

NICCY Summary: Written Assembly Questions week ending 18 September, 2015

Update on Roddensvale Special School hydrotherapy pool

<p>AQO 8641/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Oliver McMullan (<i>SF - East Antrim</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for an update on the hydrotherapy pool project at Roddensvale Special School, Larne.</p> <p>The economic appraisal for the hydrotherapy pool at Roddensvale special school was approved in April 2014 and a scheme, valued at approximately £900,000.00, was designed and put out to tender. The Education Authority, which has responsibility for the school, has advised that due to budget constraints the scheme was not able to progress to completion at that time. However I previously gave a commitment that this scheme would be delivered and I am currently seeking additional capital funding for minor works. If it is not possible to complete the scheme before the end of this financial year I would envisage that it will be delivered during FY 2016/17.</p>
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Introduction of anti-bullying legislation

<p>AQO 8640/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Conor Murphy (<i>SF - Newry and Armagh</i>)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education when he plans to introduce anti-bullying legislation.</p> <p>On 23 June 2014, I announced my intention to introduce new Anti-Bullying Legislation in the current Assembly mandate. I did so in response to a review of anti-bullying policies and practices undertaken by the NI Anti Bullying Forum.</p> <p>The proposed legislation will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a common definition of bullying; Require all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome; and Require Boards of Governors to play an active role in the preparation and implementation of anti-bullying policies and measures within the school. <p>Executive consent to legislate on this matter was received on 28 May and my officials have been working closely with the Office of Legislative Counsel over summer recess to prepare a draft Bill. This is now very close to completion.</p>
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		<p>Once I have considered the Bill, I will be writing to the Departmental Solicitors Office and the Office of the Attorney General to confirm legislative competence and, at the earliest opportunity, will be seeking Executive consent for its introduction to the Assembly.</p> <p>To have sufficient time for the Bill to complete all of its legislative stages will require the positive support of Executive colleagues, the Education Committee and members of this House. I am confident all would wish to see this Bill, which will enhance schools abilities to tackle this complex problem, pass into law.</p>
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Consideration for setting up a dedicated special needs secondary school

AQW 48749/11- 16	Mr Fearghal McKinney (<i>SDLP - South Belfast</i>)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether his Department has considered establishing a dedicated special needs secondary school.</p> <p>The Education Authority is responsible for ensuring there is sufficient provision for children and young people with special educational needs. I commissioned a review of special schools provision, the terms of reference of which included an assessment of the existing provision and a recommended regional plan for the future structure and provision of Special Schools. I am currently considering the review findings and recommendations before deciding on the way forward.</p>
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Funding of Integrated and Transformed schools funding

AQW 48748/11- 16	Mr Steven Agnew (<i>GPNI - North Down</i>)	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether a (i) Grant Maintained Integrated School; and (ii) a Transformed School can be funded through the Shared Education Project.</p> <p>(i) A grant maintained integrated school can be funded through the Shared Education Project as part of a partnership with another school provided the partnership meets the criteria as specified in the call for application; (ii) A school which as transformed to an integrated management type, can be funded through the Shared Education Project as part of a partnership with another school provided the partnership meets the criteria as specified in the call for application.</p> <p>See www.sepni.gov.uk for details, which was provided in the response to your previous question (AQW 42863/11-15).</p>
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Reforming Special Educational Needs assessment procedure

<p>AQW 48736/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education whether his Department has considered reforming the Special Educational Needs assessment procedure.</p> <p>A Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion resulted in the introduction to the Assembly of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Bill on 2 March 2015. The Bill is currently in Committee Stage. One of the proposals from the Review is to reduce the time taken for statutory assessment of a child's SEN from the current 26 weeks to 20 weeks. The SEND Bill and supporting statutory regulations, when drafted, will together support this reform to the statutory assessment procedure.</p> <p>The SEND Bill also introduces provision to enable the child, who is over compulsory school age and still at school, to exercise rights within the SEN framework, which are currently exercisable by the child's parent. In relation to statutory assessment of SEN for a child of this age, this would mean that the child will be able to request a statutory assessment and have the right to engage directly with the Education Authority in relation to all matters relating to that assessment.</p> <p>These are important proposals that aim to ensure an up-to-date approach is taken forwards in respect of statutory assessment.</p>
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Support for organisations no longer receiving funding from the Youth Council

