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## **EDUCATION IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

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### **PREAMBLE**

This paper follows on from the previous bulletin (Redford 2019), which covered the education remit of the Parliament's Education and Skills Committee between September 2018 and January 2019. The following bulletin covers the remit of the Education and Skills Committee from February 2019 to June 2019

### **FEBRUARY 2019 – JULY 2019**

The Education and Skills Committee had the following members during this period:

Clare Adamson, Johann Lamont (Deputy Convener), Alasdair Allan, Jenny Gilruth, Iain Gray, Ross Greer, Gordon MacDonald, Rona Mackay, Oliver Mundell, Tavish Scott and Liz Smith. Full records of the Committee meetings, including minutes, official papers and transcripts of proceedings can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at:

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/99746.aspx> [accessed 31.10.19]

In this period the committee completed their work on the Scottish National Standardised Assessments Inquiry and reviewed the outcomes of their inquiry into Additional Support Needs from 2017. They began two new inquiries, into STEM across the curriculum, and subject choices in the senior phase of the curriculum. In each inquiry they followed their established practice of reviewing evidence heard in private, at the end of each session. They considered the responses to two committee reports: Young People's Pathways – a progress report on Developing the Young Workforce and their Inquiry into Music tuition in schools, and heard an update of European Issues. They reviewed and closed Petition PE01694 and agreed to explore further the issues raised in PE01692. Throughout this period they heard evidence and agreed subordinate and negative orders presented by Scottish Government ministers and their officials. The committee reviewed their work programme in private at their meeting on 2 March 2019 and agreed their approach to STEM. They revisited this at their meeting on 22 May when they agreed witnesses for their STEM inquiry. They returned to their work programme again at their meeting on 26 June 2019 when they agreed a call for views on the Disclosure Scotland Bill.

## SCOTTISH NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS INQUIRY

The committee took further evidence for this inquiry at their meeting on 6 February 2019 when they heard from a parents association, professional associations and a journalist. The papers for this meeting include a SPICe briefing paper (ES/S5/19/5/1), written submissions from those attending (ES/S5/19/5/2) and a SPICe briefing on Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA) outputs (ES/S5/19/5/3). They heard final evidence in this inquiry at their next meeting on the 20 February 2019, from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The papers for this meeting included a SPICe briefing paper (ES/S5/19/6/2), a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/6/3), a summary of local authority submissions (ES/S5/19/6/4) and focus group notes (ES/S5/19/6/5). They returned to the inquiry at their meeting on 6 March 2019 when they considered an initial draft report. This was reviewed in private at their meetings on the 13 and 20 March 2019. They considered the Scottish Government response to the Committee report at their meeting on 26 June and agreed to return to the matter at future meeting.

Date of Committee	Witnesses
6 February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lindsay Law, <i>Connect</i></li> <li>• James McEnaney, <i>Lecturer and Journalist</i></li> <li>• Darren Northcott, <i>NASUWT</i></li> <li>• Susan Quinn, <i>EIS</i></li> </ul>
20 February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> <li>• Andrew Bruce, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> <li>• David Leng, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> </ul>

The evidence session on the 6 February 2019 began with a question from Liz Smith about the purpose of the standardised assessments. In reply Susan Quinn described the development of the assessments and highlighted that:

What we have is an approach that tries to do all things for all people, and it potentially cannot do everything. The SNSA that has been developed seeks to provide diagnostic information—across only about 10 per cent of the curriculum base, so it is not providing the widest information to schools—and can be used to look at individuals and groups in classes (Quinn, 06.02.19, Col 3).

Lindsay Law added that the assessments, 'have been described and communicated to parents in different ways, in each local authority area- in fact, in each school' (Law, 06.02.19, Col 4). Darren Northcott added that the purpose of the assessments, and whether it was formative or summative, was not clear. James McEnaney supported this saying that 'confusion', 'sums up everything most effectively' (McEnaney, 06.02.19, Col 6). The meeting discussed the range of assessment data used to inform policy planning by local authorities before moving on to debate the requirement for national assessment. Tavish Scott asked James McEnaney questions about the information available through the Scottish Survey

of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) In reply James McEnaney said that as a national sample SSLN gave a wider range of information, 'such as 26 per cent of kids in primary 4 reporting that nobody ever read to them at home' (McEnaney, 06.02.19, Col. 24). Jenny Gilruth asked about the standardisation of assessment and Darren Northcott replied:

