Executive

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the GTCNI Chief Executive and a GTCNI Response providing minutes of GTCNI Council Meeting 10 March 2021.



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The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 11:18am:

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

The witness briefed the Committee on governance at GTCNI.

The Briefing was reported by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr McNulty left the meeting at 11:30am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Minister for Education, DE Permanent Secretary and officials from Department of Education to brief it on the GTCNI.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

8. Correspondence

The Chairperson referred to correspondence considered by the Committee at its last meeting on Killinchy Primary School. The Chairperson noted that the Committee had agreed to write to the Department on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with officials on the role of Boards of Governors.

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education indicating that on the basis of assurances received from WJEC, the Minister has revisited his decision to withdraw WJEC qualifications from Northern Ireland.

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education informing the Committee of his intention to make a written statement to the Assembly on 1 June 2021 on 'a Fair Start' – the final report and action plan of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement.

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



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8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health regarding the vaccination of staff in Special Schools.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing an update on the Department of Education's work on youth engagement.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing copies of the Education and Training Inspectorate's thematic reports on Remote Learning for pre-school, primary, post-primary, special and education other than that at school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule oral briefings on the reports.

8.7 The Committee noted a response from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

8.8 The Committee noted a response from Ards and North Down Borough Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

8.9 The Committee noted a response from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

8.10 The Committee noted a response from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council providing details of Council programmes to support youth mental health.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the establishment of an independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking its views on the role for an independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman regarding restraint and seclusion. The Committee noted Members were briefed informally by the Ombudsman on Friday 21 May 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Ombudsman thanking her for briefing members.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Dyslexia Awareness NI providing a report on children in education with dyslexia/dyslexic tendencies and asking that an MLA proposes a private members bill.



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8.14 The Committee noted correspondence from parents providing a response from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding the delivery of speech and language and occupational therapy services.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence about the CCEA appeals process.

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence about AS level assessments.

8.17 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the decision to close St. Mary's High School, Brollagh.

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

No other business was discussed.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 2 June 2021 by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:16pm

Chris Lyttle MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for Education
2 June 2021**