



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

19 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Stephanie Mallon (Clerk Assistant) (Item 6 only)

Ms Barbara Love (Assembly Clerk) (Item 6 only)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



Northern Ireland Assembly

Apologies: Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

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

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Mr Sheehan.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with the Rare Diseases Partnership.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority asking if there was any capacity to include a category of rare diseases on the medical register at schools to allow bespoke arrangements to be put in place to support children as they progress through the education system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the record to papers for the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

The Committee noted that the Supreme Court had ruled that Christian religious education (RE) taught in schools in Northern Ireland is unlawful.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education seeking a written briefing on the impact of the judgement on the delivery of religious education and collective worship in schools.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interests



4. Matters arising

The Committee considered correspondence from its previous meeting

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on its interaction with Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence to LGNI, the Committee for Communities and the Executive Office.

The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on youth provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with Bytes.

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the regulation of Private Tutoring.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health and to the Department of Education seeking an update on this matter once it has been discussed at Children and Young People Strategy Child Protection Group.

The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on Special Educational Needs placements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to papers for the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

5. Draft Minutes

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



Northern Ireland Assembly

6. Proposed Committee Bill

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 2:07pm.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:12pm.

Mr Brooks joined the meeting at 2:56pm.

The Committee moved to public session at 2:59pm.

The Committee discussed issues relevant to the passage of a committee bill in the current mandate including the time frame and content of a committee bill.

Agreed: The Committee will discuss options for the Bill at its next meeting.

7. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda - Oral Briefing by Partnership for Inclusive Education

The Committee noted a Partnership for Inclusive Education response to SEN reform agenda.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:00pm.

Dr Ernest Purvis, Head of Policy, Children in Northern Ireland

Ms Mary Alice Clancy, Policy & Campaigns Officer, Royal National Institute for Blind People Northern Ireland

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the Special Educational Needs reform agenda.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Mathison made a declaration of interest that his wife works for an organisation that is a member of the Partnership for Inclusive Education.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee adjourned at 4:05pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:10pm.

8. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – Oral Briefing by EA Officials on Statementing Monitoring, Resource and Capital Budget update - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Education Authority.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:10pm.

Dr Tomas Adell, Chief Transformation Officer, Education Authority

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

Ms Tracey Logan, Interim Head of SEND Statutory Services, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on budget.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 5:00pm.

Mrs Guy left the meeting at 5:09pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority for additional information arising in the briefing, including to seek data on the effectiveness of annual reviews.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

9.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister on Transgender guidance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education regarding children's rights impact assessments.

9.3 The Committee noted the 50th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9.4 & 9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from parents regarding the closure of SEN classrooms at Sandelford Special School, Coleraine.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an update on conditions and reopening of the school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondents indicating the action it was taking.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence regarding the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Assumption Grammar School.

9.7 The Committee noted revised Outturn and Forecast Outturn - 2025-2026 Guidelines.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the role of the Department of Finance in relation to the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

9.9 The Committee noted an invitation from the Assembly Education Service. In an extension of the work experience partnership initiated by the Committee last year with the former Speakers for Schools, now Futures for All, the Education Service invite the Committee Chair and Clerk to take part in an online work experience/ insight session with students from a range of schools on Friday 28 November 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Chair and Clerk take part in the event.

9.10 The Committee noted an invitation from UNISON to attend an annual celebration of school support workers.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from St Louis Grammar School.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the school seeking an update.

9.13 The Committee noted Correspondence regarding its Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to papers for the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

9.14 The Committee noted a media release from the Education Authority on Safeguarding issues.

9.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Reform Group of Reclaim the Enlightenment thanking the Committee for the briefing last week, undertaking to provide a literature review and welcoming any review of the transfer test.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the forward work programme as drafted.

11. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed preparedness training at school and Martin's Law.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
26 November 2025