



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2013
ROOM 29

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Sean Rogers MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1. The Chairperson referred Members to press reports relating to the tragic death of a school boy in 2011 and the intention of the Coroner to make her report available to the Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to seek an update on the Coroner's findings and the implications for schools.

Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 10.05am

- 2.2. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson offered congratulations to all school children and their teachers in Northern Ireland on the excellent GCE A-Level and GCSE results for 2012-13.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the publication of the CCEA review of GCE A-Levels and GCSEs.

- 2.3. The Chairperson informed Members that he had attended the Northern Ireland Nurture Group Network special training conference at St. Joseph's primary school in Antrim on 28 August 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Nurture Group Network to thank them for their invitation and to seek relevant papers from the conference.

- 2.4. The Chairperson referred Members to recent press report regarding a "lock-out" at Hazelwood Integrated College.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Belfast Education and Library Board to seek clarity on this matter and urge a speedy resolution.

3. Draft minutes of 3 July 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted with disappointment that the Department's consultation on the revised Common Funding Scheme largely coincided with school summer holidays.

5. Correspondence

- 5.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Big Lottery Fund regarding the Reaching Out: Supporting Families Programme.
- 5.2. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding appointments to the Board of the Education and Skills Authority.
- 5.3. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding educational attainment in Switzerland.
- 5.4. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Curriculum Sports Programme.
- 5.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Nurture Group Network regarding an invitation to a training conference.
- 5.6. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding additional Nurture Units.

- 5.7.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Traveller Child in Education draft Action Framework.
- 5.8.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Teachers' Certificate in Religious Education.
- 5.9.** The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding Area Planning in County Fermanagh.
- 5.10.** The Committee noted correspondence from concerned parents regarding opposition to the closure of Immaculate Conception College, Derry.
- 5.11.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a recent Development Proposal to increase enrolment at the Christ the Redeemer Primary School, Lisburn.
- 5.12.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the educational benefits of Free School Meals.
- 5.13.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department and from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the Renewable Heat Incentive.
- 5.14.** The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA regarding Levels of Progression workshops.
- 5.15.** The Committee noted correspondence from the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland and from the Department regarding the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland Bill.
- 5.16.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Development Proposal relating to Gealscoil An Tseanchaí.
- 5.17.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Access NI procedures for school transport providers.
- 5.18.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the revised Common Funding Scheme.
- 5.19.** The Committee noted a newsletter from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- 5.20.** The Committee noted the Investing Activity Report July 2013.
- 5.21.** The Committee noted correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding an invitation to its Autism Research and Treatment Forum on 20 September 2013.
- 5.22.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education's policy: A Positive Pathway to Integration.
- 5.23.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the June 2013 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.
- 5.24.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Building Handbook.

The Committee considered correspondence relating to access through schools to visual impairment support and occupational therapy services

- 5.25. The Committee noted correspondence from the College of Occupational Therapists regarding the promotion of collaborative working to support Children with Special Needs.
- 5.26. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding access to occupational therapy services.
- 5.27. The Committee noted correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Children and Young People's Strategy 2006-2016.
- 5.28. The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Health Agency regarding the review of multi-disciplinary teams.
- 5.29. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, the North Eastern Education and Library Board, the Belfast Education and Library Board, the Southern Education and Library Board and the Western Education and Library Board regarding the provision of services for Visually Impaired pupils.
- 5.30. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning regarding career pathways for Visually Impaired children.
- 5.31. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding access to health services by Visually Impaired school children.
- 5.32. The Committee noted correspondence from the Health and Social Care Board regarding the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Action Plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward all correspondence relating to access through schools to visual impairment support and occupational therapy services to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The Committee considered other correspondence.

- 5.33. The Committee considered correspondence from the Environment Committee regarding the DVA Heavy Good Vehicle, Taxi and Bus Compliance Surveys 2012/2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Environment to seek information regarding the increase in bus and taxi non-compliance (set against the improvement in HGV compliance) in respect of safety and related matters and to seek information regarding non-compliance in respect of insurance issues.

- 5.34. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of the Environment regarding revised cabotage guidance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Western Education and Library Board to seek information on the impact which the revised cabotage guidelines will have on existing services to schools.

- 5.35. The Committee noted correspondence from the Environment Committee regarding the Road Safety Education Officer Service.

- 5.36. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Regional Development regarding the Safer Routes to Schools Initiative.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and seek clarification regarding the apparent lack of cross-departmental working in respect of the Safer Routes to Schools Initiative.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.27am.

- 5.37. The Committee considered correspondence from the National Deaf Children's Society regarding a proposed visit to Parliament Buildings from the Listening Bus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit the National Deaf Children's Society Listening Bus following its meeting on 9 October 2013.

