



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

23 June 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mrs Diane Dodds MLA
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr Justin McNulty MLA

Apologies:

Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

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 9:35am in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 New Members:

The Chairperson welcomed new Members Diane Dodds and Harry Harvey to the Committee.

2.2 Informal Meeting: Integrated Education Private Members Bill

The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had met informally with Kellie Armstrong MLA, sponsor of the Integrated Education Private Members Bill. The Committee noted a record of the informal meeting.

2.3 Youth Engagement

The Chairperson informed members that he took part in a youth engagement 'My life and Learning in Lockdown' during Refugee Week facilitated by Red Cross, Externe and Barnardos.

The Chairperson reminded members that at its next meeting the Committee would have a presentation of some of the artwork produced for the 'my life and learning in lockdown' project, and hear an update on the engagement events from the Assembly's Engagement Service, Education Service and Comms Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to hold its next meeting in hybrid format, in the Senate and on Starleaf.

The Committee noted correspondence presenting a song called 'Celebrate the Artist' created by local artist Ed Reynolds and Wheelworks arts group.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to play this at its next meeting as it accords very much with the theme of 'my life and learning in lockdown'.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 16 June 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Mrs Dodds joined the meeting at 9:44am

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

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education advising on the launch of two further childcare sector support funds, the Covid-19 Childcare Sustainability Fund from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021, and the Covid-19 Childcare Temporary Closure Fund from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.

5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy providing a copy of its correspondence to the Minister of Education regarding hospitality and tourism and future skills development.

5.4 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority indicating that it would be unable to provide a response to the Committee's request for further information on Special Educational Needs, within the timeframe requested by the Committee.



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5.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority providing information on how to apply for free school meals and uniform grants.

5.6 The Committee noted correspondence on behalf of the Future Schools Project, requesting an opportunity to brief the Committee on its work and progress of the project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the organisation to brief it on the work of the Future Schools Project.

5.7 The Committee noted a briefing paper on school starting age flexibility from School Start Flexibility NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite School Start Flexibility NI to brief it on school starting age flexibility.

5.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Girlguiding Ulster regarding a new study on girls' safety and their experiences of sexual harassment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send the report to the Committee for Justice and the Women's Caucus.

5.9 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the investigation by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) of sexual harassment in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Education why there is no requirement for schools to have sexual harassment policies.

5.10 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

5.11 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

5.12 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

5.13 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

5.14 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding public examinations in 2022 and beyond.



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6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

7. Special Educational Needs Framework - Department of Education Oral Briefing

The Committee noted: A summary of Special Educational Needs Framework Consultations; a summary report of consultation responses on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice; a summary report of consultation responses Special Educational Needs Regulations, an Education Authority response on Special Educational Needs; and the Hansard report of a briefing on Special Educational Needs with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Children's Law Centre.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:00am:

Mr Ricky Irwin, Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Department of Education

Ms Julie McBride, Head of SEN, Department of Education

Mr Chris Hutchinson, SEN Review Team, Department of Education

Ms Clar McKenna, Head of Special Education – Statutory Assessment and Review Service, Education Authority

Ms Tracey Logan, Representative, Education Authority

Mr Mark Lee, Director of Disability & Older People, Department of Health

Ms Geraldine Teague, Lead AHP Consultant CYP & Interagency, Public Health Agency

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



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The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education, providing the Hansard report of the Committee's 16 June briefing on Special Educational Needs with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Children's Law Centre; urging engagement with these groups to reach agreement on legislative and operational measures; and asking for early sight of the Education Authority business plan and budget lines.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 11:08am

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

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education and the Hansard report of briefings on UNCRC from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Children's Law Centre.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:09am:

Mr Paul Brush, Director, Youth and Early Years, Department of Education

Mr Paul Wright, Head of Children & Young People's Strategy Team, Department of Education

Ms Pamela Baxter, Children and Young People's Strategy Team, Department of Education

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the 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 write to the Department of Education suggesting that it use this exercise to update policy to reflect the impacts on rights of the pandemic, Brexit and the Northern Ireland protocol, and:

- Proposing that it should produce an Northern Ireland specific report as a snapshot of progress in NI against the 115 matters on the list of issues;
- Seeking information on the impact of school starting age on educational outcomes;
- Welcoming updates from policy sections on restraint, transfer, a childcare strategy and RSE; and
- Seeking UNCRC training for professionals working with children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek briefings from other rights stakeholders on the UNCRC.

9. Budget/In-Year Monitoring Update, Childcare Strategy and Common Funding Formula - Department of Education Oral Briefing

The Committee noted Departmental briefing papers.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 12:09pm:

Mr Gary Fair, Director of Finance, Department of Education

Mr Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education

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

Ms Tina Dempster, Head of Childcare Strategy Team, Department of Education

The witnesses briefed the Committee on in-year monitoring and budget.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr McNulty left the meeting at 12:41pm and the Committee lost decision making quorum.



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The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

10. Any Other Business

Committee members discussed reported changes to class courses and noted that CCEA would be briefing the Committee at a future meeting.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 June 2021 in the Senate chamber and by video conference at 9:30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14pm

Chris Lyttle MLA

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