



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

4 February 2026

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 Jon Burrows MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Catriona Doherty (Legal Advisor) (Item 7 only)

Ms Gillian Kane, (Senior Research Officer) (Item 8 only)

Mr Michael Scholes, (Research Officer) (Item 8 only)



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Apologies: Mr Gary Middleton MLA

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

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Mr Middleton.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a record of an informal briefing with Kingston Bryars on 20 January 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to the Department of Education seeking information on the range of qualifications available to pupils attending special schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the record of the informal briefing to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

The Committee considered a record of an informal briefing with Victoria Graf on 27 January 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the record of the informal briefing to its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

The Committee considered a written Ministerial statement on a Five-Year Education Budget Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education stating its concerns that the statement should have been made to the Assembly and inviting the Minister to brief it on the Budget Strategy.



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

- Information on, what work the Department of Education is doing to research the impacts of academic selection;
- evidence that proposed legislation for a managing authority for the controlled sector will improve educational outcomes for pupils; and
- information regarding additional funding for school playing fields.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department of Education to provide it with an oral briefing on religious education.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 28 January 2026.

6. Overview of the Special Educational Needs Delivery Plan Enabling Actions - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

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

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:20pm.



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Mrs Janis Scallon, Director for SEN Reform and Inclusion Development,
Department of Education

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

Ms Karen Campbell, Head of SEN Reform Delivery Team, Department of
Education

Ms Sharon Allen, Head of SEN Reform Support Team, Department of Education

Ms Emma Morgan, Principal Statistician, Department of Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on Special Educational
Needs Delivery Plan Enabling Actions.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking
information on Parental Support Classes.

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

- Statistics held on SEN pupils on reduced hours; and
- Nurses in special school settings.

The Committee moved to closed session at 3:27pm

7. General Teaching Council Bill - Oral Briefing by the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee noted a briefing paper on the General Teaching Council Bill.

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:27pm.

Ms Catriona Doherty, Legal Advisor, NIA Legal Services



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Witnesses briefed the Committee on the research paper.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Burrows left the meeting at 3:46pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking further information regarding clauses 2, 7, 9, and 11 of the Bill.

The Committee adjourned at 3:54pm

The Committee resumed in public session at 4:00pm

8. General Teaching Council Bill - Oral Briefing by Assembly Research & Information Service

The Committee noted a research paper on the Bill.

The following witness joined the meeting at 4:00pm.

Ms Gillian Kane, Senior Research Officer, NIA Research Office

Mr Michael Scholes, Research Officer, NIA Research Office

Witnesses briefed the Committee on the research paper.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education for further information on issues raised in the research paper.



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9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted the 54th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing an update on Education Authority savings proposals.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from Youth Work Alliance providing a briefing paper on the current landscape of youth work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and Education Authority regarding issues raised in the paper.

9.5 The Committee noted a written statement from the Minister of Education in relation to the Armed Forces Bill.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on School Uniform Guidelines.

9.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Outturn and Forecast Outturn.

9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal providing its report 'Two years of the restored NI Executive'.



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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 amended.

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 11 February 2026 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
11 February 2026