



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2017
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Rosemary Barton MLA
David Hilditch MLA
Carla Lockhart MLA
Phillip Logan MLA
Lord Morrow MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)
Caroline Perry (Assembly Research and Information Service) - item 5 only

Apologies:

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)
Colin McGrath MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Catherine Seeley MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:07am with the Deputy Chairperson acting as Chairperson.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Entitlement Framework

The Chairperson referred Members to Departmental correspondence in respect of changes to post-primary schools' obligations relating to the Entitlement Framework. The Committee noted the correspondence.

2.2 Computer-Based Assessment

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence indicating the discontinuation of Departmental provision of Computer-Based Assessment (CBA) tools for primary schools.

Mrs Rosemary Barton made a declaration of interest that she was the chairperson of the board of governors of a school.

Members highlighted: the importance of appropriate tracking of pupil progress using CBA; and concerns relating to limited ICT access by schools undertaking CBA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking: an assurance that appropriate guidance on the correct use of pupil progress data will be provided to schools; and clarity as to whether schools will be permitted to use commercially available CBA tools in order to meet the relevant legal obligations.

2.3 Final meeting – Ministerial/Education Authority evidence session

The Chairperson highlighted the absence of clarity in respect of: budgets for schools; reported proposed changes to the Home to School Transport model; the pre-school Special School review; the review of Outdoor Education Centres; as well as the way forward for Area Planning (and associated Development Proposals).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Minister and the Education Authority to provide oral evidence on 25 January 2017 on these issues. The Committee further agreed that in the event of the cancellation of the oral evidence session, the Committee would not meet as currently scheduled on 25 January 2017.

2.4 Chief Executive CCMS

The Chairperson informed the Committee that it had been reported that the chief executive of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is to step down.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the chief executive of CCMS offering its thanks for his service to education.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 11 January 2017.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Assembly Research and Information Service – Oral Briefing - Composite Classes

Assembly Research and Information Service joined the meeting at 10:23am.

The Committee noted a paper and considered an oral briefing on Composite Classes.

Assembly Research and Information Service left the meeting at 10:40am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department suggesting that it should undertake data gathering in respect of the educational attainment associated with children in composite classes, in order to inform related policy development.

6. Assembly Dissolution – School Budgets and Contingency Plans

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:41am.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department declining to provide a Ministerial oral briefing and providing information on 2016-17 budgets.

Gary Fair, Director of Finance; Gavin Patrick, Deputy Director of Finance; and Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure provided oral evidence to the Committee.

The officials left the meeting at 11:18am.

The Committee noted that it had previously agreed to seek a related oral evidence session from the Minister and the Education Authority on 25 January 2017.

7. Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016 – Regulations

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:20am.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016 Regulations.

Caroline Gillan, Director of Inclusion and Well-being; and Jan Matthews, Special Education and Inclusion Review Team provided oral evidence to the Committee.

The officials left the meeting at 11:47am.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) regarding a consultation on new procedures in relation to investigations/hearings in respect of teachers' professional conduct.

8.3 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson from the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Belfast and the Chinese Welfare Association to attend the Chinese New Year Showcase 2017, on Wednesday 25 January 2017.

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

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding nurture provision in primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to the Department seeking the timescales for the new nurture policy.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on Education/Health Special Educational Needs Co-operation.

8.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding public appointments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking how it is to promote the inclusion of under-represented groups in education appointments.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual regarding school children's awareness of safeguarding issues.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Forest Schools NI providing a briefing paper for an informal meeting.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Authority on the Network for Youth pilot programme

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to cancel a session on effective questioning, scheduled for Wednesday 25 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to cancel an informal meeting with the Field Studies Council, scheduled for Tuesday 24 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, as the Assembly is expected to be dissolved on 26 January 2017, all other Committee events and visits would not take place.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, in the event of it not meeting on Wednesday 25 January 2017, it was content for the Deputy Chairperson to approve the minutes of the meeting of 18 January 2017.

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

10. Any Other Business

The Chairperson recorded his thanks for Members' contributions to the work of the Committee.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 25 January 2017, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59am.

Barry McElduff
Chairperson, Committee for Education
25 January 2017