



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

9 March 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 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 Mealy (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:** None



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The meeting commenced at 9:15am in public session.

### 1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

### 2. Chairperson's Business

#### 2.1 Minister of Health - Contact Tracing in Schools

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on contact tracing in schools.

#### 2.2 Research and Information Service Briefing Paper - Executive's Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted a briefing paper produced by Assembly Research and Information Service on the Executive's Draft Investment Strategy for reference at its 15 March briefing with DE Finance officials.

#### 2.3 NI Fiscal Council.

The Committee noted a response from the NI Fiscal Council indicating that it would not be able to provide the Committee with an oral briefing on the Department of Education's Budget as it has not considered individual departmental budgets in depth.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Fiscal Council suggesting that it prioritise an analysis the impact of the Executive budget on the department for Education.

#### 2.4 Research and Information Service Briefing Paper - Newcomer Pupils in Northern Ireland Briefing paper.

The Committee noted a briefing paper produced by Assembly Research and Information Service on Newcomer Pupils in Northern Ireland.



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### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 2 March 2022 and 3 March 2022.

### 4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed industrial action being taken by Education Welfare Officers.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education supporting pay parity with equivalent posts in the Health Service.

### 5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education providing data on pupil absence rates and initiatives taken by the Department to improve these.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write again to the Minister of Education expressing concerns about absence levels in schools and seeking for further information on mitigation.

5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education regarding the establishment of sixteen new Nurture Groups.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education on Period Products (Free Provision) Bill.

5.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on Physical Education in Schools.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to recommend in its legacy report that a future Committee for Education should consider an inquiry into Physical Education in schools and making statutory the guidance about minimum weekly hours of PE.

5.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing an update on the pilot of Operation Encompass in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Justice.

5.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Gambling with Lives pilot programme in post primary schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to suggest in its Legacy report that a future Committee may wish to consider receiving a briefing on the pilot programme.

Mr McNulty left the meeting at 9:33am.

5.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

5.9 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Department of Education regarding the pooling of budgets to deliver children's services, as per the Children's Services Co-Operation Act 2015.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that the Department of Education copy its response to the Committee.

5.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding a Feminist Recovery Plan produced by the Women's Policy Group.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the plan to the Department of Education seeking a response to the issues raised.

Mr Butler left the meeting at 9:36am.

5.11 The Committee noted correspondence about the lack of integration in sports across schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education seeking a response to the issues raised.



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5.12 The Committee noted correspondence regarding a collaborative project with Azombwe and the British Council looking at creating new narratives between young people from Africa and Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond suggesting that the correspondent may wish to write to the new Education Committee following the election.

5.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing details of the upcoming Joint Consultative Forum.

5.14 The Committee noted an invitation to a policy conference on the next steps for science and technology in UK agriculture.

5.15 The Committee noted the Department of Education Investing Activity Report for February 2022.

5.16 The Committee noted correspondence regarding concerns on the Integrated Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the correspondents referring them to the Committee report on its consideration of the Bill.

Mrs Dodds joined the meeting at 9:37am.

5.17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding an SL1 for a statutory rule - The Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Mr McNulty rejoined the meeting at 9:38am.

## 6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.



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**7. Education Authority - Oral Briefing from the Education Authority Leadership Team**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority and a Public Accounts Committee memorandum of Reply on the Impact Review of Special Educational Needs.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:43am:

Ms Sara Long, Chief Executive, Education Authority

Ms Clare Duffield, Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services, Education Authority

Mr Dale Hanna, Director of Operations and Estates, Education Authority

Mr Seamus Wade, Director of Finance and ICT, Education Authority

Ms Una Turbitt, Interim Director of Children and Young People's Services, Education Authority

Ms Kim Scott, Assistant Director of Regional School Development, Education Authority

Mr Philip Moore, Head of Communications, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Education Authority.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Harvey left the meeting at 10:00am.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 10:04am.

Mr McCrossan joined the meeting at 10:10am.

Ms Brogan left the meeting at 10:14am.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority and DE seeking:



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- assurance on the broader budgetary position to address systemic funding challenges;
- further information on capacity at the new Ardnashee Special School;
- information on the appointment process for a permanent Director of Children and Young People's Services; and
- Information on the use of cluster models to facilitate early intervention to reduce reliance on statementing.

**8. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

**9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday 15 March 2022 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55am.

**Chris Lyttle MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education**

**16 March 2022**