



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

19 January 2022

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 Robin Newton MBE MLA

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

Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 9:42am in public session.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Flexible School Starting Age - Oral Briefing from the Minister of Education

The Committee noted:

- The Deferral of School Starting Age Consultation Report, the School Age Bill and the associated Explanatory and Financial Memorandum;
- A Department of Education Briefing Paper, on deferral of School Starting Age;
- A RaISE Briefing Paper on School Starting Age: Policy and Practice in UK;
- A record of an Informal Meeting with stakeholders regarding Flexible School Starting age on 14 December 2021; and
- Responses from TinyLife and School Start Flexibility NI to the Department of Education consultation on Deferring School Starting Age.

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

Miss Michelle McIlveen, Minister of Education, Department of Education

Dr Suzanne Kingon, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards,
Department of Education

Mr Adrian Murphy, School Age Flexibility Team, Department of Education

Mr Gary Fair, Finance Director, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Van Houten, Head of Budgeting Team, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Creagh, Head of Investment and Infrastructure Team, Department of
Education

The Minister briefed the Committee on proposed legislation on flexible school
starting age.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 10:30am.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister asking that the legislation includes a review within a specified time period to afford an opportunity to address other measures sought by stakeholders; and asking for a commitment to two years of funded preschool as in neighbouring jurisdictions.

3. January Monitoring / Budget 2022-25 - Oral Briefing from the Department of Education

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 10:43am:

Mr Gary Fair, Finance Director, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Van Houten, Head of Budgeting Team, Department of Education

Mr Stephen Creagh, Head of Investment and Infrastructure Team, Department of Education

The witnesses briefed the Committee on January Monitoring and the Education budget for 2022-25.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 11:02am.

Ms Brogan left the meeting at 11:17am.

Mr Harvey left the meeting at 11:41am.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Finance on the issues raised in the briefing.

The meeting became inquorate and was adjourned at 11:43pm.

Accordingly, the following actions under item 7 were agreed by the Committee by correspondence:



Northern Ireland Assembly

Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department for the Economy regarding structured education provision for young refugee and asylum seekers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Councillor Kate Nicholl, Lord Mayor of Belfast who raised these issues with it.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice calling for views on:

- A Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy (led by Department of Justice and Department of Health); and
- An Equally Safe Strategy: A Strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (led by the Executive Office).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Justice supporting the strategies and providing details of its liaison with Justice Department in regard to the Gillen review in schools.

7.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the NI Assembly Business Office providing information on the Temporary Modification of Education Duties (No.38) Notice (NI) 2022.

7.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council stating that it will no longer give evidence to the Committee concurrently with the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

7.6 The Committee noted a response from THRiVE setting out the background to the work they do with children and young people in Rathcoole and Monkstown.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite THRiVE to an informal briefing on their work.

7.7 The Committee noted a report from the Bytes Project titled "Building Resilience in Young People: Youth Work in the Voluntary Sector".



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Bytes Project to an informal briefing on the report.

7.8 on page 177 is correspondence providing the findings from the latest Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry & BDO Quarterly Economic Survey.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Outdoor Recreation NI providing its response on the Draft Environment Strategy.

7.10 The Committee noted an invitation from Angel Eyes NI to the launch of its Education Report titled "Covid-19 One Year On: The Impact on Children and Young People with Vision Impairment in Education".

7.11 The Committee noted an invitation from the Policy Forum for Northern Ireland to a keynote seminar on the next steps for the education system in Northern Ireland, and the priorities for the Independent Review of Education.

7.12 The Committee noted an invitation from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to a conference considering the future of education in NI and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's role within it.

7.13 The Committee noted an invitation from the Westminster Food & Nutrition Forum a policy conference on the 26th of April 2022, regarding the next steps for science and technology in UK agriculture.

7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from a senior research fellow at Leeds Beckett University's Law School seeking to brief the Committee on a proposal to reduce hate crime in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the correspondence to the Committee for Justice.

7.15 The Committee noted correspondence from Rainey Endowed School regarding a number of concerns about proposed changes to GCSE, AS and A2 examinations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking a response to the issues raised in the letter.

7.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Baker Tilly Mooney Moore regarding its strategic review of the Education Authority.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an informal meeting with Baker Tilly Mooney Moore on the review.

Chris Lyttle MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education

26 January 2022