



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE 2016
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Rosemary Barton MLA
Carla Lockhart MLA
Phillip Logan MLA
Jennifer McCann MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Catherine Seeley MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

David Hilditch MLA
Sandra Overend MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 9:42am.

The Committee adopted a revised agenda.

1. Apologies

Apologies are as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Committee membership

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Jennifer McCann and recorded the Committee's thanks to Ms Caitriona Ruane for her service to the Committee.

2.2 Irish Medium Education Nurture Units

The Committee discussed recent press reports relating to Departmental funding in respect of nurture units for two Irish Medium Education schools.

Mr Chris Lyttle joined the meeting at 9:46am.

Lord Morrow joined the meeting at 9:50am.

The Committee considered a motion that it should hold an additional meeting to take evidence on nurture units in the Irish Medium Education sector and Special Schools pre-school provision.

The Committee divided.

Ayes	Noes	Abstained	Not voting
Barry McElduff	Rosemary Barton		
Chris Lyttle	Philip Logan		
Jennifer McCann	Lord Morrow		
Colin McGrath			
Catherine Seeley			

The motion was passed.

Ms Carla Lockhart joined the meeting at 10:04am.

2.3 Conductive Education

The Chairperson advised that he had met informally with representatives of a school which uses a conductive form of education to help children with cerebral palsy and other conditions. The Committee noted related correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and Education Authority seeking: clarity on their views on the conductive form of education; information as to how this form of education is to be supported; details of their policy approach to school-based health therapies of this kind; and an update in respect of related co-operation between independent and Special Schools.

2.4 Informal meeting with Teaching Unions

The Chairperson advised that he had met informally with representatives of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council on 28 June 2016.

Ms Catherine Seeley left the meeting at 10:11am

2.5 Freedom of Information Requests over Summer Recess

Agreed: The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson in respect of the release of Committee papers sought under Freedom of Information requests during summer recess.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 15 June 2016.

4. Matters Arising

Ms Catherine Seeley rejoined the meeting at 10:12am

4.1 Pre-School Provision in Special Schools

The Committee noted correspondence from Fleming Fulton School; the Parents' Equal Education Coalition and the Education Authority regarding pre-School Provision in Special Schools.

4.2 June Monitoring Round

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding capital and resource issues.

5. June Monitoring Round – Departmental briefing

The Committee noted a Ministerial response on June Monitoring allocations.

Witnesses joined the meeting at 10:21am.

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance, Department of Education; Gavin Patrick, Deputy Director of Finance, Department of Education; and Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director, Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education briefed the Committee.

Witnesses left the meeting at 11:20am.

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

- an update on the funding for the Delivering Social Change literacy and numeracy Signature Project;
- an update on the timing and the criteria for the Investing in the Teaching Workforce scheme;
- information on the Department's costing of the extension of Early Years' provision;
- details of non-public funding for individual Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated schools;
- information on funding levels for teachers' continuing professional development; and

- a breakdown of the additional Special Educational Needs allocation in the June Monitoring Round.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- sight of the Memorandum of Agreement in respect of ownership arrangements on the Strule Shared Education campus;
- clarity in respect of the level of flexibility afforded to schools when capital projects deviate from design recommendations; and
- clarity as to how the involvement of councils is to be enhanced in respect of Area Planning and the planning of education capital projects.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and from the Committee for the Executive Office on the timescales for the development of the 2017-21 Budget and the Programme for Government respectively.

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

Ms Jennifer McCann left the meeting at 11:37am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of draft 2017-21 Budget information including the Department's baseline position, its pressures, its spending priorities, any proposed efficiencies, and the linkages to the Programme for Government.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a visit to the Strule Shared Education campus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme as amended.

7. Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) – introductory briefing

Witnesses joined the meeting at 11:40am.

Lorna McAlpine, Senior Development Officer, NICIE; Helen McLaughlin, Vice Chair of the NICIE Board of Directors; and Roisin Marshall, Chief Executive Officer, NICIE briefed the Committee.

Ms Jennifer McCann rejoined the meeting at 11:45am.

Ms Catherine Seeley left the meeting at 12:16pm.

Mrs Rosemary Barton left the meeting at 12.24pm.

Witnesses left the meeting at 12:37pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity as to its engagement with NICIE regarding the use of Fresh Start capital funding for shared and integrated education projects.

8. Comhairle na Gaelscolaoichta (CnaG) – introductory briefing.

The briefing was deferred.

Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 12:39pm.

9. Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) - introductory briefing

Witnesses joined the meeting at 12:40pm.

Mrs Rosemary Barton rejoined the meeting at 12.44pm.

Jim Clarke, Chief Executive, CCMS; Gerry Lundy, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Planning, CCMS; and Eugene O'Neill, Director of Human Resources, Finance and Governance, CCMS briefed the Committee.

Ms Jennifer McCann left the meeting at 1:21pm.

Ms Carla Lockhart left the meeting at 1:33pm.

Witnesses left the meeting at 1:36pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on changes to legislation relating to the Certificate of Religious Education.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

10.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Commissioner for Older People, Mr Eddie Lynch.

10.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Bytes Project - a youth work charity using creative ICT to address underachievement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to meet informally with the Bytes Project, diaries permitting.

10.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Quarry Water Safety - Stay Safe Stay Out Campaign.

10.5 The Committee noted correspondence from Templepatrick Primary School inviting the Chairperson to attend a meeting of local principals.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend, diary permitting.

10.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Methodist Church in Ireland Board of Education regarding an informal meeting with the Chairperson.

10.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority regarding the recruitment of principals.

10.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding free Home to School transport.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual relating to the level of substitute teaching in schools and highlighting dissatisfaction in respect of teacher recruitment practices.

10.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing notice of Programme for Government consultation events.

10.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding its Childcare Strategy.

10.12 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual regarding Area Planning concerns relating to Anamar School.

10.13 The Committee noted correspondence from a parents' group in respect of child safeguarding at a school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Board of Governors of the school; the Department; the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the PSNI in order to ensure that all claims have been investigated and that robust child safeguarding arrangements are in place.

10.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Commissioner for Children and Young People seeking an informal meeting with the Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend, diary permitting.

10.15 The Committee noted correspondence from Antrim Grammar inviting the Chairperson to attend its Finance Committee

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend, diary permitting.

10.16 The Committee noted a petition presented to the Assembly on behalf of Killard House School.

10.17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority responding to questions raised in respect of its structure.

10.18 The Committee noted the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 – Commencement Order No.1.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time, Place of next meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 6 July 2016, at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:42pm.

Barry McElduff
Chairperson, Committee for Education
6 July 2016