



**Tithe an
Oireachtas
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Oireachtas**

**An Coiste um Oideachas, Breisoideachas agus
Ardoideachas, Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht
Tuarascáil Taistil, Dún Éideann, an 21-23 Feabhra 2024**

Aibreán 2024

**Joint Committee on Education, Further and
Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
Travel Report, Edinburgh, 21st – 23rd February 2024**

April 2024

MEMBERSHIP



Sorca Clarke TD
Sinn Féin



Cathal Crowe TD
Fianna Fáil



Mairéad Farrell TD
Sinn Féin



Paul Kehoe TD
Fine Gael (Cathaoirleach)



Carol Nolan TD
Independent



Jim O'Callaghan TD
Fianna Fáil



Marc Ó Cathasaigh TD
Green Party



Pádraig O'Sullivan TD
Fianna Fáil



Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD
Labour Party



Senator Aisling Dolan
Fine Gael



Senator Eileen Flynn
Independent



Senator Rónán Mullen
Independent



Senator Fiona O'Loughlin
Fianna Fáil (Leas-
Cathaoirleach)



Senator Pauline O'Reilly
Green Party

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CATHAOIRLEACH'S FOREWORD



Over the course 33rd Dáil, the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science has published a significant number of major policy reports. These reports include, but are not limited to, *The Future Funding of Higher Education*, *Mental Health Supports in Schools and Tertiary Education*, *Leaving Certificate Reform*, *The Future of STEM in Irish Education*, and *School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health*.¹

The Committee has also undertaken numerous travel episodes, including trips to the Cork Life Centre, Mountjoy and *Dóchas* Education Centre, Munster Technological University, Technological University of the Shannon, Technological University Dublin, South East Technological University, Holy Family School for the Deaf, and Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust and Education Partner, United Kingdom.

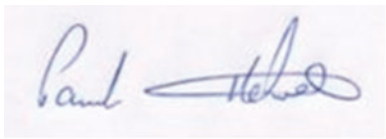
The Committee has a policy of undertaking study visits that both inform the Committee's view on a wide variety of issues and allows the Committee to engage with expert stakeholders. In this instance, the trip to Edinburgh was a great opportunity to discuss educational issues affecting both jurisdictions and to exchange best practice with our Scottish parliamentary colleagues.

As Chairman of the Committee, I would like to express thanks on behalf of the Committee to Mr Jerry O'Donovan, *Irish Consular General in Edinburgh*, Professor Andrea Nolan, *Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Edinburgh Napier University*, Professor Enda Delaney, *Professor of Modern History and Director of Research, Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh*, the Scottish Parliament's Committee on Education, Children and Young People (particularly Ms Sue Webber MSP, *Committee Convener* and Ms Pauline McIntyre, *Clerk to the Committee*), Dr Janet Browne FRSE,

¹ For a full overview of all Committee reports please see [here](#).

Education Committee Convener, Royal Society of Edinburgh, and Daria Tuhtar, Policy Manager, Royal Society of Edinburgh.

On the 23rd of April 2024, the report was agreed to be published by the Committee.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Kehoe', is shown on a light-colored background.

Paul Kehoe T.D.,

Cathaoirleach,

**Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research,
Innovation and Science.**

23rd April 2024

Introduction

The Work Programme of the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science empowers the Committee to examine key educational policy areas as it may select within its terms of reference. These include *Educational Disadvantage*, *Special Needs Provision in Education*, *Senior Cycle Educational Reform*, *Qualifications and Assessment in Further and Higher Education*, *STEM in Early Childhood Education*, *Mental Health Supports in Schools*, and *Digital Services in Schools*.

On the 17th of October 2023 the Committee agreed in private session to undertake a fact-finding interparliamentary trip to Edinburgh. The Committee agreed to meet with the Irish Consulate in Edinburgh, prominent senior Irish academics working in Scotland, the Scottish Parliament's Committee on *Education, Children and Young People*, and the *Royal Society of Edinburgh* to discuss a range of cross-jurisdiction educational issues as part of the Committee's ongoing examination of key educational policy areas. The trip allowed the Committee to develop its understanding of the Scottish educational system as well as outline some of the major issues in Irish education.

It was agreed that four Members would participate in this study visit. The Committee was represented on the visit by Deputy Paul Kehoe TD (*Cathaoirleach*), Deputy Cathal Crowe TD, Deputy Carol Nolan TD, and Senator Fiona O'Loughlin. The delegation was also accompanied by Julian Power Foley (Policy Advisor).

Sanction was granted for the Committee to travel under the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee, whereby it is outlined that the Committee has the:

“(10) power to—

(a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and

(b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 120(4)(a).”

Summary of Engagements

Wednesday, 21st February 2024

The Committee attended a working dinner hosted by the Consular General of Ireland in Edinburgh, Mr Jerry O’Donovan, at the Grand Café at the Scotsman Hotel. The Committee were also joined by Professor Andrea Nolan, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Edinburgh Napier University, and Professor Enda Delaney, Professor of Modern History and Director of Research, Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh.

Thursday, 22nd February 2024

On the morning of Thursday 22nd February, the Committee met with Members of the Scottish Parliament’s Committee on *Education, Children and Young People*. The Committee was established in June 2021 and its remit is to consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the *Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills*, and matters relating to the Historical Abuse Inquiry and Redress falling within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister. The Committee has 10 current Members and 5 substitute Members. Ms Sue Webber MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party) is the Convener of the Committee and Ms Ruth Maguire MSP (Scottish National Party) is the Deputy Convener.

The Oireachtas and Scottish Parliament Committee's met informally and discussed the following issues:

1. Senior Cycle Education Reform.
2. Qualifications and Assessment in Further and Higher Education.
3. Reform of the Inspectorate in Scottish Schools.
4. Pre Budget-Scrutiny: Scottish Experience.
5. Pre-Legislative Scrutiny: Irish Experience.
6. Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Early Childhood Education.
7. Provision of Emotional and Therapeutic Counsellors in Primary and Post Primary Education and the link with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Following the meeting the Committee observed General Questions and First Minister's Questions from the viewing gallery in the Scottish Parliament. Thereafter the Committee had a working lunch hosted by the Committee Convener, Ms Sue Webber MSP, in the Holyrood Room of the Scottish Parliament. Finally, the Committee were brought on a tour of the Scottish Parliament.

Friday, 23rd February 2024

On the morning of Friday 23rd February, the Committee visited the *Royal Society Edinburgh* to meet with Dr Janet Browne FRSE, Education Committee Convener.

The *Royal Society of Edinburgh's* Education Committee brings together experts across all areas and levels of education to debate and analyse educational issues and

produce recommendations for decision-makers. Since its inception in 2009, it has established itself as an independent and credible voice on various education issues such as the attainment gap, the review of Curriculum for Excellence and interdisciplinary learning.

The Committee discussed issues such as early childhood education, curriculum reform at primary and post-primary level, assessment and evaluation at primary and post-primary level schools, student mental health and wellbeing, education funding, and educational development *vis a vis* urban and rural settings.

APPENDIX 1 – Members of the Delegation from the Joint Committee



Cathal Crowe TD
Fianna Fáil



Paul Kehoe TD
Fine Gael
(*Cathaoirleach*)



Carol Nolan TD
Independent



Senator Fiona O' Loughlin
*Fianna Fáil (Leas-
Cathaoirleach)*

ACCOMPANYING STAFF

Julian Power Foley, Policy Advisor

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