



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

24 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
Mr Jon Burrows MLA
Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

In attendance:

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Claire Milliken (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Aisling Willighan (Clerical Officer)
Mr Stephen Orme (Assembly Clerk) (item 10 only)
Mr Jonathan Redpath (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) (item 10 only)



Northern Ireland Assembly

Attended via teleconference facilities:

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Mrs Julie Middleton MLA

Apologies: None

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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee's own-initiative Bill, the School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill was introduced on Monday 22 June 2026 and that the Second Stage debate is scheduled for Tuesday 30 June 2026. The Chair commended all involved in advising on and drafting the Committee Bill.

The Chairperson highlighted the work of the Time to Read, Time 2 Count, and Time to Code early-intervention volunteer programmes run by Business in the Community Northern Ireland which aim to support children in primary schools by improving literacy, numeracy, and digital skills through regular one-to-one or small group sessions with trained business volunteers.

3. Declaration of Interest

Mr Sheehan made a declaration of interest that two of his children had attended Bunscoil Sleibhe Duibhe.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education of 17 June 2026

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the group CyberFirst to its stakeholder list.

The Committee noted a translation of a briefing paper from Conradh na Gaeilge on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this to the papers for the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

The Deputy Chairperson raised concerns about the appointment of the new behaviour Czar by the Department of Education.

Mr Brooks joined the meeting at 2:07pm

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 17 June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education held on 17 June 2026.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

6. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – oral briefing by Department for Communities

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Communities, correspondence from Unison and a briefing paper from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in relation to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to item 14 at 2:12pm.

14. Correspondence

14.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

14.2 The Committee noted correspondence regarding uniform policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education regarding the issues raised.

14.3 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from correspondence from individual to the Department of Education regarding the Review of the Religious Education Core Syllabus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking to be copied into its response to the correspondent.

14.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to issues raised by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the response with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

14.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

14.6 The Committee noted correspondence from EBSA Horizons NI regarding SEN Regulations.

14.7 The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal providing a report 'Improving the institutions - suggested reforms to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive'.

14.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority providing a copy of a response to the ABS-EBSNA NI Parent Support Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an oral update on the Department's attendance strategy.

14.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the NI Fiscal Council providing its Sustainability Report 2026

14.10 The Committee noted correspondence from Community Foundation NI on the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

14.11 The Committee noted correspondence from PolicyWISE on the use of generative AI in schools.

14.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Cash Profiles and Use of Vote on Account.

14.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding outturn and forecast outturn.

14.14 The Committee noted correspondence providing the Muckamore Inquiry Executive Summary and Recommendations.

14.15 The Committee noted the 69th Report Of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The Committee returned to item 14 at 2:21pm

7. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – oral briefing by Youth Assembly

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Youth Assembly.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The following Youth Assembly Members joined the meeting at 2:21pm

Ms Emily Murray, Representative, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Mr Saul Wilton, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Sarah Agnew, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Mr Odhrán Carlin, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Tomila Staugaite, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:34pm.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

8. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – oral briefing from Youth Assembly

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Youth Assembly and a response from the Department of Education on the definition of workforce.

The following Youth Assembly Members joined the meeting at 3:04pm

Mr Dáire McConnell, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Mr Cillíán McGlinchey, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Niamh Barnes, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Imogen Neill, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

Ms Chloe McKenna, Member, Northern Ireland Youth Assembly

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

The Committee adjourned at 3:28pm.

The Committee resumed at 3:39pm.

9. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – Oral Briefing by Bunscoil Sleibhe Duibhe

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Pilib Mistéil.

The following witness joined the meeting at 3:39pm

Mr Pilib Mistéil, Principal, Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh.

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 4:03pm.

10. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – Informal Clause by Clause

The Committee noted correspondence from the Bill Sponsor regarding amendments to the Bill.

The Committee were briefed on amendments to the Bill by:

Mr Stephen Orme, Assembly Clerk, NIA Bill Office

Mr Jonathan Redpath, Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk, NIA Bill Office

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring forward the amendments.

The Committee discussed the clauses of the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the clauses formally at the meeting on 1 July 2026.

Mr Brooks, Mr Burrows and Mrs Middleton indicated that, although they would not seek to divide the Committee in clause-by-clause decision-making, they do not support the principles of the Bill. They noted that this position is without prejudice to any decisions they might take during the subsequent stages of the legislative process.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 4:20pm.

The Committee returned to public session at 4:28pm.

11. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – Formal Clause-by-Clause Decision-making

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing advice in relation to the legal understanding of the term “workforce” used in the Bill.

The Committee considered the clauses of the Bill.

Clause 1

The following amendment was considered:

Clause 1, Page 1, Line 18 At end insert—

‘(ba) the Education Authority; and’

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to propose amendment 1 to the Assembly.

Agreed: Subject to amendment 1, the Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as drafted.

Clause 2

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 2 as drafted.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Long Title of the Bill

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Long Title of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 4:33pm

12. Relationships and Sexuality Education Inquiry – Consideration of draft report

The Committee considered a draft report on its Relationships and Sexuality Education Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to further consider the draft report at its next meeting.

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

The Committee considered a draft report on its Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to further consider its draft report at its next meeting.

The Committee returned to public session at 4:54pm.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

16. 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 1 July 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.57pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
1 July 2026