An important part of the narrative is that one national approach replaces 28 different approaches to standardised assessments. There is no question but that that creates challenges, but we should not pretend that there were no imposed standardised assessments in schools before, because there was an awful lot of that (Northcott, 06.02.19, Col 29)

This led Lindsay Law to comment that although standardised the assessments were delivered in different ways in each local authority. Johann Lamont asked about the reasons for the introduction of the SNSA. In reply Susan Quinn said:

We have gone round and round the block with this conversation. If a single standardised test is used to determine interventions or—dare I say it— league tables, it is a narrow approach that puts us on the road to ruin. On the other hand, if the assessments are used as part of the broader bank of assessments that a school chooses to use, it does not matter whether they are used in August, September, October or whenever in the school year. People will use them to inform their decisions, and the evidence on the moderation and understanding of the standards will sit behind that (Quinn, 06.02.19, Col 32).

The evidence session concluded with a discussion about the range of other assessments being used in schools.

At the final evidence session on the 20 February 2019 the Cabinet Secretary used his opening remarks to summarise the development timeline of the SNSA and justified the approach of the Scottish Government in commissioning SNSA and not developing the SSLN. Iain Gray asked about the purpose and type of assessment in the SNSA. In reply John Swinney said that purpose of the assessments was, 'as a diagnostic tool within the education system' (Swinney, 20.02.19, Col 9), for use as formative, not summative, assessments. The Cabinet Secretary went on to say that the purpose of the SNSA, 'is to help inform the diagnostic analysis of pupils' performance' (Swinney, 20.02.19, Col 12) and that it helped individual teachers to support pupils to improve their performance. Iain Gray then asked why the SSLN was not retained. In reply the Cabinet Secretary argued that the Scottish Government had enhanced the system through the introduction of SNSA by providing, 'a nationwide picture—constructed individual by individual—of the performance of the education system, which is much more comprehensive than anything that the SSLN ever delivered for us' (Swinney, 20.02.19, Col 15). Tavish Scott asked questions about the timing and place of assessments, arguing that the differences meant that they could not be considered as standardised tests, with John Swinney saying, 'It is standardised because the same assessment is being taken' (Swinney, 20.02.19, Col 19). Ross Greer asked about local authorities who chose to use the SNSA at set times of the year. In

response the Cabinet Secretary said that the principle, that no time window should be prescribed, had been reinforced in guidance to local authorities. Ross Greer then returned to the issue of the data as formative or summative and John Swinney acknowledged that while the purpose of the SNSA was formative, ‘in the aggregation of data, the SNSA is summative,’ (Swinney, 20.02.19. Col 23). Johann Lamont followed this with questions about the administration of the assessments and the different conditions and times at which pupils were assessed. David Leng gave a detailed response about the adaptive nature of the assessments and reminded the committee the purpose of the assessment was diagnostic. He then added,

The standardisation is therefore about the assessment—the questions, the matching to the curriculum, the common reporting and the common scaling that they are on. It is not about having exactly the same conditions or timing—that is a different understanding of standardisation (Leng, 20.02.19, Col 31).

The meeting then returned to the issue of the SSLN, and the Cabinet Secretary said, ‘I judged that it was right to remove the SSLN, because we were moving to a more comprehensive performance measurement system (Swinney, 20.02.19, Col 35). Oliver Mundell asked about the suitability of the assessments for young people with additional support needs and the confusion in Parliament of the use of SNSA to diagnose additional support needs. In reply the John Swinney acknowledged that there had been confusion on that issue.

### **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS (ASN)**

The committee took evidence from witnesses involved in the tribunal system for ASN at their meeting on 27 February 2019. This meeting explored the outcomes of the recommendations made by the committee inquiry in 2017. The papers for this meeting were a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/7/1), a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/7/2), a SPICe summary of Local Authority submissions (ES/S5/19/7/3) and focus group notes (ES/S5/19/7/4). They took further evidence on ASN at their next meeting on the 6 March 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/8/1) and written submissions from those giving evidence, and a late submission from Midlothian Council (ES/S5/19/8/2). The committee discussed the evidence in private at their meeting on the 3 April 2019 and agreed the terms of a letter to the Scottish Government.

