

Glasgow City Council

Response to the Scottish Government Consultation – Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education: A Governance Review

Introduction

We share the Scottish Government's ambition to achieve Excellence and Equity in education. In the city, since 2007, we have re-focused our attention on education improvement and committed to a number of reforms which have resulted in notable success in outcomes for our children, young people and their families:

- We have closed the attainment gap year on year between Glasgow and the national figure for the percentage of pupils achieving one or more Higher by the end of S5.
- In 2016, we closed the attainment gap between Glasgow and the national figure for those achieving three or more and five or more Highers by the end of S5.
- We have closed the gap between Glasgow and the national figure on the percentage of school leavers going to higher education. In 2007, the figure was 21.7% - in 2014/15 it was 33.9%.
- Year on year, pupils living in the 30% most deprived postcodes perform better than the national average tariff score and in the 10% least deprived. More than two thirds of our pupils live in 30% most deprived postcodes of Scotland.
- We have reformed our provision for nurseries
- We ambitiously reformed our school estate to be make more effective use of school buildings and we've spent £609 million on improving the learning environment in the last 15 years, including three schools supported by Scottish Futures Trust.

However, we are not complacent and we are constantly striving to improve, which is why we protect education as much as possible in our budgets each year.

Consultation, Background & statements

We have chosen to respond to the consultation in broad terms as we found the questions to be unhelpful with some structured in such a way as to discourage open debate - not what we would expect in a consultation of such national significance. However, in order to support the government we have attempted to reference the questions, wherever possible.

It is our opinion that the case for such a wide-ranging review has not been made. We are also unclear on the need for review other than the same structure in essence has been in place since local government reorganisation in 1996. Indeed, what is the evidence base to suggest that the current governance structure is not working? However, we do believe there is a need to clarify, de clutter or reassign roles and

responsibilities to the appropriate levels of governance (and importantly accountability).

However, we were disappointed that an apparent open consultation contains a commitment to regions both in the introduction and in the introduction to questions 10 and 11.

Equally, where is the evidence base to suggest that headteachers and parents want or need more power? There is good evidence to support the link between better parental engagement, high value parental qualifications, particularly a mother's, and educational outcomes for children. There is also evidence that school communities who are empowered within a clear framework of accountability can make a significant difference to children's lives, particularly where families are experiencing poverty. However, there is no evidence that we are aware of where giving money direct to schools and transferring some legislative duties direct to schools rather than through a local authority makes any difference to children's educational outcomes.

Parents have told us that they have very serious concerns about the governance review. They feel that the document is not 'parent-friendly' as it contains too much educational jargon, the timescale is too short for meaningful engagement with parent groups across the city and the document does not make a case for reform. As one parent asked 'What exactly is it that is not working in our current system?'

We accept that nationally there continue to be challenges with closing the gap and young people's performance is inconsistent in SQA examinations. However, as the figures above prove, young people in Glasgow schools are performing better than would be expected given the very significant challenges our children, young people and families face. Glasgow has taken a systemic approach to change over a period of time. We welcome the recent financial support from national government and have concerns that structural changes could create uncertainty for stakeholders and impede our progress.

We fully support the government's policy on *getting it right for every child*. We believe that the governance review would have been better to have started with the needs of children and sought to answer an overarching question such as

- *What governance arrangements are needed to ensure that every child receives high quality learning and teaching in every classroom and playroom?*

That is, start from the child and then build outwards to national government level.

Overall, we believe that the current governance framework of national, local and community (schools and nurseries) is sound. In particular, local government plays a key role in local democracy and accountability to citizens and community for services provided. In best practice, local authorities provide leadership, capacity building, support and challenge and facilitate collaboration between and across establishments and sectors to secure improvements for children and young people.

Glasgow City Council can clearly evidence the vital role it has played working with its nurseries and schools to improve outcomes for children and young people. Some of

the practice and policies developed and implemented in recent years are sector leading receiving national and international recognition and replication.

There is a need, however, to clarify/restate the roles and responsibilities of the three tiers governance to ensure that decisions (and accountability for them) around children's needs are at the correct level. Similarly, there needs to be greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of other national agencies and quangos within the overall education governance system. [Ref - Question 1]

As stated previously, we share the government's vision of excellence and equity for all. We always strive for this in Glasgow. Glasgow is ambitious for education and we are committed to delivering the best educational outcomes for each and every child and young person. We believe a key component of our success has been our belief that every child has the potential to succeed and it is only through each and every member of staff, parent and child sharing that belief and having the highest expectations for both themselves and for the children they teach or care for will we collectively achieve this success.