- 5.38. The Committee considered correspondence from the Replay Theatre Company regarding funding for the Replay Theatre 'UP' Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Belfast Education and Library Board to provide a written briefing on the Arts programmes in schools that it currently supports.

- 5.39. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding Departmental Savings Delivery Plans – up to 31 March 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance and Personnel seeking clarity as to the impact of the Department of Education's decision to not provide information on the Savings Delivery Plans to DFP.

- 5.40. The Committee considered correspondence from the Letterkenny Institute of Technology regarding a request to brief the Committee on transferability of students to higher and further education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Employment and Learning for comment.

- 5.41. The Committee noted correspondence from the Southern Education and Library Board regarding the Implementation of the Boards'/Staff Commission's Equality Action Plan for the period 1 April 2012- 31 March 2013. The Committee also noted that it would seek further information on relevant actions from the Department at its next meeting.

- 5.42. The Committee noted correspondence from National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers regarding the Public Sector Pensions Bill. The Committee also noted that the Northern Ireland Teaching Council would brief the Committee on this subject at the next Education Committee meeting.

- 5.43. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Programme for Government 2011-15. The Committee also noted that the Department is scheduled to brief the Committee on this subject at the next Education Committee meeting and that at this briefing further details in respect of Shared Education commitments would be sought.
- 5.44. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its Business Plan 2012-13 – End of Year Report on Progress. The Committee also noted that the Department is scheduled to brief on this subject at the next Education Committee meeting.
- 5.45. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the July outturn and the June Monitoring Round.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would write to the Department to seek further information on the breakdown of the £10m increase in the School Maintenance budget.
- 5.46. The Committee considered the Capital Project Activity update for August 2013 and correspondence from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) regarding information provided by the Departmental in respect of its capital projects.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to urge the Department to amend and improve the information provided in respect of capital projects in line with SIB's correspondence.
- 5.47. The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí Development Proposal.
- 5.48. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the closure of Orangefield High School.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the former interim Chief Executive of the Belfast Education and Library Board to brief the Committee on this subject.
- 5.49. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding an update on the Pay Remit Team.
- 5.50. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the Craigavon Area Plans.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister and invite him to brief the Committee on the Craigavon Area Plan and the implications for the Dickson Plan following publication of the Development Proposal.
- 5.51. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding its draft guidance to schools regarding community access to school premises.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an oral briefing.
- 5.52. The Committee noted further correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding an invitation to its Autism Research and Treatment Forum on 20 September 2013.

- 5.53. The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre regarding the Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Safety and Lifeskills Education Centre to seek a briefing on the relevant aspects of its work.

- 5.54. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department for Employment and Learning regarding invitations to apprenticeship discussion forums for employers and trainers.

- 5.55. The Committee considered correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board including a handbook for primary schools on Shared Education and a review by the University of Ulster of the NEELB Primary Integrating Enriching Education (PIEE) Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the University of Ulster and to the North Eastern Education and Library Board to invite them to brief the Committee on the PIEE Project.

- 5.56. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its role in the promotion of best practice and the sharing of experience across Area Learning Communities.

- 5.57. The Committee considered correspondence from the Construction Employers Federation regarding an invitation for the Chairperson to attend the Construction Excellence Awards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would attend this event on behalf of the Committee.

- 5.58. The Committee considered correspondence from the North West Education Action Group regarding an invitation to a public meeting on the future of post-primary education in North West Fermanagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Trevor Lunn would attend this meeting on behalf of the Committee.

- 5.59. The Committee considered correspondence from Professor Colin Knox regarding Area Planning, Shared Education and Educational Attainment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Professor Knox to invite him to brief the Committee.

- 5.60. The Committee noted an invitation to attend the Creative Change Seminar on 11 September 2013.

- 5.61. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding consultations on proposed changes to the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme. The Committee also noted that the Department would brief the Committee on this subject later in September.

6. End of Session Report

The Committee considered the draft 2012-13 End of Session report

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, subject to minor amendment, it was content for the 2012-13 End of Session report for the Education Committee to be published.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with its Forward Work Programme as drafted.

8. Any Other Business

Members highlighted concerns relating to costs associated with school uniforms and the availability of the school uniform grant and noted that Assembly Research had published a useful paper on the former issue during the previous session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Western Education and Library Board seeking clarification on the availability of the school uniform grant to pupils transferring from Lisnaskea High School.

The Chairperson highlighted correspondence relating to the regrading of SEN Classroom Assistants.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the relevant ELB and seek clarity on the apparent absence of an agreement between employers and the trade unions on a procedure for the regrading of SEN Classroom Assistants.

The Committee noted that the deadline for written submissions to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process had been extended until the end of September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the relevant joint submission from the GTC and NITC to be published by those organisations in advance of formal consideration by the Committee.

9. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 September 2013 at 10:00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.12am

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
11 September 2013