



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

26 March 2025

**Meeting Location:** Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College

**Present:** Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
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 Danny Baker MLA  
Mr Colin Crawford MLA  
Ms Cara Hunter MLA

The meeting commenced at 2:02pm in public session.



## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Danny Baker, Mr Colin Crawford and Ms Cara Hunter.

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

### **2.1 Invitation to PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Programme**

The Committee discussed an invitation from PEACEPLUS to an event to mark the launch of the ASPIRE Programme on Tuesday 8 April 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Committee Office would check member's availability to attend the event.

### **2.2 Record of informal meeting**

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting that members held with NIC ICTU and noted that a formal briefing is also scheduled.

### **2.3 Information on Bangor Academy's approaches to Special Educational Needs Education**

The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College for hosting the Committee meeting; and the Committee noted a paper providing information on its approaches to Special Educational Needs Education.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to The Committee Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College with thanks for hosting the Committee meeting and for its tour and presentation of its positive approach to Special Educational Needs education.

## **3. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.



#### **4. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to organisations that took part in its Outdoor Education in Schools event.

**Agreed:** the Committee agreed to discuss actions to follow up on the event at its next meeting.

#### **5. Minutes of Proceedings**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 12 March 2025.

#### **6. Post-19 Special Educational Needs Provision – Oral briefing by Caleb's Cause NI**

The Committee noted a correspondence from Caleb's Cause NI.

The following witness joined the meeting at 2:15pm:

Ms Alma White, Campaigner, Caleb's Cause NI

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Brooks joined the meeting at 2:36pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to raise the issues discussed at briefings with officials and at the Concurrent meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Economy indicating that it wishes to discuss Post-19 Special Educational Needs Provision at the Concurrent Meeting of Committee for the Economy and Committee for Education on 14 May 2025.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

### **7. Special Educational Needs Education update – Oral briefing from Department of Education officials**

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

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:09pm:

Mrs Linsey Farrell, Deputy Secretary, Education Policy & Children's Services,  
Department of Education

Mrs Janis Scallon, Director of Inclusion, Department of Education

Ms Lorraine Brown, Head of Special Education – Early Years & Pupil Support,  
Department of Education

Ms Julie McBride, Head of Special Education Review Team, Department of  
Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 4:15pm

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Education Authority to provide it with an oral briefing on the operational aspects of delivering SEN education.

### **8. SR 2025/42 The Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2025**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education; a report to the Assembly on the Statutory Rule; the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025; an explanatory memorandum for the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025; and the thirty fifth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:36pm:

Mr Mark Bailey, Director of Education Workforce, Department of Education



## Northern Ireland Assembly

Mr Brian Quinn, Head of Teachers' Pay and Pensions Team, Department of Education.

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** That the Committee for Education has considered the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2025 and has no objection to the rule.

### 9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding a Joint Concurrent Meeting of Committee for the Economy and Committee for Education on 14 May 2025.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding its stakeholder event on Outdoor Learning in Schools.

9.4 The Committee considered correspondence from Gael Linn indicating that the 'Scoil Spreagtha' scheme will not continue during the 2025/2026 academic year due to funding challenges.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education noting its disappointment that funding was not available for the scheme and asking that he meet with the group to see their work.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing the GTCNI Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24.

**Agreed:** the Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on the current status and role of GTCNI.

9.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding final budget 2025-26 proposals.

9.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice on delays with Access NI checks.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual asking the Committee to scrutinise the recruitment process for the Strule Shared Education Campus Education Advisor role.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking information on the recruitment process.

9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education notifying the Committee of his intention to make a written statement to the Assembly in relation to the Launch of Three-Year Proposals for Statutory Key Stage Assessment.

9.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education notifying the Committee of the Minister's intention to make a written statement to the Assembly

9.11 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on delays with Access NI checks.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority welcoming the work that it has done to address delays but expressing concerns regarding the high number of outstanding checks. The Committee requested that the Education Authority provide it with regular updates on this matter.

9.12 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding the Department's engagement with Young Enterprise Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with Young Enterprise Northern Ireland.

9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Buddy Bear Trust inviting the Committee to visit the Buddy Bear Trust Conductive Education School. The Chairperson informed members that he had already agreed to visit the school and invited other committee members to attend with him if they were available.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Committee Office would check member's availability to visit the school.

9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education asking the Committee to reconsider the length of the Committee stage of the School Uniforms Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond indicating that it will endeavour to complete the Committee Stage with urgency while carrying out the careful scrutiny that its statutory role requires.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 5:24pm.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

9.15 The Committee discussed a response from the Minister of Education about recent changes to Senior Staff in the Department of Education

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to public session at 5:27pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Head of the Civil Service seeking information on staffing arrangements.

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

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with its normal meeting on 14 May 2025 in addition to a Concurrent Meeting of Committee for the Economy and Committee for Education.

### **11. Any Other Business.**

The Committee discussed the use of Restraint and Seclusion in educational settings.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing to provide an update on the work of the Task and Finish group on Restraint and Seclusion in educational settings.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the RCN to an informal meeting on Restraint and Seclusion in educational settings.

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

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32pm.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Nick Mathison MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**2 April 2025**