We believe an optimistic system is an improving system so rather than focus on barriers we focus on what works. We know our schools and their communities and have the expertise to offer support where it is needed.

There is strong evidence to show that to bring about systemic change you need to focus on a small number of key priorities and drive them consistently. In this way, all stakeholders are able to contribute and impact is maximised. Too much change can bring about uncertainty which can destabilise improvement planning which will reduce impact.

As we have already said, we welcome the government's focus on excellence and equity and we share this ambition. However, the review has already introduced uncertainty with parents and headteachers expressing concern about the extent of change needed and what the impact of additional legislative and financial duties will mean for them.

We have worked hard in Glasgow to create a system where all improvement is recognised and celebrated. In some cases, only small changes are needed in classrooms to bring about improvement, in other cases, more fundamental change is needed, such as a change of leadership. However, it is always evidence-based and carried out in partnership with schools.

For a national system to be successful all levels of governance and agencies require to be working together, complementing each other to maximise impact and all focused on the same key priorities. There are currently a number of inconsistencies where priorities are not aligned. For example, we support the empowerment of schools to deliver a curriculum which meets the needs of their local community, we empower our heads to develop management structures which meets their needs working flexibly within their devolved budget. However, their flexibility is constrained by the national policy on teacher numbers whereby local authorities must maintain overall numbers of teachers in order to guarantee their funding. For example, some secondary schools have chosen to have complementary professionals as part of

their senior management team using their devolved budget. We have supported this because there is a strong rationale although it has meant fewer teachers. [Ref - Question 2]

Of course we would broadly support principles such as those set out in the consultation document. Although we don't really understand why there is a need to develop a new set of principles to underpin governance reform. The opening sentence in this section states that 'the focus of this review is on how governance can be improved to support the delivery of excellence and equity to our children and young people'. Therefore, to extend this out to five principles reads merely as a play on words. For example, surely delivering equity in bullet one is exactly the same as meeting the needs of all of our children and young people no matter where they live or their family circumstance in bullet two?

And for the next bullet, of course, education should be supported by a simple and transparent funding system – is it not already? Glasgow's funding to schools is simple, open and transparent – we publish the formula used which takes into account deprivation and all schools get to see how money is apportioned to every other school. We do the same with staffing. Is national government able to say the same in terms of what they devolve to local authorities for education?

The last bullet is flawed – presumably just a typo – with over a third of our school leavers going into higher education then we could have expected higher education to be listed as a post-school destination.

We found it surprising that there was no mention in the principles of the importance of investment in the workforce to enhance and improve leadership and learning and teaching. [Ref -Question 3]

In Glasgow, as have previously stated, we set high level priorities and then ask our schools to align their local priorities to them. Our schools serve very diverse communities – there is not a one size fits all in Glasgow - therefore, flexibility is critical that they work with their local communities to agree on the priorities which meet their needs.

Rightly so, we hold our schools to account for their outcomes for children and young people. For example, when one school amended its curriculum so radically that it resulted in notably fewer pupils achieving qualifications we intervened and insisted that the curriculum was changed.

We have focused relentlessly on the core business of learning and teaching. If it doesn't impact on what happens in the classroom then we ask headteachers to stop doing it.

We have empowered our headteachers to lead their schools as senior managers of the authority. They develop their curriculum to meet the needs of their children and young people – in best practice, they do this in partnership with parents, carers and their pupils. There has never been a 'Glasgow curriculum'. Instead, we debate and challenge each other in a climate of professional trust and confidence. The result is

that each school has an evolving curriculum which is being reflected upon and improved.

We encourage innovation and creativity, but all young people need to be included and be achieving. Our headteachers work exceptionally hard – they are expected to do more and more as finances have become tighter. The last two years have been very difficult because of the shortage of teachers. Our children and families are becoming more complex and distressed, particularly those living in poverty. Our headteachers need protected and supported to enable them to concentrate on leading learning – any additional workload linked to bureaucracy around finance will take them away from learning and teaching and above all else – improving attainment.

The role of the education authority is one of experience, support and challenge. We support through making best use of available resources and we challenge to have the highest expectations for each and every child in our care.

Sometimes, this can create conflict – a child misbehaving due to difficult personal experiences can be very trying but removal from the register through exclusion won't help that child – nor will placing him/her in a specialist provision out with mainstream. Our significant investment in nurture and early intervention over the last 15 years and our ground-breaking enhanced nurture is keeping more children and young people in education with positive outcomes.

