



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

10 June 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr David Brooks MLA
Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA
Ms Cara Hunter MLA
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA
Mrs Julie Middleton MLA

In attendance:

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Claire Milliken (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Aisling Willighan (Clerical Officer)



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Attended via teleconference facilities: N/A

Apologies: Mr Danny Baker MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Danny Baker MLA.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a draft press release following the public disorder asking the Education Minister to protect the uninterrupted education and safety of children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the press release.

The Committee noted correspondence received from PPR regarding public disorder and the safety of children attending schools and that the issues raised would be considered during the Ministerial briefing.

The Chairperson thanked the organisers at Ulster University for invitation to the Taking Boys Seriously event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to the priority of tackling educational underachievement in the autumn term.



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3. Declaration of Interest

Nick Mathison MLA made a declaration of interest that his wife was employed by Angel Eyes NI.

Cara Hunter MLA made a declaration of interest that she is a member of the technical advisory council for Synthesia AI.

Cathy Mason MLA made a declaration of interest that she had made representations for Shimna Integrated College.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered the Minister's reply to the Committee's initial concerns about industrial action over an impasse regarding teacher workload.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 03 June 2026.

6. Ministerial Briefing – Oral briefing by the Minister of Education

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.18pm

Paul Givan MLA, Minister of Education

Sharon Smyth, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education

Paul Brush, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Education

Dr Suzanne Kingon, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Education

Neil Palmer, Finance Director, Department of Education



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The Minister and witnesses provided a departmental update to the Committee.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 3.05pm

Michelle Guy left the meeting at 3.05pm

Cara Hunter rejoined the meeting at 3.09pm

Michelle Guy rejoined the meeting at 3.09pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek further information, viz:

- An assessment of the effectiveness and any proposed review of the NISTR system, and why some schools are not operating the system accurately;
- To outline the approach to data collection on EBSNA, including whether system issues had been resolved; the system of coding used for monitoring attendance; the number of parents prosecuted for child non-attendance; and how DE supports parents to secure Art 28 UNCRC rights in accessing support for pupils with EBSNA.
- A written briefing on the new youth services strategy launched today and investment in diversionary youth services in light of the role of youth in recent public disorder; and
- The results of the King's College London review of mobile phone pouches pilot scheme; related capital costs; and to signpost parents and pupils who took part in the pilot and who might wish to present to Committee.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service to ask that she:

- Provide the response to previous correspondence issued regarding the former Permanent Secretary;
- Advise the Committee and set out processes followed as to whether it is for officials or Ministers to promote officials within government departments; and
- Publish the Review referred to in the Minister of Education's Written Statement of 27 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance in support of the Education Minister's increased bid for Early Years funding.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

Jon Burrows left the meeting at 3.56pm

Cathy Mason left the meeting at 3.59pm

Jon Burrows rejoined the meeting at 4.09pm

Cathy Mason rejoined the meeting at 4.09pm

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 4.10pm

Cara Hunter rejoined the meeting at 4.25pm

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 8.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the 2025/26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn.



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7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the National Population Projections for Northern Ireland.

7.4 The Committee considered correspondence from the Education Authority regarding moderate and severe learning difficulties.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority for:

- further detail on moderate and severe learning difficulties across all special schools;
- a list of special schools by specialism; and
- confirmation that each special school is confident that the pupil is in the appropriate placement and that it can meet the stated needs of each pupil.

7.5 The Committee considered correspondence from Council for Integrated Education regarding correspondence from Shimna Integrated College.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Shimna Integrated College.

7.6 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill papers.

7.7 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill papers.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Strategic Investment Board regarding the Investing Activity Report for May 2026.

7.9 The Committee considered correspondence from Bangor Academy regarding the future of vocational education in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to inform Bangor Academy that this issue will be considered in the concurrent meeting with Committee for Economy on 17 June 2026.

7.10 The Committee considered correspondence from Foyle Network Foundation regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill papers.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Angel Eyes NI regarding the calendar of events for June and July.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Danny Baker MLA to the University of Ulster regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

7.13 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Childminding Association requesting to meet with the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing in the autumn term.



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7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

7.15 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding ratio changes for registered childminders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to Northern Ireland Childminding Association for information.

7.16 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding safeguarding concerns and information available from Childline.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for reply, and to copy the Committee for Education in its reply.

7.17 The Committee noted an invitation from University of Ulster School of Law to Migration Policy Clinic event.

7.18 The Committee considered correspondence from Rural Community Network regarding Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill papers.

7.19 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the equality scheme within the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Department of Education for comment.



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7.20 The Committee considered correspondence from Committee for Finance regarding the HM Treasury Open Book Review of the Northern Ireland Executive Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this correspondence at the Budget briefing scheduled for 01 July 2026.

7.21 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding a draft refreshed Special Educational Needs Framework for Specialist Provision.

7.22 The Committee considered correspondence from the Education Authority regarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

7.23 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to this correspondence at the concurrent meeting with Committee for Economy on 17 June 2026.

The Committee moved to closed session at 4.48pm

8. Private Members Bills

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.48pm

Stephen Orme, Bill Clerk, Northern Ireland Assembly Bill Office

Jonathan Repath, Senior Assistant Clerk, Northern Ireland Assembly Bill Office



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The officials briefed the Committee on legislative procedure and draft amendments iro the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill and Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

David Brooks left the meeting at 4.49pm

David Brooks rejoined the meeting at 4.51pm

The Committee considered two draft amendments for the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed one amendment as drafted.

Agreed: Iro a second draft amendment, the Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek its interpretation of the term workforce within to the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

The Committee considered one draft amendment to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill pursuant to the advice of the Examiner for Statutory Rules.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make this amendment to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Communities for further information and potentially a virtual briefing on the impact of holiday meal payments to families on means-tested benefits.

The meeting returned to public session at 5.12pm

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 5.12pm

Pat Sheehan rejoined the meeting at 5.16pm



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The Committee returned to agenda item 7.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

10. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 June 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.21pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
17 June 2026