



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Education

## Minutes of Proceedings

11 March 2026

**Meeting Location:** Room 29 Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Mr Peter Martin MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Aisling Willighan (Clerical Officer)

Present via teleconference facilities:

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting commenced at 2:01pm in public session.

### **1. Apologies**

No apologies have been received.

Mr Burrows joined the meeting at 2:02pm

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

The Committee noted a record of an Informal meeting with representatives of Tiny Life about concerns over funding arrangements.

### **3. Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted a letter, read into the record as requested, from Rhea Donnell who gave evidence to the Committee on its proposed bill to allow all pupils the choice to wear trousers at its meeting on 4 March 2026.

### **5. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 4 March 2026.

Ms Hunter joined the meeting at 2:05pm



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## 6. Oral briefing on Curriculum Review

The Committee noted a summary of its 3 February Curriculum Review stakeholder event round table discussions.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:07pm.

Ms Lucy Crehan, Educational Consultant, Review of the NI Curriculum

Ms Christine Counsell, Head of Curriculum Taskforce, Review of the NI Curriculum.

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing in relation to curriculum.

Mr Martin joined the meeting at 2:12pm.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Martin left the meeting at 3:16pm

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education sharing papers from its stakeholder event on curriculum and seeking further information on:

- Early years recommendations, prioritisation and sequencing; and
- Education for sustainable development

Mr Martin rejoined the meeting at 3:25pm.

## 7. Restrictive Practices - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Officials

The Committee noted a Department of Education briefing paper.

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

Ms Claire McClelland, Director of Raising Aspirations and Supporting Learning, Department of Education

Mr Michael Leonard, Head of Additional Educational Needs Team, Department of Education

Ms Judith Logan, Additional Educational Needs Team, Department of Education.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing in relation to the use of restrictive practices in educational settings.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Mason left the meeting at 4:27pm.

Mrs Guy left the meeting at 4:31pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on protocols for injury caused in schools and the equipment it recommends for teacher and pupil safety.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking:

- How many times the task and finish group met with all member organisations present; and
- Seeking a rationale for not replying to organisations that left the task and finish group.

### **8. General Teaching Council Bill - Oral Briefing by Department of Education Bill Team**

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the GTCNI Bill.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:46pm.

Mr Mark Bailey, Director of Education Workforce, Department of Education

Mr Alan Boyd, Head of GTCNI Interim Sponsorship Team, Department of Education

Ms Leanne Johnston, GTCNI Interim Sponsorship Team, Department of Education.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Hunter left the meeting at 5:10pm.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add to RaISe queries of analogous regulators the disciplinary processes within their systems; and to arrange a briefing from the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the Bill.

### 9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual providing additional information regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add these to papers for the secondary legislation.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding air quality guidance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education seeking his views on the changed guidance in England and the impact on guidance in Northern Ireland.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence providing the Finance Minister's Oral Statement on the Chancellor's Spring Forecast.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Strategically Important Small Schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the correspondence with the Department of Education seeking its views on the issues raised.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on the draft budget.

9.7 The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Survivor Council to an Expert Insights Event.

9.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Justice Committee on the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report into Child Criminal Exploitation in Northern Ireland.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

9.9 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education on academic selection, the proposed managing authority for controlled schools and additional funding for playing fields.

9.10 The Committee noted an invitation from Professor Victoria Graf to take part in a virtual tour of the WISH Charter Schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a virtual tour of the WISH Charter Schools.

## 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

The Committee discussed concerns regarding the impact of the McCloud judgement of teachers' pensions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking information on this matter

## 11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:41pm.

**Nick Mathison MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**18 March 2026**