Therefore, in Glasgow, what we have is reaping rewards and we are striving to continue to improve. We listen to our staff and work with them to respond to the changing needs of local communities. [Ref - Question 4]

We encourage our schools to work together in a range of different ways and have done so over a considerable length of time. We started by ensuring that all professional development included teachers working collaboratively to share good practice. Our self-evaluation processes are built around headteachers working together in groups sometimes supported by authority staff to provide an additional level of challenge. Our primary schools work together in clusters as part of our approach to raising attainment as part of Glasgow's Improvement Challenge. Increasingly collaborative working is becoming embedded into practice and being built into working time agreements and improvement plans. [Ref - Question 8]

In addition, we look outwards and our officers work collaboratively with other local authorities. For example, through the schools improving partnerships between Fife and Glasgow; the early years work with surrounding authorities and through planned pieces of work such as the recent work on moderation led by East Renfrewshire.

We already have a range of services and support being delivered to clusters of schools. For example, our long-established Learning Communities (nursery, primary and secondary) work together on curriculum planning and transitions. Joint Support Teams work across sectors in Learning Communities to support children and families experiencing difficulties. Staged Intervention Inclusion Meetings enable psychological services to work with clusters of schools to consider learning pathways for children with additional support needs. Our Leaders of Learning team provides

support to individual and clusters of schools as identified by schools themselves and by our improvement service. Our Leaders of Early Learning team do the same for nurseries, including partners. Quality improvement support is delivered through eight Local Improvement Groups across the city. Our Area Improvement Teams, led by Heads of Service, provide support and challenge to schools and nurseries in three areas in the city. Finally, the Directorate provide leadership to the whole city and link directly with elected members to provide strategic leadership and accountability. Therefore, we are already delivering services and support to clusters of schools and nurseries in a range of different ways which are leading to improved outcomes for children and their families. [Ref - Question 9]

We are working in partnership with other local authorities in different ways. For example, our languages team has over a sustained period delivered training and support to a number of other local authorities. We also deliver nurture training for a range of authorities. We recently invited representatives from neighbouring authorities to attend our Equity for All conference and we are working with them to support professional development in moderation and assessment. We do not see the benefit in having a formal regional structure for education and do not believe that the case for this has been made in the consultation document. [Ref - Question 11]

We note in the consultation document that there is a list of who is in scope within the review, yet there is no question seeking our views about the range of organisations listed.

We would welcome more coherent support from Education Scotland, more hands-on advice and guidance rather than more web-based support or advice notes. There is a growing view amongst our schools and nurseries that the inspection function of Education Scotland requires to be strengthened through separating it from the development and support function. There is confusion between the two roles where we have inspectors developing advice and guidance and then inspecting its impact. A number of years ago, HMIE became an agency in order to protect the inspection function and enable it to evaluate independently. This has been lost in recent years.

We do not believe that there is a need for a separate small leadership agency, SCEL. There is duplication in terms of HR and finance support for such a small organisation. Leadership support should not sit in isolation. This would be better placed as part of a new agency which contains the development and support function of Education Scotland.

We agree that it is right for national government to set the policy for Scottish education. However, in recent times policy has moved towards directive where we are being judged on input measures rather than on what matters - the difference we are making to educational outcomes. We find it somewhat ironic that the government wishes to empower teachers, parents and communities but does not appear to want to empower local authorities to deliver national priorities in partnership with their local communities. [Ref - Question 12]

We would also welcome a clearer understanding of the construction of national government. We have to currently link with three Directorates – one for early years,

one for schools and one for Developing the Young Workforce. This appears to be bureaucratic and causes additional work for local authorities as we require to work across three sets of civil servants.

Devolved school management is a long-established position in Scotland. It is very well-established in Glasgow. At the moment, almost all of relevant resources are devolved to schools. A number of years ago, a common complaint from headteachers was their inability to recruit for their own schools. This was the result of falling rolls in schools which resulted in surplus staff requiring to be redeployed. It was also due to lack of action around teachers who were not consistently delivering high quality learning and teaching. This position has changed with rising rolls in the city. Headteachers are actively involved in recruiting their own staff. We strengthened our HR resource and see professional HR support as essential to raising attainment. We don't believe this can be managed efficiently at school level.

A key strength in Glasgow is our belief that we all, from the teacher in the classroom, the Headteacher to the Director of Education, share the legislative duty to secure improved outcomes for every child. We do not see the education authority as one entity and schools as a separate entity – we all depend on each other to carry out our respective roles to maximise impact and to provide mutual support and challenge. To disrupt this through changes to legislation or structures would be to the detriment of education and raising attainment in the city.

