



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

17 June 2026

**Meeting Location:** Room 29 Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason 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)

**Attended via teleconference facilities:**

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Julie Middleton MLA



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**Apologies:** Mr Jon Burrows MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

Michelle Guy joined the meeting at 2.02pm

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Jon Burrows MLA and Mr Pat Sheehan MLA.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson informed the Committee of his visit to Glenveagh Special School and thanked the staff there for his warm welcome.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Department of Education regarding area planning, special school infrastructure and capital projects.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority regarding special school transitions for 8-year old pupils.



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

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

David Brooks made a declaration of interest that he is a member of the Business Committee.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker's Office regarding School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Business Office to schedule Bill Stages in plenary business, preferably before the Summer Recess.

### **5. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 10 June 2026.

### **6. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – oral briefing by Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.13pm

Chris Quinn, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Alex Tennant, Interim Chief Executive, Northern Commissioner for Children and Young People

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

This was followed by a question and answer session.



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Cathy Mason MLA left the meeting at 2.31pm

Cathy Mason MLA rejoined the meeting at 2.34pm

Julie Middleton MLA joined the meeting at 2.54pm

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Communities regarding the resource requirements of the role and functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a stakeholder engagement event including UU ARK team and Boys Model School on educational underachievement.

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 11.

Michelle Guy MLA left the meeting at 3.15pm

Danny Baker MLA left the meeting at 3.16pm

David Brooks MLA left the meeting at 3.17pm

**7. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill - Oral Briefing by Altram**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.17pm

Áine Andrews, Chairperson, Altram

Aisling Walls, Manager, Altram

Theresa Brady, Manager of Ionad na Fuisioige, Altram

Sinéad McConnell, CEO of Ionad Uíbh Eachach, Altram



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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.

David Brooks MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.18pm

Danny Baker MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.21pm

Michelle Guy MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.27pm

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to commission two amendments to the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill (an amendment to include Altram as a consultee and an amendment re immersion pedagogy).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Bil Sponsor of a third potential amendment area.

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

David Brooks MLA rejoined the meeting at 3.42pm

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

Cathy Mason MLA left the meeting at 4.09pm

Cathy Mason MLA rejoined the meeting at 4.15pm



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**8. Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill – consideration of survey results**

The Committee considered the Citizen Space survey responses to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

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

The Committee moved to Closed session at 4.20pm

**9. Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – consideration of survey results and informal clause by clause**

The Committee considered the Citizen Space survey responses to the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill and the clauses.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consult with the Bill Sponsor regarding amendment to clause 1 to include Altram as a consultee and an amendment to clause 1 (5c).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the clauses formally at the meeting on 24 June 2026.

The meeting returned to public session at 4.25pm

Michelle Guy left the meeting at 4.28pm



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**10. Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda – consideration of report**

The Committee considered the Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation Agenda report emailed by the Clerk.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to provide the Clerk with any revisions or additional recommendations ahead of consideration at next week's meeting.

**11. Correspondence**

11.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

11.2 The Committee considered correspondence from Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to provide a nil return.

11.3 The Committee considered correspondence from Nourishing NI regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

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

11.4 The Committee considered correspondence from the Education Authority regarding resources for SEN pupils at school

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



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11.5 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding wear and tear allowance for childminders.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Northern Ireland Childminders Association.

11.6 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding mental health in the curriculum.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this at a future concurrent meeting with the Committee for Health.

11.7 The Committee considered correspondence received from Department of Health regarding the Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this at a future concurrent meeting with Committee for Health.

11.8 The Committee considered correspondence from Dr Sinéad Furey and Professor Jayne Woodside from University of Ulster regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

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

11.9 The Committee considered correspondence from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding the Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Departments of Education and Health for a written briefing.



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11.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding a recent cyber-attack on the Education Authority.

11.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Education regarding moderate learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties.

11.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding restrictive practices.

11.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission regarding exemptions from proposed legislative changes to allow pupils to choose to wear trousers to school.

11.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding free school meals 2026-27.

11.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority providing an update on recent disturbances.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the individual who raised the initial query.

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



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11.17 The Committee considered correspondence from Advice NI regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

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

11.18 The Committee considered correspondence from the Controlled Schools' Support Council 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.

11.19 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Communities regarding the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill papers and schedule a briefing with DfC officials.

11.20 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Statutory Nursery School Principals regarding statutory pre-school provision.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education asking to be copied into the reply to the Northern Ireland Statutory Nursery School Principals.

11.21 The Committee noted correspondence from Department for Communities regarding automatic enrolment to free school meals for Universal Credit claimants.



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11.22 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding concerns at Shimna Integrated College.

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

11.23 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding SEN Regulations, Code of Practice and Reform.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Angel Eyes NI.

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

The Committee returned to agenda item 7.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

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

## **13. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.



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

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 June 2026 at 2:00pm in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.36pm.

**Nick Mathison MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**24 June 2026**