



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2016
DOWN HIGH SCHOOL, DOWNPATRICK

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Jennifer McCann MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:17am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Visit to Down High School

The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to the principal, staff and pupils of Down High School for hosting the Committee's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write a letter of thanks to the principal of Down High School.

2.2 Christmas Cards

The Chairperson noted that hard copy Assembly Christmas cards were not available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would send electronic Christmas Cards to its stakeholders.

2.3 TIMSS and PISA

Ms Carla Lockhart joined the meeting at 10:19am

Mr Philip Logan joined the meeting at 10:19am.

The Deputy Chairperson reported on an informal briefing with Departmental officials on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The Committee welcomed the improvement in mathematics attainment for primary school children.

The Chairperson advised Members that the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report would be published on Tuesday 6 December 2016.

The Committee noted that it was scheduled to receive an oral briefing on TIMSS and PISA from Assembly Research and Information Services on 11 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to receive an informal early briefing on PISA from Departmental officials.

2.4 Northern Ireland Audit Office Comptroller and Auditor General

The Chairperson advised Members that the Comptroller and Auditor General was seeking an informal meeting with him.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to meet informally with the Comptroller and Auditor General.

2.5 Special Educational Needs

The Chairperson referred Members to a draft note on the Committee's informal stakeholder event on Special Educational Needs Health and Education co-operation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the draft note with officials prior to an evidence session on co-operation in respect of Special Educational Needs, scheduled for 7 December 2016.

The Chairperson informed Members that he had been invited to open proceedings at the Assembly Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) seminar on 14 December 2016 on children and young people's attitudes and experiences.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to speak at the KESS seminar.

2.6 Youth Issues

The Chairperson briefed Members on a recent meeting he had with Youth Action NI at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Youth Action NI to an informal meeting.

The Chairperson briefed Members on a meeting he had with the National Citizen Service (NCS) and a group of young people engaged in a social action programme relating to mental health support for school children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NCS to an informal meeting.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission seeking an update on the creation of a Youth Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal youth stakeholder event and to give further consideration to the subject of such an event.

The Chairperson suggested that the Committee be represented at the Volunteer Now Awards of Excellence Ceremony, on 7 December 2016, by the Deputy Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chairperson could attend the event, diary permitting.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 16 November 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 23 November 2016.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a draft response to the Committee for the Executive Office on the Education Committee's European priorities for 2016-17.

It was proposed that the Committee submit the draft response to the Committee for the Executive Office.

The Committee divided.

Ayes	Noes	Abstained	Not voting
Barry McElduff	Carla Lockhart		
Chris Lyttle	Phillip Logan		
Rosemary Barton	Lord Morrow		
Colin McGrath			
Sandra Overend			
Catherine Seeley			

The motion was passed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its response to the Committee for the Executive Office on the Education Committee's European priorities for 2016-17 including the scrutiny of: Erasmus+; Peace IV funding for Shared Education projects; and the impact (if any) of Brexit on the portability of Northern Ireland educational qualifications.

5. Levels of Progression – oral evidence session – Department of Education and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Officials joined the meeting at 10:43am.

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Assessment, Department of Education; Dale Heaney, Head of Curriculum Development Team, Department of Education; Deborah Frost, Standards and Improvement Team, Department of Education; and Richard Hannah, Director of Education Strategy, Council for the Curriculum, Assessments and Examinations provided oral evidence to the Committee.

Mr Chris Lyttle left the meeting at 11:13am.

Mrs Sandra Overend left the meeting at 11:33am.

Officials left the meeting at 11:38am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification of its plans to either procure alternative Computer-Based Assessment tools or extend the contractual period for the Northern Ireland Literacy Assessment (NILA) and Northern Ireland Numeracy Assessment (NINA).

6. Rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres – oral evidence session - Unison

A representative from Unison joined the meeting at 11:39am.

Kevin Hillick, Unison provided oral evidence to the Committee.

Mrs Sandra Overend rejoined the meeting at 11:46am.

Mr Chris Lyttle rejoined the meeting at 11:58am.

