



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2016  
TOR BANK SCHOOL, DUNDONALD

**Present:**

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)  
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
Philip Logan MLA  
Jennifer McCann 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:**

David Hilditch MLA  
Carla Lockhart MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 10:08am.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are as indicated above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first Education Committee meeting of the 2016-17 session of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 6 July 2016.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Correspondence**

**5.1** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

**5.2** The Committee considered correspondence from the Education Authority regarding the review of pre-school provision in Special Schools. The Committee noted that further information was to be provided.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of related issues until its next meeting.

**5.3** The Committee noted correspondence from a parent raising concerns relating to pre-school provision for their child in a Special School.

**5.4** The Committee noted correspondence from UNISON regarding Ardnashee School and College.

**5.5** The Committee considered correspondence from a parent regarding gender imbalance in a composite primary school class.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity regarding its policy on composite classes and gender imbalance.

**5.6** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding conductive education and Buddy Bear School.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to Buddy Bear School for comment.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking: clarity on the availability of conductive education in other schools and advice on the Educational Psychology Service's view on this school-based therapy.

**5.7** The Committee considered restricted correspondence from a parent in relation to a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) for their child.

**Agreed:** As the Committee has no role in the consideration of individual SEN statements, the Committee agreed to advise the parent accordingly and suggest that further information or support might be sought from the Children's Law Centre.

**5.8** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), and the Police Service of Northern Ireland regarding child safeguarding arrangements at a post-primary school.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer further consideration of this issue pending a response from the relevant Board of Governors in respect of an independent investigation into the child safeguarding concerns.

**5.9** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the Certificate of Religious Education and the related Fair Employment Treatment Order exemption for schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office seeking clarity on the way forward in respect of legislative change designed to remove the relevant exemption.

**5.10** The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding the UNCRC Fifth Periodic Report on the UK.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of related issues until its next meeting.

**5.11** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department and the Minister regarding the Early Years Pathway Fund.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of related issues until its next meeting.

**5.12** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding capital issues relating to the June Monitoring Round.

**5.13** The Committee noted the Investing Activity Report for the Department of Education for August 2016.

**5.14** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding nurture provision. The Committee also noted that the Department will brief on this subject later in the present session.

**5.15** The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of related issues until its next meeting.

**5.16** The Committee noted correspondence from the Irish National Teachers' Organisation regarding pension arrangements for tutors employed as part of the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity in respect of pension arrangements for PMLP tutors.

**5.17** The Committee considered the August edition of the Assembly's EU Affairs Report

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of related issues until its next meeting.

**5.18** The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Executive Brussels Office report for April to July 2016

**5.19** The Committee noted correspondence regarding the retirement of the Secretary to the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.

**5.20** The Committee noted a request for the Chairperson to speak at Volunteering – the Next Generation: A review of the Millennium Volunteers programme, on Monday 26 September 2016

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

**5.21** The Committee noted an invitation from Business in the Community to hold its meeting on 5 October 2016 at the Tomorrow's World – Responsible Business Summit 2016, in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to hold its meeting on 5 October 2016 at the relevant venue.

**5.22** The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People regarding the Programme for Government and the Children and Young Persons' Strategy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an early briefing on the Programme for Government and the Children and Young Persons' Strategy.

**5.23** The Committee noted an invitation from the Minister to a reception in December 2016 to celebrate the achievement of pre-schools and schools as part of the Every School a Good School policy.

**5.24** The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum regarding Anti-Bullying Week.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to give further consideration, at next week's meeting, as to how Members could best support Anti-Bullying Week.

**5.25** The Committee noted an invitation from Ulster Rugby to the Chairperson to attend an event on 26 August 2016.

**5.26** The Committee noted an invitation to attend the British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland Parliamentary Event on Monday 19 September 2016

**5.27** The Committee considered the Joint Inspection Evaluation of Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA). The Committee noted that the Chairperson would be meeting informally with representatives of Autism NI and the National Autistic Society in October.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking its evaluation of the audit of autism support services undertaken by MCA and seeking comment on the reported abandonment of plans for residential support services at MCA.

**5.28** The Committee noted the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) UK Impact Report 2015 and Strategy 2016-18.

**5.29** The Committee noted the Education Authority Quarterly Screening Outcome report April - June 2016.

**5.30** The Committee noted a response from CCMS regarding the recruitment of school principals.

**5.31** The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law Centre regarding, inter alia, poor educational provision in a Juvenile Justice Centre.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity in respect of the issues raised. The Committee also agreed to arrange a visit to the relevant Juvenile Justice Centre.

## **6. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted scheduled stakeholder events on the evenings of 19 October 2016 and 16 November 2016 in Parliament Buildings. The events may be based on the Programme for Government and the Children and Young Persons' Strategy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

## **7. Any Other Business**

*Mrs Sandra Overend joined the meeting at 10.57am*

Members noted recent changes to Departmental guidance to schools on primary to post-primary transfer. Members expressed differing views.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this matter at its next meeting.

**8. Date, Time, Place of next meeting**

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 14 September 2016, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 10:59am.*

**Barry McElduff**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**14 September 2016**