



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

9 October 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

Mr Colin Crawford 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 Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)



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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mr Colin Crawford MLA to the Committee.

2.2 The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Northern Ireland Nursery Principals.

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

- An update on any work around principal release for nursery school principals,
- How it intended to address the disparity between funding for small schools and nursery's; and
- An update on a review of the common funding formula.

2.3 The Committee discussed a bus accident involving pupils from Strangford Integrated College.

The Chairperson made a declaration of interest that one of his children attended Strangford Integrated College.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the principal of the school, sympathising with the pupils that were injured and commending the school and pupils for their response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking if it is considering a review of safety on school transport.



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2.4 The Committee discussed a record of a Committee event on the challenges faced by Newcomer Children in Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Education Authority's Intercultural Education Service to brief it at a future meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

Mr Crawford made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the Board of Governors of Harryville Primary School.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office which is co-ordinating a response from the Assembly to the draft programme for Government.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft response at its next meeting.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 2 October 2024.

6. Committee Inquiry into Relationships and Sexuality Education - Oral Briefing from NSPCC.

The Committee noted a briefing paper from NSPCC.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:10pm:

Ms Déarbhlá Sloan, Senior Policy & Public Affairs Officer, NSPCC

Ms Karen Walker, School Service Manager, NSPCC



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Ms Caroline Cunningham, Policy & Public Affairs Manager, NSPCC.

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

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NSPCC for further information on its evaluation of the 'Talk Relationships' pilot scheme.

7. Committee Inquiry into Relationships and Sexuality Education - Oral briefing from Transferor Representatives' Council

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Transferor Representatives' Council.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:03pm.

Dr Andrew Brown, Chair, Transferor Representatives' Council, Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Dr Anita Gracie, Board of Education Member, Methodist Church in Ireland

Dr Rebecca Stevenson, Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in Ireland

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

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 4:00pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:09pm

8. The Daily Mile - Oral Briefing

The Committee noted briefing papers from the Daily Mile.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:09pm:

Dr Barbara McConnell, Senior Lecturer, Stranmillis University College



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Dr Brenda McKay Redmond, Senior Lecturer, Stranmillis University College

Dr Gavin Breslin, Head of Research, The Daily Mile Network Northern Ireland

Ms Nicola Topping, Head of Pupil Wellbeing Services, Education Authority.

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the work of the Daily Mile

This was followed by a question and answer session.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for the Economy on the gateway review for the 14-19 Implementation Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy seeking a further information on the gateway review and an update the implementation of the 14-19 framework.

9.3 The Committee noted the Investing Activity Report for September 2024.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence re Belfast Wider Early Years (BWEY) SEN Early Years Pilot seeking a meeting with the Committee on the work of the project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the group to an informal briefing.

9.5 The Committee noted a Youth Assembly Newsletter for September 2024

9.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Parliamentary Excellence Programme seeking members' feedback on the Effective questioning session on Wednesday 25 September 2024.

9.7 The Committee noted a Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission E-Newsletter

9.8 The Committee noted an invitation to visit Middletown Centre for Autism.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a visit to the Middletown Centre for Autism in 2025.

9.9 The Committee noted an invitation for the Chair and Deputy Chair to attend the Policy Forum for Northern Ireland keynote seminar: Next steps for the education



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system in Northern Ireland on Wednesday 15th January 2025. The Committee noted that the Deputy Chair was available to attend.

9.10 The Committee noted Angel Eyes Quarterly Ezine.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual objecting to the layout of its RSE survey.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Outscape Nature towns and cities.

9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a Minister for Finance statement to Assembly and Final Agreed Budget Sustainability Plan.

9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance Committee regarding unfilled vacancies across the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking a breakdown of its vacancies.

9.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

9.16 The Committee noted correspondence from the Women's Aid Federation seeking to brief the Committee in relation to its RSE inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing with the Women's Aid Federation.

9.17 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns about the role of previous employers informing the Education Authority of any concerns they may have employing a person in the interest of Child Protection/Safeguarding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on its policies in this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland seeking its views on good practice guidance available for employers.

9.18 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding a recent meeting he had with the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC).

9.19 The Committee noted papers placed by the Minister of Education in the Assembly Library in relation to his meeting with the LLC.



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9.20 The Committee noted correspondence from the North Down Primary Principals' Group seeking to brief the Committee on incidents of abuse of school staff by parents and carers.

9.21 The Committee noted previous correspondence from the North Down Primary Principals' Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the North Down Primary Principals' Group seeking further information re next steps.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted its concern that the Department of Education was unable to provide it with an oral briefing on its budget.

The Committee discussed the scheduling of its RSE Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue this discussion at its next meeting.

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 16 October 2024 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:26pm.



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Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education

16 October 2024