



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

23 October 2024

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy 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 Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies**

Mr Colin Crawford MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



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

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Crawford and Ms Hunter.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

#### 2.1 Record of informal meeting with ADD NI.

The Committee noted a record of member's informal meeting with ADD NI on 15 October 2024.

#### 2.2 Halloween Recess

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting will be on Wednesday 6 November 2024 due to recess.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the meeting pack for its meeting on Wednesday 6 November 2024 would be issued to members on Monday 4 November 2024.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to liaise with witnesses to ensure members receive briefing papers on a timely basis.

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

Mr Mathison made a declaration of interest that Mr Lyttle who would be briefing the Committee had previously employed him.

Mr Sheehan made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the GAA.

Mrs Mason made a declaration of interest that she is a member of the GAA.



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Mr Baker made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the GAA.

Mrs Guy made a declaration of interest that she is a member of the GAA.

#### 4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed members that changes agreed by the Committee at its last meeting to its citizen space survey had been implemented and that the revised survey was now available.

The Committee discussed a link on the Rainbow Project's website that had been raised at its previous meeting. Mr Martin advised that he had informed the PSNI and gave some additional details he had become aware of.

Mr Martin proposed:

That the Committee for Education write to the Committee for Health informing it that the Rainbow Project had previously published a link on its website to the Gender GP website, that the Committee considered this a safeguarding issue and asking it to look at this matter.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 2; Abstain 0.

#### **AYES**

Mr David Brooks

Mr Peter Martin

#### **NOES**

Mr Danny Baker

Mrs Michelle Guy

Mrs Cathy Mason

Mr Nick Mathison

Mr Pat Sheehan

The motion fell.

#### 5. Minutes of Proceedings

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 16 October 2024.



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**6. School Sports' Programme – Department of Education written update regarding the School Sports' Programme, task and finish group**

The Committee noted a written briefing paper from the Department of Education on the School Sports' Programme, task and finish group.

**7. School Sports' Programme - Oral briefing from Sports Bodies**

The Committee noted an Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) report 'thematic evaluation of physical education in primary schools'.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:26pm.

Ms Claire Rea, Primary School Development Manager, Irish Football Association Foundation

Mr Chris Lyttle, Head of Public Affairs, Irish Football Association

Dr Eugene Young, Director of Coaching and Game Development, Ulster GAA

Mr Michael Glover, Coaching Administration and Research Officer, Gaelic Athletic Association

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the School Sports Programme.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite officials to brief it on Physical Education (PE) in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health and the Department for Communities asking if they would be able to work with the Department of Education to support PE in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Sport NI to ask what action it is taking to encourage and support sport in schools.



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**8. Committee Inquiry into Relationships and Sexuality Education – Oral briefing from Children's Law Centre**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Children's Law Centre.

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:20pm.

Mr Fergal McFerran, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Children's Law Centre

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on Relationships and Sexuality Education.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 3:53pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:00pm.

**9. RAISE Programme and Fair Start - Oral briefing from the Department of Education**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:01pm.

Mr Peter Hutchinson, Director of Raising Aspirations, Supporting Learning and Empowering Improvement

Mr Dale Heaney, Head of Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the RAISE Programme and Fair Start.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 5:01pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking for a detailed breakdown of the methodology, weighting and entire model used to determine eligibility for the RAISE Programme.



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### 10. Correspondence

10.2 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising the difficulties faced by parents with multiple births

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking its response to the issues relevant to it.

10.3 The Committee noted a submission to its inquiry into RSE.

10.4 The Committee noted Correspondence from Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

10.5 The Committee noted a submission to its inquiry into RSE from the National Secular Society submission.

10.6 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual proposing the Committee hear additional perspectives from three specific groups, in relation to its inquiry into RSE.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Sex Matters, the Women's Rights Network and LGB Alliance seeking their views for the Inquiry.

10.7 The Committee noted correspondence from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta raising a number of questions in response to information provided by SEAG to the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to SEAG seeking its response to these issues.

10.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Alliance for Choice regarding its RSE Inquiry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite Alliance for Choice to provide it with an oral briefing.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding an Oral Statement made by the Minister of Education on the Independent Review of Education.

10.10 – 10.23 The Committee noted correspondence from individuals detailing concerns about the way the Committee questionnaire for parents and teachers is structured.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the correspondents informing them of its decision to revise the questionnaire to add more text boxes and options, allowing for



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more nuanced and varied responses, and to extend the deadline for responses to Tuesday 19 November 2024.

10.24 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing a response to the Independent Review of Education.

10.25 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on support for enrolment for children in Temporary Accommodation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the Education Authority's response with PPR.

10.26 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education relating to transforming Local Youth Work.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with Youth Work Alliance who raised these issues with the Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2024.

10.27 The Committee noted a written update provided by the Department of Education on the Budget for 2024-25.

### **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

### **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 6 November 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25pm.



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**Nick Mathison MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education  
6 November 2024**