



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

30 June 2021

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber/ Teleconference

Present in the Senate Chamber:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Robbie Butler MLA

Mrs Diane Dodds MLA

Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA

Mr Justin McNulty MLA

Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA



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Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 9:37am in public session

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Informal meeting note: Bill Office briefing on primary legislative processes

The Committee noted a record of an informal briefing from Assembly Bill Clerks on the primary legislative processes.

2.2 Call for Evidence for Integrated Education Bill

The Chairperson advised members that as the Second Stage of the Integrated Education Bill will take place on Tuesday 6 July the Bill will come to the Committee on 7 July, and referred members to a draft call for evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a Call for Evidence for the Integrated Education Bill.

Mr Butler joined the meeting at 9:40am.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 9:40am.

2.3 Post Primary Transfer

The Committee discussed the current Post Primary Transfer system.

Mrs Dodds joined the meeting at 9:51am.



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2.4 Celebrate the Artist

The Committee viewed an excerpt from the video for the song 'Celebrate the Artist' by Ed Reynolds for Wheelworks Art to complement the artwork received from its call for art in the 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown' youth engagement project, and thanked those involved in creating it.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to tweet a link to the video.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 23 June 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Youth Engagement - Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement Office Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement and Education Services; a 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown' presentation of some of the findings of the engagement events with young people; Mentimeter Boards from the Committee's 3 June event on 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown'; A note of the Committee's 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown' event facilitated by British Red Cross, Extern and Barnardos with young refugees for Refugee Week; a presentation of the artworks created for the project by young pupils, both in virtual format and on display in the Senate Chamber; and a note on the 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown' School Focus Groups carried out by the Assembly's Education Service.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:51am:



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Mrs Louise Close, Outreach Manager, Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement

Ms Marina McConville, Education Officer, Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service

The officials briefed the Committee on the feedback from young people in the 'My Life and Learning in Lockdown' youth engagement events and art project.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 10:44am.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education advocating flexibility in the use of funding for summer schemes pursuant to feedback from the School Focus Group events.

6. Youth Engagement - Department of Education Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:58am:

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

The witnesses briefed the Committee on Youth Engagement.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Newton left the meeting at 11:30am.

Mr McNulty left the meeting at 11:38am.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education thanking witnesses and requesting an update following its liaison with third sector partners after recess.

7. School Uniform Policy: Comparative Best Practice - Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service Oral Briefing

The Committee noted a Research and Information Service Briefing Paper on 'School Uniforms: Cost, Gender and behavioural considerations'.

Ms Sinead McMurray, Research Officer, NIA Research Office joined the meeting by video conference at 11:47am:

The witness briefed the Committee on the research paper.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to schools seeking information on their uniform policy, the cost of uniforms, whether approved uniform is restricted to particular retailers and whether they were considering gender neutral uniform.

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

- Providing a copy of the research paper;
- Seeking information on uniform allowances and when these were last reviewed to take account of price rises;
- Asking whether the Department plans to put uniform guidance in Northern Ireland on a statutory footing as the Welsh Government has recently done;
- Commending voluntary uniform exchange schemes; and
- Suggesting that the Department consider the introduction of price capping for school uniforms.



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8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on mandatory autism training and guidance on restraint and seclusion.

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on access to an appropriate electronic devices for pupils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to Department of Education asking if it planned to gather information on students' access to appropriate electronic devices on a per-child basis.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from CCEA providing further information on Appeals and Contingency Plans.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the EA indicating that it would need additional time to supply the information requested.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the Financial Reporting (Departments and Public Bodies) Bill.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure providing a copy of correspondence to the Department of Education on the usage of Class C Taxi License Holders for school transportation.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal about its research and work on Education, skills and training for 14-19 year olds.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office providing a brief outline of its work on the Department of Education.

8.10 The Committee noted an invitation from the Women's Policy Group to the re-launch of the Covid-19 Feminist Recovery Plan on 28 July 2021.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Pink Ladies Cancer Support Group on pesticide use and cancer prevention.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking about the use of weed killers on the school estate.



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8.12 The Committee noted correspondence raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

8.14 The Committee noted correspondence raising concerns regarding CCEA plans for the assessment of GCSE Science in the summer of 2022.

8.15 The Committee noted further correspondence regarding the implications of children and young people wearing face masks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it would consider what further action to take when it had received responses on this matter from the Department of Education and Department of Health.

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence about Flexible School Starting Age.

8.17 The Committee noted correspondence about the financial management at St Mary's High School, Brollagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it has no role in management of individual school finance.

8.18 The Committee noted correspondence regarding student hardship payments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for the Economy.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the Northern Ireland Audit Office on 'financial capacity of schools'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CCEA to provide a briefing at its next meeting.

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



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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 7 July 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:02pm

Chris Lyttle MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for Education
7 July 2021**