The witness left the meeting at 12:00 noon.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Unison suggesting that it brings its concerns to the Education Authority Board and seeking:

- confirmation in respect of the suggestion that not all Outdoor Education Centre staff possessed appropriate qualifications including youth work qualifications;
- sight of Unison's response to the Education Authority consultation including details of any alternative proposals for the reorganisation of the Outdoor Education Centres; and
- clarification as to whether Unison's members have sought to revise working practices in order to address reported inefficiencies in Outdoor Education Centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- detailed information on the condition survey of the Outdoor Education Centres;
- information on full-time and part-time staffing for the last 5 years broken down by centre;
- an explanation as to how centre users will be reallocated, in the event of proposed closures;
- information on the ownership of the centres proposed for closure and the Authority's plans for the disposal of associated vacant buildings; and
- clarification as to the purpose of the rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres and the allocation of relevant savings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to related issues at an informal meeting including the Sports Forum and representatives of relevant teaching unions.

Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 12:05pm

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Minister on school budget planning.

7.3 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence to the Minister from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum and British Youth Council regarding funding for the Youth Parliament in Northern Ireland.

Members noted that the Committee had already agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission on related matters.

7.4 The Committee noted a formal invitation to attend a coding event at Stranmillis University College on 7 December 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, in line with its forward work programme, to attend the event.

7.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding funding for the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to NIABF for comment.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the transfer of education provision within the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre from the Youth Justice Agency to the Education Authority.

7.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the support it provides to encourage entrepreneurship among school pupils.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice calling for evidence for its Review on Stalking Legislation.

Mr Colin McGrath rejoined the meeting at 12:10pm

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing a briefing paper on 'International Human Rights Standards: Recommendations relating to Northern Ireland'.

The Chairperson proposed that the Committee write to the Department seeking its views on the following issues: education prospects for Traveller children; exclusions and bullying based on race; children's rights and involvement of children in policy-making; the promotion of integrated education and the abolition of academic selection; the need for a play and leisure policy; the development of family consultations; and the inability of the Executive to agree the text of its response to the review of minority languages.

The Committee divided.

Ayes	Noes	Abstained	Not voting
Barry McElduff	Carla Lockhart		
Chris Lyttle	Phillip Logan		
Rosemary Barton	Lord Morrow		
Colin McGrath			
Sandra Overend			
Catherine Seeley			

The motion was passed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking commentary on the issues set out above.

7.10 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding the review of pre-school provision in Special Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- clarification on the number of filled pre-school places in Special Schools in 2016-17;
- an explanation in respect of the previously stated justification for the review which was based on an expected increase in demand for pre-school Special School places; and
- clarification as to how principals of Special Schools were invited to join the relevant consultative groups.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority on composite classes and Area Plans.

Ms Carla Lockhart left the meeting at 12:16pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity as to why there is to be no formal consultation on Annual Area Action Plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would circulate the composite class research papers identified in the correspondence.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Forest School Association seeking a briefing with the Committee on a proposed Northern Ireland-wide Forest School Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Forest School Association to an informal meeting.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from Children in Northern Ireland regarding the 2016-21 Programme for Government.

7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department providing information on the Every School a Good School reception on Wednesday 7 December 2016.

7.15 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to attend the launch of the Toybox project for Traveller children on Friday 9 December 2016.

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

8. Forward Work Programme

Lord Morrow left the meeting at 12:20pm.

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit the BT Young Scientist Exhibition in the RDS on Thursday 12 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that while visiting the BT Young Scientist Exhibition, it would meet informally with the relevant Oireachtas Committee. The Committee also agreed that it would schedule other informal meetings, while in Dublin.

Lord Morrow rejoined the meeting at 12:21pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme, as amended.

9. Any Other Business

The Committee noted arrangements for its meeting on Wednesday 7 December 2016.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 7 December 2016, at 11.15am in Stranmillis University College.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25pm.

Barry McElduff
Chairperson, Committee for Education
7 December 2016