



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

03 June 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
Mrs Michelle Guy 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)



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Attended via teleconference facilities:

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Apologies:

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

The meeting moved to closed session at 2.02pm.

The meeting reconvened in public session at 2.03pm.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

None.

3. Declaration of Interest

None.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Cara Hunter MLA joined the meeting at 2.09pm

Jon Burrows MLA joined the meeting at 2.09pm

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and agreed a draft response regarding revisions to a RalSe report on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

The Committee noted the Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) Programme Interim Evaluation Report received from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

The Committee considered a memo from the Committee Clerk regarding the informal meeting with Benedict Blythe Foundation. The Chairperson thanked the witnesses who attended the informal meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Departments of Education and Health to promote the introduction of Benedict's Law in Northern Ireland and encourage collaboration between the two Departments; and to schedule a briefing on the National Allergy Strategy in due course.

The Committee noted a communication from the Northern Ireland Assembly Bill Office regarding a typographical amendment to the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill.

The Committee considered correspondence from the National Education Union regarding a ballot for industrial action.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education to encourage ongoing engagement with all unions; to seek reassurance that he will implement the workload review at pace; and to ensure he does everything within his remit to address concerns raised by National Education Union.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 27 May 2026.

6. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – oral briefing from Caleb’s Cause NI

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.11pm

Alma White, Caleb’s Cause NI

Caleb White, pupil

Karen Ryan, parent

Emily Ryan, pupil

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the Strategic Review of current SEN provision and transformation agenda.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Pat Sheehan MLA left the meeting at 2.57pm

Pat Sheehan MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.02pm

Jon Burrows MLA left the meeting at 3.25pm

Jon Burrows rejoined the meeting at 3.29pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the following actions following this briefing:



Northern Ireland Assembly

- To detail to witnesses Northern Ireland Assembly Education Office arrangements in collaboration with Futures for All, regarding online and in person work experience student placements;
- To share Stranmillis University College research 'Transform: Exploring Pathways and Barriers for Young People with Disabilities' with witnesses and the Departments of Education and Health; and
- To ask the Minister of Education for further information on transitions, data sharing and mapping.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

The Committee moved in to Closed session at 3.43pm

Cathy Mason MLA left the meeting at 3.43pm

David Brooks MLA left the meeting at 3.43pm

7. Private Members Bills – briefing from Examiner of Statutory Rules

The following official joined the meeting at 3.43pm

Angela Kelly, Examiner of Statutory Rules, Northern Ireland Assembly

The official briefed the Committee on Private Members Bills.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

David Brooks MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.45pm

Cathy Mason MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.51pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission amendments from the Northern Ireland Assembly Bill Office.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Committee returned to public session at 3.56pm

8. SL1 – SEN Regulations 2026 – briefing from Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules would provide an update at SL5 stage of the SEN Regulations 2026.

9. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – briefing from Department of Education

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3.57pm

Eamonn McConville, Director of Transport and Food in Schools, Department of Education; and

Jonathan Boyd, Head of Food in Schools Team, Department of Education

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Pat Sheehan MLA left the meeting at 4.04pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education regarding the opportunity for the Office of Legislative Counsel to draft amendments pursuant to the advice received.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

The Committee adjourned at 4.12pm



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Committee resumed at 4.20pm

Pat Sheehan MLA rejoined the meeting at 4.21pm

10. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – briefing from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4.20pm

Maria Thomasson, CEO, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Christine Mhic Colaim, Senior Education Officer, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Jon Burrows MLA left the meeting at 4.41pm

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission draft amendments to the Bill ensure the inclusion of adequate Education Authority SEN personnel in its provisions.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

11. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – consideration of draft report

The Committee considered the draft report for the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda emailed to Members.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Chair invited Members to inform the Clerk of feedback and additional proposed recommendations to inform the next draft.

12. Education Inspections Bill – Committee consideration

The Committee considered the Education Inspections Bill and Explanatory Memorandum and a draft Committee Stage timeline, survey questions and list of proposed Stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Committee Stage timeline, survey questions and list of proposed stakeholders.

Agreed: Members agreed to inform the Committee Office of any additions they wished to propose to the Stakeholder list.

Cara Hunter MLA left the meeting at 4.58pm

13. Correspondence

13.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

13.2 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the joint concurrent meeting on 17 June 2026.

13.3 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Health regarding Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People regarding mental health in school's curriculum.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

13.4 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Parent Support Group regarding alternative provision for children experiencing EBSNA.

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

13.5 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (Amendment) Regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Justice for information.

13.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding teachers' pensions and overpayments.

Cathy Mason MLA left the meeting at 5.25pm

13.7 The Committee considered correspondence from the Board of Governors of The Wallace High School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the individual who originally raised the issue.

Cathy Mason rejoined the meeting at 5.31pm

13.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding retention and disposal schedules.

13.9 The Committee considered correspondence from Community Advice Causeway regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Bill folders.

13.10 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding SEN provision at St Paul's High School.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the individual who originally raised the issue.

13.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Health and Wellbeing Framework.

13.12 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the SEN Regulations.

13.13 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Special Educational Needs regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the SEN Regulations folder.

13.14 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding automatic enrolment to free school meals for Universal Credit claimants.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

13.15 The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding an urgent SEN placement for their child.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to Education Authority to address the issues raised and encourage the Authority to meet with the individual.

13.16 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the ITE Bursary Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the individual who raised the issue.

13.17 The Committee noted an invite from the Education Authority to a number of events to celebrate the Being Well Doing Well programme.

13.18 The Committee considered correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules delegated powers for the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Bill papers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Bill Sponsor.

13.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department for the Economy regarding February Outturn and Forecast Outturn.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

13.20 The Committee noted correspondence from Outscape regarding POMNI 2025 Webinar resources.

13.21 The Committee considered correspondence from Save the Children regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Bill folders.

13.22 The Committee considered correspondence from National Education Union regarding a ballot for industrial action.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education to encourage ongoing engagement with all unions, to seek reassurance of his implementation of the workload review, delivered at pace and to ensure he does everything within his remit to address concerns raised by National Education Union.

13. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

14. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

15. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.45pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
10 June 2026