



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

19 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

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)

Present by Video or Teleconference

Mr Robbie Butler MLA



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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Speakers for Schools on 11 June 2024 along with their presentation and a School Impact Report 2022 to 2023.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on:

- How access to work experience can be made more flexible to allow pupils to access this throughout the year; and
- Information on EA's insurance requirements for employers hosting work experience students, and its administration and visiting requirements for teachers facilitating the exercise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy asking if the careers portal could be used to allow pupils to access work experience opportunities.



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3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed a response from the Department of Education on free School Meals, School Uniform and Transport.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking what action it would be taking to address the over reliance on taxi transport for Special Educational Needs children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 2:05pm

The Committee discussed (then embargoed) correspondence from the Minister of Education about the upcoming launch of a consultation on School Uniform Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking details of the communications strategy for the consultation, and asking it to consider extending the consultation beyond the proposed closure date of 27 September 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 7

7. Committee Inquiry into Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

The Committee noted a briefing paper on potential witnesses, a draft RSE Curriculum Briefing Note, a draft timeline for the RSE Inquiry, a RAISE RSE presentation and a briefing paper on minimum content at key stages 3 & 4.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with a list of specialist witnesses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with questions for Citizen Space survey on RSE.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with a timetable for the inquiry.



The Committee returned to public session at 2:16pm

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 12 June 2024.

6. Independent Review of Education Panel - Oral Briefing

The Committee noted the 'Investing in the Future' report and Hansard of the briefing from the panel on 29 May 2024.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:17pm:

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

Dr Keir Bloomer, Chairperson, Independent Review of Education

Ms Isabel Nisbet, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

Mr Robin McLoughlin, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

Ms Marie Lindsay, Panel Member, Independent Review of Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the review.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee meeting adjourned at 3:29pm.

The Committee meeting resumed at 3:38pm.

8. Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) - Introduction and Area Planning

The Committee noted a CCMS briefing paper and presentation, and a report entitled 'Catholic Schools Delivering for Communities in the 21st Century'.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:38pm:



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Ms Eve Bremner, Chief Executive, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Ms Majella Corrigan, Director of School Planning & Provisions, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Mr Michael Keenan, Director of Education, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

The witnesses briefed the Committee on CCMS priorities.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Butler left the meeting at 4:12pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCMS thanking it for its invitation to visit one of its schools.

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

- Information on management resources available to implement the significant changes ensuing from Development Proposal decisions; and
- Updates in due course on the CCMS-led collaborative bid with other sectors seeking funding to progress the jointly managed school model from the Public Services Transformation Fund.

9. Correspondence

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

9.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to area planning.

9.3 The Committee note correspondence from the Department of Education about the publication of a revised version of its Teacher Education Partnership Handbook.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the publication of the 'Review of Department of Education Targeted Early Years Interventions' report.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education about the publication of the 'Standardisation of the Preschools Education Programme: Scoping Study Final Report'.



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9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to the Committee for Health in relation to School Nurses.

9.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing information on the Interim Public Sector Transformation Board.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding information on the Executive Budget.

9.9 The Committee noted the seventeenth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9.10 The Committee noted the eighteenth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) providing a written briefing on its key initiatives.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite BBFC to an informal meeting.

9.12 The Committee noted Correspondence from an individual asking about the Independent review of Education panel's views on Single Education System and Constitutional Change.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the correspondence to the panel.

9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing information on June Monitoring bids.

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

- Asking that it provides the Committee urgent updates over the summer recess of any progress made in negotiations with trade unions on pay and grading;
- Asking that it outline how it intends to address the issue of school deficits and ensure these are brought under control in the year ahead.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the Committee for Finance.

9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from NASUWT seeking a meeting regarding the findings and recommendations of Special School survey 2023/2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NASUWT to brief it on the findings and recommendations of Special School survey 2023/2024 at a future meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme



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The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite ADD NI to an informal meeting.

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

10. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 June 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.

Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education
26 June 2024