<p>AQW 48687/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education what steps his Department has taken to support organisations that no longer receive funding via the Youth Council.</p> <p>I can confirm that in the current financial year no organisations have lost the entirety of their funding from the Youth Council.</p> <p>The Youth Council's resource budget for 2015-16 was £4.1m, which was £1m lower than the 2014-15 opening baseline. The Youth Council has used circa £3.3m of this to maintain support for Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations albeit at a reduced level of financial support compared to that provided in previous years.</p> <p>Decisions on individual funding allocations are an operational matter for the Youth Council.</p>
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Shared educational campuses

<p>AQW 48686/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Trevor Lunn (APNI - Lagan Valley)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education (i) how many shared educational campuses have now been formally approved by his Department; and (ii) for his assessment of how this compares with the commitments referenced in Together: Building a United Community.</p> <p>To date, I have announced 3 projects to proceed in planning under the Shared Education Campuses Programme. Feasibility Studies and Economic Appraisals are currently being progressed.</p> <p>The <i>Together: Building a United Community</i> strategy includes a headline action to commence 10 new shared education campuses by 2018.</p>
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Special Educational Needs assessment process

<p>AQW 48627/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Fearghal McKinney (SDLP - South Belfast)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education for his assessment of the process whereby children are referred from the Education Authority to Health and Social Care Trusts as part of the Special Educational Needs assessment.</p> <p>I am content with the process whereby children are referred by the Education Authority (EA) to the appropriate Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT), as part of the statutory assessment process.</p> <p>When issuing a Notice of Proposal to make a statutory assessment to parents, the EA must copy any such proposal to a designated officer of the appropriate HSCT. This enables the Trust to seek the parents' consent to their child being medically examined as part of any proposed statutory assessment.</p> <p>If the assessment proceeds the EA is required to seek advice from the HSCT as part of the process and all such requests specify a date by which it must be submitted.</p>
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Impact of Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project

<p>AQW 48595/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Gregory Campbell (DUP - East Londonderry)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, following recent GCSE results, for his assessment of what impact the Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project has had on improved achievements.</p> <p>In line with the Every School a Good School Policy and the Count, Read: Succeed Strategy; schools have been focussed on school improvement and in raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Improvement in attainment is often a result of effective leadership along with the provision of high quality teaching and learning.</p> <p>In support of this, DE working in partnership with the Education Authority (EA), other managing authorities and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) have implemented a range of programmes and interventions to improve literacy and numeracy achievement including the significant investment from the DSC Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.</p> <p>This year, following the second year of the DSC programme, GCSE results show that in English over three-quarters of entries (75.8%) achieved A*-C grades, 2.8 percentage points higher than last year and in maths, one-third (66.6%) achieved A*-C grades, up from 66.2% last year.</p> <p>The analysis of the Year 12 School Annual Examination Results (SAER) for 2013/14 indicated that around 69% of the DSC supported schools showed an improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including English and maths from the previous year. Analysis of this year's SAER, published in December, may provide further evidence of the effect of the second year of the DSC programme on improved GCSE results.</p> <p>We do not have the means to disaggregate the effect of quality teaching or the impact of individual elements of interventions on overall attainment, to state categorically that one intervention or another was largely responsible for the improvement in performance..</p>
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Schools involved in a formal intervention process