<b>Date of Committee</b>	<b>Witnesses</b>
27 February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May Dunsmuir, <i>First-tier Tribunal for Scotland</i></li> <li>• Nick Hobbs, <i>Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland</i></li> <li>• Professor Sheila Riddell, <i>University of Edinburgh</i></li> </ul>
6 March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kayleigh Thorpe, <i>Enable</i></li> <li>• Nick Ward, <i>National Autistic Society Scotland</i></li> <li>• Seamus Searson, <i>Scottish Secondary Teacher's Association</i></li> </ul>

At the start of the session the witnesses explained their individual roles in relation to ASN. May Dunsmuir described the ASN tribunal as, 'a specialist tribunal that is well geared up to attend to the particular needs that come before it' (Dunsmuir, 27.02.19, Col 3). Sheila Riddell outlined the research that the University of Edinburgh was carrying out in relation to children's rights in England and Scotland, and Nick Hobbs described the role of Children's commissioner's office in promoting and safeguarding the rights of children in Scotland. The meeting then considered the limited use of Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs), with all members of the panel agreeing that there was a lack of understanding of what a CSP was for amongst school and local authority staff. Sheila Riddell then gave an example in relation to looked after children:

I would have thought that most children who are looked after or care experienced, for example, should have a CSP. Since 2009, there has been an obligation on local authorities to assess whether children in that particularly vulnerable group should have a statutory support plan. Those children all get support from education and social work, so they would qualify. Why are not all those children getting a CSP ? (Riddell, 27.02.19, Col 7).

Ross Greer asked if local authorities were less willing to consider CSPs because of the resource implications. Sheila Riddell agreed could be an issue and said that when the responsibility moved to schools, no work was done to assess if teachers' had the knowledge and time to lead on CSPs. This was supported by May Dunsmuir who said that the tribunal saw CSPs that were not working because, 'they are not being reviewed regularly enough, or they fail to set out clear ways that the educational objectives are to be met' (Dunsmuir, 27.02.19, Col 9). Jenny Gilruth asked if the local authorities were risk averse to agreeing CSPs. Sheila Riddell said that they were, and added that the system was, 'Designed with practitioners, not parents and children, in mind,' (Riddell, 27.02.19, Col 12). Oliver Mundell asked about the responsibility of assessing children with additional support needs. Sheila Riddell replied that it was a local authority responsibility that they often passed to schools. May Dunsmuir said that in practice teachers often waited for a medical diagnosis, adding, 'My concern is that that usually involves very vulnerable children and that their rights are being overshadowed by resource-driven decisions rather than needs-led decisions being made' (Dunsmuir, 27.10.19, Col 14). The meeting then discussed the presumption of mainstream education for children and young people with ASN before considering the variation in the way that each local authority recorded ASN.

The evidence from the second panel of witnesses began with a discussion about the use of CSPs. The panel responded that they were underused, because of a lack of understanding and differences between local authorities, with Seamus Sarson saying:

We need experts working in our schools who can identify youngsters and help teachers to deliver what they need to do. We have to accept that teachers are not experts in all these fields (Sarson, 06.03.19, Col 6).

The committee discussed the different interpretations of the guidance about the presumption of mainstreaming before exploring the different support plans that were used for children and young people in school. This led to a discussion about the local authority proposals to remove ASN teachers and replace them with pupil support assistants. The meeting discussed the training available to ASN staff before considering the use of part-time timetables for children and young people with ASN.

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) INQUIRY**

The committee heard evidence in a roundtable format at their meeting on 27 March 2019 to inform their planned inquiry on STEM. The meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/9/1) and a pack of written submissions (ES/S5/19/8/2). They reviewed the evidence in private, after the roundtable, and agreed the terms of their inquiry and to hold a workshop on STEM at the Scottish Learning Festival. They took their first session of evidence in the inquiry at their meeting on 5 June 2019 with a focus on STEM in early years education. The papers for this meeting were a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/19/1), a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/19/2) and a STEM background paper from SPICe (ES/S5/19/19/3). The committee heard further evidence at their meeting on 12 June 2019. The supporting papers for this meeting were a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/20/3) and a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/20/4). They took further evidence at their meeting on 26 June 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/22/1), a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/22/2) and a SPICe paper on connectivity (ES/S5/19/22/3).

