



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

24 September 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Mr David Brooks MLA

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Mrs Michelle Guy MLA

Mrs Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Thomas McConville (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA



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

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Nick Mathison, Cara Hunter and Gary Middleton.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

3. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to item 6 at 2:01pm.

6. Mental Health Issues in Schools - Oral Briefing by the Mental Health Champion

The Committee noted:

- A briefing paper from the Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion; and
- The Children and Young Peoples Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2:01pm.

Professor Siobhan O'Neill, NI Mental Health Champion, Mental Health Champion

Dr Nicole Bond, Research Officer, Mental Health Champion



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The witness provided the Committee with a briefing on mental health and an assessment of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a transcript of the briefing to the Department of Education highlighting the concerns raised by the Mental Health Champion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking an update on the work of its Restraint and Seclusion Task and Finish Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to item 4 at 3:07pm.

4. Matters arising

The Committee discussed correspondence from Michelle Guy MLA in relation to the Minister of Education's visit to the Core Knowledge National Conference in Florida in June 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking information on the cost and value for money of the visit.

The Committee noted draft minutes of its meeting on Tuesday 23 September 2025.

The Committee noted correspondence from David Brooks MLA on the proposed tabling of Committee amendments for Further Consideration Stage.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department setting out technical amendments tabled for FCS and offering to provide officials to brief the Committee at its meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written briefing from officials.

The Committee discussed the Minister's announcement of a new Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme, aimed at tackling teacher shortages in critical post-primary subjects across Northern Ireland. Members raised concerns that the Minister had not made the announcement in the Assembly.

Agreed: It was agreed to write to the Minister seeking clarity on the announcement.



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5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 17 September 2025.

7. Update on recommendations of PAC Report on Special Educational Needs - Oral Briefing by DE Officials

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3:29pm.

Mr Ronnie Armour, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department of Education

Mrs Janis Scallon, Director for SEN Reform and Inclusion Development, Department of Education

Ms Deirdre Ward, Director for SEN Strategic Policy, Department of Education

The witnesses provided the Committee with a briefing on progress that has been achieved in response to the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking information on its definition of Special Educational Needs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education regarding issues raised in an Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a response from NICCY in relation to the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education supporting NICCY's recommendation that the Department undertakes a screening exercise and



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if required conduct a Child Rights Assessment on the relevant clauses of the Bill to ascertain any impact on the children's rights that particular clauses may have.

8.3 The Committee noted the 44th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

8.4 The Committee considered correspondence from Cubbie.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Correspondence to the Committee for Health.

8.5 The Committee noted an invitation to the Education for Sustainable Development Forum Conference on 2 October 2025.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee seeking committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education requesting an update on shared strategies.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for Finance regarding the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill and the Public Office (Accountability) Bill.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Linking Generations NI (LGNI) providing an update on its 'Building an Intergenerational NI' proposal to the Department of Communities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking what it could do to support the work of LGNI on a cross departmental basis.

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.



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The Committee discussed the oral briefing with the Minister of Education scheduled to take place on 22 October 2025. Members expressed concerns that the time allocated by the Minister was insufficient to address the issues it wished to address.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an extension to the time for the briefing or an additional briefing with the Minister.

10. 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 1 October 2025 at 2:00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49pm.

Nick Mathison MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Education
1 October 2025