



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

16 June 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)
Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 9:05am in public session

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Department of Education News release, actions to support school leaders.

The Committee noted a Department of Education News release on actions to support school leaders.

2.2 Post Primary Transfer: places

The Committee noted correspondence on pupils who have received no/an inappropriate school place via post primary transfer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking inter alia:

- What temporary variations have been put in place to resolve problems placing children in schools;
- What measures and resources are being provided to the Education Authority to assemble appeal panels to expedite appeals of placement decisions;
- How it is seeking to ensure these children will be placed in appropriate sectors;
- What action the Department took when the Committee proposed these and other contingency measures back in August; and
- That the Department reflect on the criteria it used in guidance to schools and the impact of these decisions on the wellbeing of the young people affected.

Mr McNulty joined the meeting at 9:14am.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 9:14am.



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2.3 Meeting with the Minister

The Committee noted a record of a meeting the Chair and the Deputy Chair with the Minister of Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the Minister as soon as possible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister setting out the Committee's priorities.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 9 June 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Special Educational Needs Framework - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Children's Law Centre: Oral Briefing

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

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:14am:

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 Rachel Hogan, Special Educational Needs Representative, Children's Law Centre

The witnesses briefed the Committee on concerns about the Special Educational Needs Framework.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Butler joined the meeting at 9:47am.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise the issues discussed with departmental officials at its next meeting.

6. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People: Oral Briefing

The Committee noted briefing papers from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY); and an Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Paper on the Implementation of the UNCRC.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:53am:

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

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Commissioner's statutory role in the process for reporting and Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.



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The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Commissioner to report on her statutory supervision after the summer recess.

**7. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) -
Children's Law Centre: Oral Briefing**

The Committee noted a Children's Law Centre briefing paper on UNCRC.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:00am:

Ms Paddy Kelly, Director, Children's Law Centre

Ms Claire Kemp, Policy Officer, Children's Law Centre

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr Humphrey left the meeting at 11:01am.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 11:16am.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise the issues discussed with departmental officials at its next meeting.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.



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8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Temporary Modification of Education Duties Notice Made Under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on supporting Irish Medium Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on accountability of school governors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised these issues with the Committee.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on a childcare strategy and counselling services in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond stating that the articulation of a strategy should not be subject to the availability of resources dictated to DE from the centre; and seeking an update on the Department's engagement with the childcare sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information on waiting times for counselling services including the timeframes for each stage from triage through assessment of counselling need to treatment.

8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing further information on the Addressing bullying in Schools Act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek detail of action taken to collate necessary baseline statistics and to address errors in suicide statistics.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly providing a public petition on 'St Conor's Primary School, Omagh: Additional Parking and Traffic-calming Measures'.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities about setting up a High Street Task Force for Northern Ireland.



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8.9 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on the provision of Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy in Special Schools.

8.10 The Committee noted a response from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on the provision of Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy in Special Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider scheduling briefings on this matter.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA providing an explanatory animation on the AS level grades not contributing to A2 in 2022.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA providing its Post-Results Service Process for Heads of Centre Summer 2021; Consultation Report on Post-Results Service Summer 2021; and Post-Results Service Consultation Initial Findings.

8.13 The Committee noted a response from Pure Mental on the Department's response regarding the 'Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.'

8.14 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum on the Department's response regarding the 'Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.'

8.15 The Committee noted a response from the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland on the Department's response regarding the 'Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.'

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Girlguiding Ulster providing its girls attitude survey 2020 and Back in Lockdown Report.

8.17 The Committee noted a report from Homestart 'Home is Where We Start From'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with Homestart on the report.

8.18 The Committee noted correspondence on Killinchy Primary School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's response on accountability of school governors to the correspondent.



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8.19 The Committee noted correspondence from St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan raising concerns regarding changes to arrangements for assessing GCSE Science in 2021-22.

8.20 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the CCEA Complaints process.

8.21 The Committee noted correspondence on the health implications of children and young people wearing face masks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Minister of Education and the Minister of Health asking for an update on the use of face masks in schools and when review of this is likely in line with the public health situation.

8.22 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the closure of Straid Primary School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department about the use of its assets as community resources.

8.23 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority providing information on the roles and responsibilities of the Child Protection Support Service (CPSS).

8.24 The Committee noted a briefing paper from Department of Education on the June Monitoring Round 2021-22.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.



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10. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Humphrey and Mr Bradley thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Committee.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:24pm

Chris Lyttle MLA

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