



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

26 June 2024

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Danny Baker MLA  
Mr David Brooks MLA  
Ms Cheryl Brownlee MLA  
Mr Robbie Butler MLA  
Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Joshua Devlin (Clerical Officer)

**Present by Video or Teleconference**

Ms Cara Hunter MLA  
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA



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The meeting commenced at 2:00 pm in public session.

### 1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

### 2. Chairperson's Business

#### 2.1 informal meeting with Youth Start Consortium

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Youth Start Consortium on 25 June 2024 at page and a briefing paper from Youth Start Consortium.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance asking if there will be scope to provide funding to bridge the gap between the shared prosperity fund and a replacement scheme that may arise.

Mrs Mason joined the meeting at 2:02pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy and Department of Education asking that as part of the 14 – 19 strategy, youth charities are included in the strategy as key delivery partners.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy asking it to engage with Youth Start Consortium on the support it can provide as part of a replacement for UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

#### 2.2 Summer Recess

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit views on the releasing or withholding information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Committee office will distribute a briefing pack of correspondence received at the end of July 2024.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would delegate authority to agree actions on urgent correspondence received over the recess via correspondence.

2.3 The Chairperson informed members that the Minister for Education had announced at question time that the Department had agreed to provide funding for special schools summer schemes.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education:

- Noting concerns that for many special schools this announcement may have come too late and notifications have already been sent to parents that the schemes weren't running; and
- Asking the Department to engage with special schools to make them aware of what funding and support is available as a matter of urgency.

2.4 The Chairperson thanked Members and staff for their contribution to the work of the Committee. The Chairperson also thanked the wider Educational sector and stakeholders for their engagement with the Committee.

### 3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Committee noted a written statement from the Minister for Education on the Uniform Consultation.

4.2 The Committee noted a briefing paper from paper from Bright Futures Project Peaches regarding concerns about special schools and that an informal meeting had been arranged with the group following recess.

### 5. Minutes of Proceedings

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 19 June 2024.



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Ms Hunter joined the meeting at 2:11pm.

### **6. Transforming Local Youth Work in NI - Oral Briefing**

The Committee noted a briefing paper on Transforming Local Youth Work in Northern Ireland.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:11pm:

Ms Sheila Morris, Senior Leader, Youth Action NI

Mr John Lynch, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Work Alliance

Mr Michial Dudley, Chief Executive Officer, Boys & Girls Clubs (NI)

Mr Stephen Dallas, Chief Executive Officer, The Bytes Project

Mr Tony Silcock, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Initiatives NI

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on transforming Local Youth Work.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 2:32pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education:

- Supporting the charities call for the establishment of a Local youth services planning and investment forum;
- Seeking a reduction in the bureaucracy involved in delivering youth services;
- Asking what action is being taken to map and address vacancies; and
- Asking that consideration be given to moving to a model the Department of the Economy used for ESF and SEUPB programmes that would allocate a set percentage on top of staff costs as a management fee.

The Committee adjourned at 3:15pm.



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The Committee resumed at 3:23pm.

### **7. Council Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) - Development of Inspection - Oral Briefing**

The Committee noted an ETI briefing paper.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:23pm:

Ms Faustina Graham, Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

Ms Nicola Byrne, Assistant Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

Ms Sinead McKenna, Acting Assistant Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

Mrs Cathy Galway, Director of Policy, Planning, Organisational Development and Youth, Education and Training Inspectorate

Ms Elaine McAllister, Managing Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate.

The witnesses briefed the Committee on ETI priorities.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

### **8. Correspondence**

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

8.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on post-19 special educational needs (SEN) provision.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with Caleb's Cause NI, who originally raised these issues with it.

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education about early learning and childcare measures for 2024/25.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to the Expansion of Sure Start



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8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to the use of CCTV in classrooms as a means of capturing evidence of bullying type behaviour.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with the correspondent, who originally raised these issues with it.

8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority about Indoor Air Quality.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with the correspondent, who originally raised these issues with it.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the correspondent that raised this matter to an informal meeting following summer recess.

8.7 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Education in relation to the perceived lack of co-operation between the two Departments in developing a Childcare Strategy.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on the ISNI Investing Activity report.

8.9 The Committee noted the nineteenth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from uniformed groups providing a summary of their membership.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence on air quality in schools.

8.12 The committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the work of the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with the Northern Ireland Forest School Association.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence on air quality in schools.

8.14 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding concerns about Education Authority processes for SEN pupils.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking it to address the concerns about its processes.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the NSPCC seeking to give oral evidence to the Committee as part of its RSE inquiry.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with NSPCC.

8.16 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on accountability regarding the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings.

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

8.17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister in relation to negotiations relating to teacher and principal workload.

8.18 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on Beechlawn School.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with the individual who raised this matter with the Committee.

8.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) providing its Directors' report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

8.20 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority providing an update on the 2024/25 application process for Free School meals and School Uniform/Physical Education Clothing Allowances.

8.21 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on its policy in relation to nursing across educational settings.

### 9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted additional proposed academic witnesses for its inquiry into RSE.

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to take evidence from a panel of organisations on the challenges faced by newcomer children.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme as amended.



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## **10. Any Other Business**

The Committee discussed the work of L'Arche, Belfast.

The Committee discussed the eligibility criteria for funding under the RAISE programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on the eligibility criteria for funding under the RAISE programme.

## **11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 September 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

**Nick Mathison MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**11 September 2024**