



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

2 April 2025

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

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mr Peter Martin MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Colin Crawford MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA



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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted a report and speaking notes for the informal meeting with Children's Law Centre on 25 March 2025 regarding the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings.

The Committee discussed an invitation for the Chairperson to attend the Ulster Teacher's Union Conference on 11 April 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Chairperson attend the conference on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee considered correspondence from Young Enterprise regarding engagement with the Executive Office.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a record of table discussions at the Committee's stakeholder event on Outdoor Education in Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a motion to the House on this item in due course.



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The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the work of the Department's Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group which offered to provide an informal oral briefing on the work of the group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department to provide it with an informal oral briefing on the work of the Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 26 March 2025.

6. Education Authority Transition Service

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority, a report on Post-School Transitions of Students, and a report on Disabled students' school and post-school careers.

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

Ms Clar McKenna, Head of Statutory Assessment and Review Service, Education Authority

Ms Elaine Craig, Interim Assistant Director, SEND Statutory Support Services, Education Authority.

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the transition service.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking inter alia whether they are considering a business case to better resource the transition service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an update on the number of children with special educational needs still awaiting placements in the upcoming year.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking its view on appropriate resourcing for the service and if the grading of the role is appropriate.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Economy indicating that it wishes to look at this matter in the concurrent meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education.

7. Deprivation and Underachievement - Oral Briefing Dublin City University

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Professor Downes.

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:10pm:

Professor Paul Downes, Director, Educational Disadvantage Centre, Dublin City University

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on addressing educational underachievement.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 4:17pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:25pm.

8. Deprivation and Underachievement - Oral Briefing Economic and Social Research Institute

The Committee noted briefing papers from the Economic and Social Research Institute.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:25pm:

Professor Selina McCoy, Adjunct Professor of Sociology, Economic and Social Research Institute



Dr Anne Devlin, ESRI, Economic and Social Research Institute

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on addressing educational underachievement.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to witnesses seeking further information on the development and evolution of the ROI Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) schools programme.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 5:27pm

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual about Access NI checks.

The Committee returned to public session at 5:38pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education in regard to Access NI checks.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council providing an assessment of the Executive's 2025-26 Draft Budget.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly's public engagement team asking if the Committee wishes to be part of the Assembly's presence at the Balmoral Show.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not take part in the Assembly's presence at the Balmoral Show.



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9.5 The Committee correspondence from the Committee for the Economy inviting officials from both DE and DfE to attend the concurrent meeting on 14 May 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking confirmation that officials will be attending.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on support for the Middletown Centre for Autism.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Middletown Centre for Autism.

9.7 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Education to a Raise Children and Young People's Event in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Queens University Belfast regarding an event on AI potential in Public Sector.

9.9 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the allocation of funding from the Pathway Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Sólás seeking its views.

9.10 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Speakers for Schools to the Committee for the Economy regarding careers, skills and the 14-19 framework.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Interim Public Sector Transformation Board.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding a Joint Consultative Forum meeting on Tuesday 15 April 2025.

9.13 The Committee noted a newsletter from Outscape.



9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education regarding the launch of a public consultation on a revised Integrated Education Strategy and Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on a revised Integrated Education Strategy and Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance seeking an update on transformation, digitisation, and the smartbus project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on the funding for Special Educational Needs.

9.15 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education setting out its policy on voluntary contributions sought by schools from parents.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to write again to the Department of Education seeking clarity on governance arrangements.

9.16 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing its view on the 'Classroom Assistants in Northern Ireland' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the report's authors.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.



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11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 April 2025 at 2:00pm in room 29 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.

Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education
9 April 2025