



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

3 November 2021

**Meeting Location:** Teleconference

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mrs Diane Dodds MLA  
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA  
Mr Justin McNulty MLA  
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

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

**Apologies:**

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA  
Mr Robbie Butler MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA



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The meeting commenced at 9:43am in public session.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies as above.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

#### 2.1 Hansard – Northern Ireland Humanists – 21 October 2021

The Committee noted a record of a briefing with Northern Ireland Humanists on the Integrated Education Bill at its meeting on 21 October. The Chairperson informed members that the Committee had lost quorum at the start of the briefing and that the remaining Committee members had continued with the briefing on an informal basis.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the record of the meeting should be included in the report of the Committee Stage of the Integrated Education Bill.

#### 2.2 Staff Shortages in Special Schools

The Committee discussed concerns about staff shortages in special schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking an urgent update on staffing in special schools and asking what action was being taken to address any shortages.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 21 October 2021.



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#### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

#### 5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education informing the Committee that she has advised the Department for Health and Social Care in England that she wishes to expire section 37 and the relevant part of Schedule 16 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

5.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the collection of information on individual students' access to an appropriate electronic device.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write again to the Department of Education asking how data collected at school level is being collated by the Department or Education Authority.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the joint oral briefing by Department of Education and Department for the Economy officials on the 14-19 Strategy.

5.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Review of the Education Authority.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek more information on the remit of the review and proposed arrangements for interaction with the Committee.

5.6 The Committee noted correspondence from Cara Hunter MLA requesting that the Committee consider a visit or briefing on Gaelcholáiste Dhoire, an Irish medium school in Dungiven.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a visit to the school.



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5.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding a Review of the Education Authority's Equality Scheme and seeking views on proposals to amend the scheme.

5.8 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence to the Minister of Education from An Gréasán regarding the uptake of the Irish language and other languages in English medium post-primary schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education asking to be copied into the response to this letter.

5.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry providing the results of its latest Quarterly Economic Survey.

5.10 The Committee noted an invitation from Queens University Belfast to a live online event 'In Conversation with Professor Andrew Heyn' on Thursday 11 November 2021.

5.11 The Committee noted a consultation from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) on a draft scheme for the appointment of principals & vice principals in Catholic Maintained schools.

## 6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

## 7. October monitoring, Budget and Strule Campus – Oral Briefing by the Department of Education

The Committee noted:

- Briefing papers from the Department of Education on October Monitoring and the Strule Campus;



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- An oral statement from the Minister of Finance on the 2021-22 October Monitoring Round;
- A written statement from the Minister of Finance on Budget 2022-25 Funding; and
- A response from the Department of Education on school restart.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:03am:

Mr Gary Fair, Director of Finance, Department of Education

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

Mr Seamus Gallagher, Acting Investment and Infrastructure Director, Department of Education

Ms Sinead Crossan, Strule Shared Education Campus, Business Change Manager, Department of Education

Ms Jennifer Morgan, Strule Shared Education Campus, Construction Director, Department of Education

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the October monitoring, Budget and the Strule Campus.

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 seeking:

- A briefing paper outlining the factors which give rise to lower per capita spend on Education for Northern Ireland pupils in comparison to Scotland, England and Wales;
- Information on delays incurred by the 'Being Well, Doing Well' pilot project;
- A range of models to demonstrate the indicative cost of building a new school.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a further briefing on budget in December.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the schools intended to migrate to the Strule Campus project asking how delays with the project have impacted on maintenance of their school buildings and consequently on pupils.

### **8. Integrated Education Bill**

The Committee noted a Research paper on the Integrated Education Bill

The Committee Clerk provided members with an update on the Committee stage of the Integrated Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on the provisions of the Bill.

### **9. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

### **10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Thursday 4 November 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.

**Chris Lyttle MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education  
10 November 2021**