



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

17 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

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

Present via teleconference facilities :

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Apologies:

Ms Cara Hunter MLA



Northern Ireland Assembly

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

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Cara Hunter.

Mr Brooks joined the Committee at 2:03pm.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted that Peter Martin was moving from the Committee and recorded the Committee's thanks for his work on the Committee.

Mrs Mason joined the meeting via teleconference facilities at 2:07pm.

The Committee discussed the Consideration Stage of the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Matters arising

The Committee noted correspondence from Justin McCamphill providing clarification of comments he made at the last committee meeting.

The Committee discussed correspondence regarding governance at Assumption Grammer School, Ballynahinch.

Mrs Guy made a declaration of interest that her daughter is a pupil at Assumption Grammer School



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Education Authority regarding issues raised in the correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy correspondence to the Department of Education to the Board of Governors of Assumption Grammar School.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding a ministerial statement and consultation on the future of CCEA GCSE and A-level qualifications.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 8 September 2025 and 10 September 2025.

6. Terms of Reference for Special Educational Needs review

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for a Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and the SEN Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Terms of Reference as amended.

Agreed: The Committee decided to scope capacity for joint working and research with the Health Committee on aspects of the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on presentation of Special Educational Needs by local area.

7. Special Educational Needs Placements - Oral Briefing by the Independent Autism Reviewer

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:57pm.

Ms Ema Cubitt, Independent Autism Reviewer, Department of Health



Northern Ireland Assembly

The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on Special Educational Needs Placements.

Mr Martin left the meeting at 3:30pm.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Committee adjourned at 3:57pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:04pm

8. Special Educational Needs Placements – Oral briefing by Education Authority officials

The Committee noted a briefing papers from the Education Authority; and Correspondence from SEN Reform NI.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 4:04pm.

Mr Dale Hanna, Chief Operations Officer, Education Authority

Mr Peter Canavan, Programme Director SEND Placements, Education Authority

Dr Tomas Adell, Chief Transformation Officer, Education Authority

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on Special Educational Needs Placements.

Mr Martin rejoined the meeting at 4:17pm.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Baker left the meeting at 4:49pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking:

- a breakdown of the cost of the SEN delivery programme; and
- an update on its work to create a definitive nomenclature for SEN.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the Education Authority seeking:

- A breakdown of its SEN budget;



Northern Ireland Assembly

- Information on vacancy and sickness rates for link officers; and
- Information on its safeguarding regime for taxi drivers transporting SEN pupils.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Middletown Centre for Autism seeking its engagement on the Committee Strategic Review of Current SEN provision and Transformation Agenda.

Mrs Guy left the meeting at 5:04pm.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Mental Health Champion seeking a meeting with the Committee to discuss the issues affecting mental health in schools along with the Emotional Health & Wellbeing Framework

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Mental Health Champion to provide it with an oral briefing.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman setting out concerns regarding clause 7 of the School Uniforms Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on this matter in the context of Further Consideration Stage of the Bill.

9.4 The Committee noted an invitation to the Imaginarium Exhibition Launch.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Minister's intention to make an oral statement.

9.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Independent Review of Baseline School Funding providing terms of reference for the review, details of the panel and seeking the Committee's views.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to engage with the review.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. 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.

11. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee for Education meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17pm.

Pat Sheehan MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Education
24 September 2025