We recognise that potentially other parts of the country do not work in this way. Our view is that energy would be better spent improving the culture and ethos in the other parts of the country rather than disrupting what works in the city. [Ref - Question 5]

Excellent schools are outward looking schools. They are schools that work with a range of partners in a positive, well-planned way to deliver a wide set of experiences to children and young people which support the four capacities from Curriculum for Excellence. To do this, schools need more autonomy to develop staff teams which have a range of complementary skills. We are trying to do this in the city through streamlining staff in central teams and instead placing them in schools, for example, employability staff and pathway coordinators through our mentoring programme. However, we are constrained by having to be ever mindful of our commitment to teacher numbers and being financially penalised. In addition, there are some aspects which require to be managed centrally, for example, Active Schools through our partnership with Sport Scotland and Glasgow Life are part of our PEPASS team. Having a central team working with clusters of schools and planning activities locally, in an area and then city-wide for major events allows us to maximise the opportunities available for children and young people.

Most partnerships are best delivered at school level. Headteachers are best placed to decide on which partnerships deliver for their children and young people. Increasingly, our third sector partners and housing associations play key roles in the

life of our schools. Local elected members play a key role in brokering positive partnerships through their knowledge of local communities and partnerships. They also play a key role supporting parents. At a strategic city-wide level, the Directorate forges strong partnerships with the colleges and universities in the city ensuring that the strategic planning is in place to provide the range of learning pathways needed at local level. [Ref - Question 6]

Early learning and childcare has been a key priority for Glasgow for many years. We have invested heavily in extending our provision to be more affordable and flexible for parents. We work with a wide range of partners in the city and as part of our Co-operative Council policy we are increasingly supporting social enterprise models within an urban setting. However, provision of early learning and childcare is more than just making it available for parents, we must not compromise quality for quantity. The local authority has a key role in ensuring that quality is maintained, building capacity to support more community-led provision and ensuring value for money through commissioning and procurement. [Ref - Question 7]

Much of our success in improving outcomes for children and young people is due to our relentless focus on improving learning and teaching. We have focused on the key role of the classroom teacher. We have provided high quality professional development and have invested in professional HR support so that our staff are well supported and challenged. We are intolerant of performance which results in weak outcomes for children and young people.

We work with a range of partners, including the universities and professional associations, to ensure that the professional development being offered meets the identified needs of teachers.

We work closely with our universities that deliver teacher education to ensure that our probationary programme builds effectively on prior learning and provides an appropriate level of challenge for newly qualified teachers. Our challenges are practical ones. However, we have retained a dedicated quality improvement officer who works closely with our university partners and is well-placed to manage our programmes for newly qualified teachers and to support the needs of career long professional learning. The West Partnership for teacher education works across eight local authorities and two schools of education. [Ref - Question 13]

We agree that funding should be fair and transparent. We publish all the formulae used for staffing, supply cover and resources. We developed in partnership with schools and professional associations an approach to allow more flexibility for senior leaders with their promoted staff through a points system. This has been positively welcomed by them. It is open and transparent and decision making is shared between the school and the centre. We use the scale of the city to maximise the benefit to schools by having some central teams, for example, English as an additional language, nurture development, dyslexia support, some curriculum specialists. We listen carefully to our staff and respond taking into account their

views. We believe that we already have funding formulae which support excellence and equity (i.e. takes into account deprivation and EAL and is sufficiently flexible to respond to change), is fair, is simple, transparent and predictable and delivers value for money.

We do not believe the case has been made explicitly in the consultation document for one to be developed. We question how feasible it is to develop one funding formulae which would meet the needs of a small rural school and meet the needs of a large urban school with a diverse population. [Ref - Question 14]

Our headteachers have told us strongly that they do not want additional controls over funding to be devolved to school level. They want to lead learning supported by robust and professional management. They believe this is what they have in Glasgow. Government may also need to take into consideration that additional responsibilities around finance could impact on job-sizing of headteachers and mean that more investment is needed in headteacher salaries. [Ref - Question 15]

Glasgow City Council has been committed to attaining excellence in education since assuming control of schools in 1996. We therefore welcome the Scottish Government's support for these objectives and are glad they now share our vision for excellence and equity. Glasgow's performance in the last ten years shows that significant progress has been made and that there is capacity to continue to improve the number of young people achieving qualifications and going onto positive destinations.

As a minority government, we do not believe that the Scottish Government has done enough to engage with elected representatives in Holyrood or across local government, nor with communities who will feel the immediate consequences of these radical proposals. Glasgow is not convinced that the case has been made for radical reform in terms of structural changes or the removal of the crucial link with local democracy. Though not stated in the document there is an implicit threat to the role of Councils and their management of education. We would caution the government not to change what is clearly working well for our children and young people in this city.