



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

23 March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30 Parliament Buildings/ Teleconference

Present:

- Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
- Mr Robbie Butler MLA
- Mr Harry Harvey MLA

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

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Justin McNulty MLA

Apologies:

- Mrs Diane Dodds MLA
- Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
- Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA



Northern Ireland Assembly

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

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee discussed the significant impact of current industrial action on education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education and the Education Authority seeking urgent resolution of industrial action affecting school transport and special schools.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 15 March 2022 and 16 March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that as this was its last meeting, it was content for the Chairperson to approve the minutes of this meeting.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education regarding an Oral Statement on projects to be advanced in planning under the major capital works programme.

5.3 The Committee noted Integrated Education Fund Learning Together newsletters.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from Foras Na Gaeilge regarding a public consultation on its Corporate Plan 2023-2025.

5.5 The Committee noted correspondence from Outdoor Recreation NI providing information on its virtual conference.

5.6 The Committee noted correspondence regarding Department of Education participation in a Department of Health's Working Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health asking why the Department of Education were not invited to participate in the Working Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent suggesting that they may wish to write to the new Committee for Education when it is established.

5.7 The Committee noted a copy of the Minister of Education's Oral Statement on projects to be advanced in planning under the major capital works programme.

5.8 The Committee noted a response from Department of Education providing further detail on the 2021-22 Spring Supplementary Estimates.

5.9 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the transfer test.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent that raised this issue with it.

5.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing an update on issues raised in the Parenting NI Big Parenting Survey.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Parenting NI.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

5.11 The Committee noted a copy of a response from Department of Education to the Justice Committee on the Children's Services Cooperation Act 2015.

5.12 The Committee noted correspondence regarding concerns about continued funding for Engage and SEND Implementation after 31st March 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education seeking urgent clarity on continued funding arrangements for:

- The Engage programme; and
- The Happy Healthy Minds programme.

5.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Informing Choices NI suggesting that the Committee include in its legacy report a recommendation for a future Committee to ask the Education Minister to commission updated evaluations of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary, Post-Primary and Special Education Needs Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include this in its Legacy report.

5.14 The Committee noted correspondence from Ballynahinch Primary School, St. Patricks Primary School Ballynahinch and Spa Primary School about concerns following the Assembly's passing of the Integrated Education Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondents its report on the Integrated Education Bill and suggest that they may wish to write to the new Committee for Education when it is established.

5.15 The Committee noted an invitation from the Ulster Teachers Union to its conference on 31 March and 1 April 2022.

5.16 The Committee noted information on a Westminster Food & Nutrition Forum policy conference - Next steps for science and technology in UK agriculture on 26 April 2022.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the items remaining in its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to highlight these to the new Education Committee.

7. Life and Learning in Lockdown - Consideration of Committee for Education report

The Committee considered its report on Life and Learning in Lockdown.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the report on Life and Learning in Lockdown as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the report on Life and Learning in Lockdown should be published.

8. Impact of COVID 19 - Oral briefing from the Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion on pupil mental health and emotional wellbeing

The Committee noted a presentation from the Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 10:12am:

Professor Siobhan O'Neill, NI Mental Health Champion, Mental Health Champion.

Mr Peter Cash, Senior Policy Officer, Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland.

The witnesses provided the Committee with briefing on the ongoing impact of the covid-19 pandemic on children's mental health and wellbeing.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sheehan joined the meeting at 10:44am



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to adjourn its meeting to mark the Day of Reflection to remember those lives which have been lost during the pandemic and those who have been left behind.

The Committee adjourned at 10:55am.

Mr McNulty left the meeting at 10:55am.

The meeting resumed at 11:16am with the following members present: Mr Lyttle, Mr Sheehan, Ms Brogan, Mr Butler and Mr Harvey.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education to share the record of the Mental Health Champion's session, and her priorities of food, sleep, exercise, play and digital equality; and to seek an update on the Covid recovery plan in relation to education; on funded summer schemes for this year; and on the security of dedicated funding for holiday hunger until 2025.

9. Draft Legacy Report 2017-2022 - Consideration of Committee for Education report

The Committee considered its draft Legacy Report for the 2017-2022 mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Legacy Report 2017-2022 as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Legacy Report 2017-2022 should be published.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. Any Other Business

The Chairperson expressed his thanks to Committee members and staff and those who had engaged with the Committee over the 2017-2022 mandate.

Members thanked the Chairperson for his work on the Committee.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

No further meetings of the Committee for Education are planned before the end of the mandate.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55am.

Chris Lyttle MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education

24 March 2022