



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

21 May 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
Mr Peter Martin MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Colin Crawford MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

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



1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee would be meeting on Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 9:15am to take evidence in relation to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

3. Declaration of Interests

Mr Mathison made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the Board of Governors for Killinchy Primary School.

Mr Brooks made a declaration of interest that his wife is a member of the Board of Governors for Grosvenor Grammar School and Mitchell House School.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy providing the draft minutes of the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to issue from the Department for the Economy and the Department of Education about the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting.



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The Committee considered a draft motion on issues raised at the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education.

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

The Committee noted transcripts of the Concurrent meeting of the Committee for Education and the Committee for Health on 19 February 2025.

5. Minutes of Proceedings

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 14 May 2025.

6. Report regarding Western Trust Restraint and Seclusion - Oral Briefing from Children's Law Centre

The Committee noted:

- A briefing paper from the Children's Law Centre;
- A record of informal meeting on 14 May 2024 with the Harry's Law Campaign;
- A briefing paper from the Harry's Law Campaign informal meeting on 14 May 2024;
- A record of informal meeting on 25 March 2025 with the Children's Law Centre;
- Opening remarks for informal briefing 25 March 2025 with Children's Law Centre; and
- A record of an informal meeting on 8 April 2025 with the Department of Education.

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

Ms Rachel Hogan, SEND Specialist Legal Adviser, Children's Law Centre.

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on restraint and seclusion in educational settings.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter joined the meeting at 2:40pm.



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7. Report regarding Western Trust Restraint and Seclusion - Oral Briefing from the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman

The Committee noted:

- A briefing paper from NIPSO the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman;
- The Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman Report on a complaint against the Western Health & Social Care Trust;
- The Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman Overview Report on the use of restrictive practices in schools;
- The Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman Sectoral Insights report on Education; and
- A School Case Digest from the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:25pm.

Ms Margaret Kelly, Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman

Mr Sean Martin, Deputy Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on restraint and seclusion in educational settings.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 4:30pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider at its next meeting a draft motion to the Assembly on restraint and seclusion, and options to repeal Article 4. (1)(c) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

8. Correspondence



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Mr Sheehan joined the meeting at 4:33pm.

8.1 The Committee noted a correspondence Index.

8.2 The Committee noted a submission from Community Union on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

8.3 The Committee noted a newsletter from Outscape.

8.4 The Committee noted a submission from Strathearn School on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing a breakdown of actions being progressed to address workload issues, including timelines for delivery; and the scope and timeline for the work of the independent review of workload.

8.6 The Committee a response from the Department of Education on Special Educational Needs Funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking for further information on plans for development of Special Educational Needs schools.

8.7 The Committee noted a submission from NASUWT on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding Caleb's Cause.

8.9 The Committee noted a written Ministerial Statement on Early Learning and Childcare.

8.10 The Committee noted the 39th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing a written update on the Department's 2024-25 provisional outturn Capital Budget and 2025-26 initial approved budget breakdown.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed a draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee moved to closed session at 4:45pm



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The Committee discussed possible amendments to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

The Committee returned to public session at 4:47pm

10. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed the work of the National Association of Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Nacoa asking it to provide a written brief on its work supporting children.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 9:15am.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
28 May 2025