



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

29 May 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Ms Cheryl Brownlee MLA

Mr Robbie Butler MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason 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)



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

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Deputy Chairperson Pat Sheehan.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson recorded his thanks to the Committee for the Economy for organising a concurrent meeting of the Committee for Education and the Committee for the Economy.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

Mr Butler joined the meeting at 2:04pm.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee had agreed at its last meeting to pause the launch of its Inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education until after summer recess.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to review revised Terms of Reference, timetable and suggested questions at its meeting on 19 June 2024.



5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 22 May 2024.

6. Independent Review of Education Panel – Systemic Overview Briefing

The Committee noted the 'Investing in the Future' report.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:07 pm:

Dr Keir Bloomer, Chairperson, Independent Review of Education

Sir Gerry Loughran, Vice-Chairperson, Independent Review of Education

Ms Isabel Nisbet, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

Ms Marie Lindsay, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

Mr Robin McLoughlin OBE, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the recommendations of the Independent Review of Education.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Brownlee joined the meeting at 2:26pm.

Mr Mathison made a Declaration of Interest that he is a member of a Board of Governors.

Ms Hunter left at 4:00pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to focus on the following issues at future briefings scheduled with the Independent Review of Education panel:

- Educational underachievement and socioeconomic status;
- Transitions and progressions;
- Area Planning; and
- Childcare and early years.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Health encouraging them to engage with the Independent Review of Education on cross cutting issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education requesting physical copies of the 'Investing in the Future' report.

7. Correspondence

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

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education regarding his written statement on 23 May on a package of measures for early learning and childcare.

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education about recommendations from Diverse Youth NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share this response and responses from other departments with Diverse Youth NI.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health regarding Special Educational Needs Policy.

7.5 The Committee noted a copy of an invitation to the Department of Education Permanent Secretary to appear before the Public Accounts Committee on the 'Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to educational attainment' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an informal briefing from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on this and other education reports in due course.

7.6 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Department of Education regarding support for Childminding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss these issues when members meet informally with NICMA on 4 June 2024.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance about engagement on draft budget.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding MSc Physician Associate studies.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the Committee for Health and the Committee for the Economy.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual about the use of CCTV in Classrooms.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the Department of Education for reply.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from Marie Curie providing a copy of their report 'Grief Education and Bereavement Support in Schools: Legislative, Policy and Practice Context'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing with Marie Curie on the report, if possible to coincide with Grief Awareness week.

7.11 The Committee noted further correspondence from the Board of Governors of Beechlawn School indicating that previous correspondence is time-critical in respect to appropriate placements in September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an urgent response from the Education Authority.

7.12 The Committee noted an invitation from Gael Linn to the Scoil Spreagtha Ócáidí Cheiliúrtha Celebration Events.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Communities supporting the initiative and noting the meagre funding required for the Scoil Spreagtha Ócáidí Cheiliúrtha scheme.

7.13 The Committee noted an invitation from Include Youth to a lunchtime event taking place in Parliament Buildings on Wednesday 5 June from 12:00pm.

7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from Ulster University seeking a meeting with the Committee regarding its 'Taking Boys Seriously' research project; and agreed to invite a briefing on this in due course.

7.15 The Committee noted an invitation from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation to its Vere Foster Lecture 2024.

7.16 The Committee noted correspondence from Sure Start about timing for a meeting with the Committee.

7.17 The Committee noted an invitation from Queen's University Belfast School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work to their Think Family Outcomes Workshop.



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8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

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

9. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 June 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 pm.

Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education
5 June 2024