



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

10 September 2025

**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  
Mr Peter Martin MLA  
Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Lucia Wilson (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



The meeting commenced at 2:03pm in public session.

### **1. Apologies**

An apology was received from Cara Hunter.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson welcomed Jon Burrows to the Committee and recorded the Committee's thanks to Colin Crawford for his work on the Committee.

The Committee noted a press release from a group of youth organisations, LGBTQIA+ charities and education unions urging the Minister to reinstate guidance for supporting trans pupils.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister asking:

- What interim guidance has been put in place to support trans pupils;
- When does the Minister expect final guidance to be put in place; and
- That the Minister shares his legal advice on this matter.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 2 July 2025.

### **4. Matters arising**

The Committee discussed its procedures.



## **5. Declaration of Interest.**

Mr Brooks made a declaration of interest that his wife is a member of the Board of Governors for Grosvenor Grammar School and Mitchell House School.

## **6. Oral briefing by the Northern Ireland Teaching Council**

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:24pm.

Mr Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Ms Jacquie White, NIC - ICTU, Ulster Teachers' Union

Mr Justin McCamphill, National Official Northern Ireland, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

Ms Joanne Whyte, President, National Association of Head Teachers

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on issues faced by their membership.

Mr Mathison made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the Board of Governors for Killinchy Primary School.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The meeting adjourned at 3:46pm.

The meeting resumed at 3:52pm.

## **7. School Inspections Bill – Oral Briefing by the Department of Education**

The Committee noted:

- A Department of Education consultation summary report on proposals to strengthen inspection legislation;
- A briefing paper from the Department of Education; and
- A note on a pre-brief from officials for the Chairperson.



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The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:53pm.

Dr Suzanne Kingon, Deputy Secretary of Policy, Delivery and Infrastructure,  
Department of Education

Ms Kathryn Menary, School Improvement Team, Department of Education

Ms Nicola Byrne, Assistant Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Barry O'Rourke, Assistant Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on proposed legislation on school inspections.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education and Training Inspectorate seeking a written briefing on inspection of home-schooled children.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking further information on the level of inspections that can be carried out during action short of strike.

### 8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25.

8.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy in relation to the Insolvency Amendment Bill.

8.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education providing its Directors Report and Financial Statements for year ending 31 March 2025.

8.5 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education seeking its support for the transfer of functions of the Government Indemnity



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Scheme covering museums, galleries and libraries to the Department for Communities.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education supporting the transfer.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (NICCEA) Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25.

8.7 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Minister of Education asking him to meet with members of the youth Assembly.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Department of Finance budget information gathering process.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Assessment of the implications of the Spending Review.

8.10 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding concern about the Department engagement on the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education on a rise in the annual household earnings threshold for free school meals (FSM) and uniform grant (UG) applications for those in receipt of Universal Credit.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence Department of Education update to support young carers and of the upcoming launch of 'Teach the Teachers' video by Action for Children.

8.13 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department of Education asking what steps are being taken to embed the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking that the Committee is copied into its response.



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8.14 The Committee noted correspondence from UCAS providing June 30 Deadline Data 2025.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council providing its publication databank and user guide.

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law Centre regarding absenteeism in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange briefings on absenteeism in schools.

8.17 The Committee noted an update from Caleb's Cause NI on its campaign in support of young school leavers with complex needs who are transitioning from special school settings into adult services.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange briefings from Caleb's Cause NI.

8.18 The Committee noted the Second Report on the operation of the Children's Services Co-operation Act.

8.19 The Committee noted correspondence from the Independent Autism Reviewer regarding SEN placements. Members noted that a briefing with the Independent Autism Reviewer had been arranged for the next Committee meeting.

8.20 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing the business plan 2024-25 end-year report on progress of business plan 2025-26.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on this matter.

8.21 The Committee noted correspondence from Timothy Gaston MLA asking that NI Survivor Council is added to its list of consultees

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add the NI Survivor Council to its list of consultees.

8.22 The Committee noted correspondence from the Women's Rights Network NI providing a submission to the Committee inquiry into RSE.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add the submission to the inquiry papers.



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8.23 The Committee noted correspondence from the integrated Education Fund regarding concerns about methodology used to produce 'Parental School Admission Survey' and the promotion of the findings.

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

8.24 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education to concerns raised in relation to the systems in place to provide special educational needs (SEN) placements.

8.25 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding access to Team Teach training for mainstream schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with NAHT who raised this matter with it.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking an update on guidelines for the use of restrictive practices in educational settings.

8.26 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding the Youth Assembly's report A Curriculum for the 21st Century – Learning for Life and Work.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the response with the Youth Assembly.

8.27 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health about facilities at the Shankill Women's Centre.

8.28 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the implementation of recommendations from the Investigation 'Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary Schools in Northern Ireland: A Compelling Case for Reform'.

8.29 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education providing the response to its consultation on 16-18 Legislation.

8.30 The Committee noted an invitation to the Supporting Care Leavers Conference 2025.



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8.31 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs seeking views on the Dilapidation Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Education Authority seeking their views on the impact of the legislation in relation to the school estate.

8.32 The Committee noted Committee a response from the Education Authority in relation to SEN Placements.

8.33 The Committee noted an invitation to the Launch of the Imaginarium Exhibition Youth Visions for a Sustainable Future.

8.34 The Committee noted an invitation for the Chairperson to attend the Open Five Nations Citizenship Education Conference.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed it was content for the Chairperson to attend the conference on behalf of the Committee.

8.35 The Committee noted an invitation for the Chairperson to attend the Outdoor Communication Board Launch event. The Chairperson indicated that he was not available to attend the Conference and asked members to contact the Committee office if they were available to attend.

8.36 The Committee noted a letter from Minister of Education regarding a ministerial statement.

8.37 The Committee noted a letter from Portadown Integrated Nursery and Primary School raising concerns about current accommodation at the school and funding delays for new school buildings.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking further information on the process for new school buildings.

8.38 The Committee noted correspondence from St Louis Grammar School.

8.39 The Committee noted correspondence referring to alleged financial irregularities an individual school.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to this correspondence at its next meeting.

8.40 The Committee noted correspondence from SEN Reform NI.





8.41 The Committee noted the 43rd Report Of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

### **9. 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.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to restrict its business at meetings to two briefings only.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that as part of its review of SEN that every second meeting would be dedicated to taking evidence for the review.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would consider the proposed draft Terms of Reference for its review of SEN at its next meeting.

### **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 September 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:22pm.



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**Nick Mathison MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**17 September 2025**