



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

18 September 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mr Robbie Butler MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mr Peter Martin MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Joshua Devlin (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference

Mr Danny Baker MLA



The meeting commenced at 2:01 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Robbie Butler and Ms Cara Hunter.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Committee membership

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Peter Martin to the Committee.

The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to Ms Cheryl Brownlee for her work on the Committee.

2.2 Informal meeting with Department of Education - update on School Uniforms policy.

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with departmental officials on Tuesday 10 September 2024 on uniform policy.

2.3 Informal meetings with the History Teachers Association Northern Ireland and Bright Futures Project PEACHES

The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had held an informal meetings with the History Teachers Association Northern Ireland and Bright Futures Project PEACHES on Tuesday 17 September 2024 and that a record of these meetings would be prepared for the Committee's next meeting.

2.4 Committee event on links between poverty and educational outcomes for children and young people



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The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had held an event examining the links between poverty and educational outcomes for children and young people on Tuesday 17 September 2024 and that a record of these meetings would be prepared for the Committee's next meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 11 September 2024.

6. Relationships and Sexuality Education Inquiry - Oral Briefing from Invisible Traffick

The following witness joined the meeting at 2:06pm:

Ms Megan Phair, Invisible to Visible Project Coordinator, Invisible Traffick.

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on the work of Invisible Track and its work on Relationships and Sexuality Education.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice and Department of Health seeking an update on the development of a National Referral Mechanism for criminal exploitation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Invisible Traffick seeking further information on the primary school programme and sessions held in alternative settings.

The Committee considered a draft survey for children and young people on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that members contact the Clerk with proposed amendments to the survey and return to this matter at its next meeting.

The Committee considered a draft press release for its mini inquiry into Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the press release.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index and summary note of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding a consultation on proposed changes to performance measures.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on its Pay and Grading consultation.

7.4 The Committee noted the twenty-first report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

7.5 The Committee noted the twenty-second report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding a report on a Rural Childcare Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking its views on the reports recommendations.

7.7 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Department for the Economy and the Department of Education seeking an update on their Joint working programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange further briefings on this matter.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office seeking views on the draft Programme for Government.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this matter at a future meeting.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a timeline for the 2025-26 Budget.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) about departmental guides.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the Northern Ireland Audit Office as part of its Forward Work Programme.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Auditory Verbal therapy on access to early and effective support for deaf children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Auditory Verbal therapy to provide it with an informal oral briefing.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Speakers for Schools about work experience at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly Education Service forwarding its note of an informal meeting it held with Speakers for Schools.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Retail NI sharing its response to the Department of Education School Uniform Consultation.

7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from an Individual regarding concerns about an individual schools governance arrangements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond indicating it has no role in a school's internal governance and forwarding a copy of the Northern Ireland Audit Office good practice guide.

7.15 The Committee noted correspondence from Caleb's Cause NI.

7.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Carrickfergus Grammar School about school playing fields.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority on this matter.

7.17 The Committee noted correspondence from Individual about the use of magnetic phone pouches in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the correspondent to provide it with a written briefing paper on this subject.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended.



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11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 September 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 pm.

Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education
25 September 2024