<p>AQW 48567/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Peter Weir (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the number of schools (i) currently involved in a formal intervention process; and (ii) his Department estimates will become involved, following the changes that are being made to the formal intervention process in September 2015.</p> <p>There are currently nine schools in formal intervention.</p> <p>Any decision to place a school in formal intervention as a result of the changes to the process will be dependent on the outcome of a future follow-up inspection. For this reason it is not possible to estimate the number of schools that may require support through the process.</p> <p>The change that may result in an increase in the number of schools receiving support through the process relates to those occasions when a school is evaluated as needing to address (an) important area(s) for improvement (formerly a 'satisfactory' evaluation) at its initial inspection and remains at this level at both its first and second follow-up inspections.</p> <p>Based on historic data, however, the number is likely to be relatively small. If this change to the process had been introduced from 2009, when Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement was launched, then only an additional five schools, which were evaluated as 'satisfactory' on three consecutive occasions, would have entered the process during the six school years to June 2015.</p>
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Sexual assaults occurred in schools

<p>AQW 48530/11- 16</p>	<p>Mrs Sandra Overend (UUP - Mid Ulster)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education, given the publication of statistics revealing that 259 sexual assaults occurred in schools over the last three years, what plans his Department has to provide better help and guidance to teachers.</p> <p>The safety of children while at school is of paramount importance to me. Schools do great work to ensure that is the case and Boards of Governors will be clear on the need for reporting concerns about criminal activity to the PSNI and I know take those responsibilities seriously.</p> <p>We need however to ensure that we understand the picture behind the figures being released by the police. I have asked my officials to seek a meeting with the PSNI to discuss in more detail the figures that were released by the PSNI in the past few weeks. That meeting is now scheduled and will provide an opportunity to review the figures and explore the nature of the reports that have been reported by schools to the police.</p>
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		<p>Child protection in schools is an important issue which my Department takes extremely seriously. In dealing with child protection concerns, the Department's document, 'Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection' provides clear advice to schools and others on their responsibilities in relation to child protection.</p> <p>Additionally, our revised curriculum includes, as an integral element, the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and Learning for Life and Work statutory areas of learning. Relationships and Sexuality Education is a core element of this part of the curriculum and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has worked with teachers to update guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) for schools, with new guidance published just at the end of August 2015. This guidance is designed to help schools to reflect on their existing RSE provision to take steps to ensure that it is relevant to pupils' lives and addresses the dangers to which young people may be exposed, in particular technology.</p> <p>As well as the curriculum, the i-Matter Programme promotes pupils' emotional health and wellbeing and on helping to build resilience among our young people. It also provides support services for vulnerable pupils and support to schools in the event of a crisis. A further development is the piloting of a new 'Preventative Education' programme in partnership with the NSPCC which is working to build the capacity of teachers to deliver an effective preventative curriculum in primary schools.</p> <p>I would also add that my Department also works closely with other Departments and agencies including the Safeguarding Board (SBNI) to share information and advice on any emerging issues of a child protection nature with schools and others in the education sector.</p>
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Finger printing of pupils obtaining school lunches

<p>AQW 48508/11- 16</p>	<p>Mr Alex Easton (DUP - North Down)</p>	<p>To ask the Minister of Education to detail the reasoning behind some schools operating a system of taking pupils finger prints when obtaining school lunches.</p> <p>Some larger schools have introduced cashless catering systems to modernise and streamline cash collection in school dining rooms. Cashless systems can be operated using cards and 4 digit pin numbers or biometric systems. As cards and pin numbers are easily lost, stolen or forgotten, the use of biometric systems, including those which use a finger image, have become more common in recent years.</p> <p>The rationale behind the use of a biometric system which uses a finger image includes:</p> <p>It helps remove the stigma attached to free meal entitlement by providing anonymity ie the pupil's account is credited directly.</p> <p>Speed of service is increased at the point of sale thus reducing queuing times.</p> <p>Parents can receive a report on their child's eating habits. These can show how much money was paid in and when; how much was spent on food and when; and can detail each individual item purchased.</p> <p>Specific food allergy ingredients can be barred automatically.</p> <p>All data held electronically is handled in accordance with the guidelines of the Data Protection Act 1998. The data is only utilised for the purposes of the cashless catering system and is destroyed when the data is no longer required or relevant ie when the pupil leaves the school. The child's finger print is not stored on the system.</p> <p>As a matter of good practice schools write to parents to advise them of the systems in use, giving them an opportunity to opt out. There is a facility to provide a child with a card or PIN number in this scenario.</p>
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