The roundtable discussion began with a question from Rona Mackay about gender barriers that discouraged girls from following STEM subjects. In response both Toni Scullion and Lorna Hay said that the role models and a space to participate supported girls to follow STEM subjects. The meeting then explored a proposal from Ian Wall that professional learning for primary teachers should include a science at National 5 and Higher Mathematics. This was supported by Fiona McNeill who said that the Learned Societies Group had advocated a pass in a science subject at National 5 as an entry requirement for primary teaching for some time. The meeting then discussed the need to raise awareness of career opportunities in STEM with parents and families. Lorna Hay and Toni Scullion talked about the programme of STEM work done through primary/ secondary cluster schools in their local authority areas. This led to an exploration of the career opportunities available in STEM and the need to encourage the industry to work directly with schools.

The first evidence panel considered the work that Education Scotland was doing to support the STEM strategy in early years, the confidence of early years practitioners in delivering STEM subjects and the STEM support available to teachers in early years. The meeting spent some time considering resources available to support the strategy and the challenges of accessing STEM experiences in rural schools. The session ended with a discussion about gender balance and equality.

Date of Committee	Witnesses
27 March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lorna Hay, <i>Pitteuchar Primary School</i></li> <li>• Professor Iain Hunter, <i>University of Strathclyde</i></li> <li>• Dr Fiona McNeill, <i>Learned Societies Group, RSE</i></li> <li>• Toni Scullion, <i>St Kentigern's Academy</i></li> <li>• Liz Turner, <i>BT Group</i></li> <li>• Professor Ian Wall, <i>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Committee (STEMEC)</i></li> <li>• Talat Yaqoob, <i>Equate Scotland</i></li> </ul>
5 June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Boyd, <i>Primary Teacher</i></li> <li>• Elisabeth Kelly, <i>Principal Teacher</i></li> <li>• Andrew Bruce, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> <li>• Ian Menzies, <i>Education Scotland</i></li> <li>• Dr Emma Woodham, <i>Glasgow Science Centre</i></li> </ul>
12 June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shona Birrell, <i>Teacher</i></li> <li>• Lorna Hay, <i>Teacher</i></li> <li>• Alastair MacGregor, <i>Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC)</i></li> <li>• Dr Karen Petrie, <i>British Computer Society</i></li> <li>• Professor Lesley Yellowlees, <i>Learned Societies' Group (LSG)</i></li> </ul>
26 June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nicola Connor, <i>Teacher, West Lothian Council</i></li> <li>• Nicola Dasgupta, <i>EIS</i></li> <li>• Dr Simon Gage, <i>Edinburgh Science</i></li> <li>• Matt Lancashire, <i>Scottish Council for Development and Industry</i></li> <li>• Kathryn Thomas, <i>Highland Council</i></li> </ul>

The committee took further evidence on STEM in early years from a second panel of witnesses at their meeting on 12 June 2019. In his opening question Iain Gray acknowledged the range of work being done in STEM and asked, '[how] can we make that work central to our education system?' (Gray, 12 June 2019, Col 5). In reply Lorna Hay said, 'We need to cascade knowledge and build capacity' (Hay, 12.06.19, Col 5). This led the meeting to consider the range of qualifications required for entry to primary teaching and the opportunities of working with subject specialists in secondary schools. They discussed the professional learning available through SSERC and the difficulties of providing STEM experiences for children in rural areas before addressing the issue of parental engagement. The meeting ended with a discussion about gender equality.

The committee heard further evidence at their meeting on 26 June 2019. The session began with a discussion about moving pilot programmes into mainstream provision. The convener asked about teacher confidence to teach STEM subjects.



In response Kathryn Thomas talked about the success of the SSERC cluster mentor programme and professional learning offered to teachers during their probationary year in schools. Alasdair Allan asked about equality of access and engagement with parents. In reply Matt Lancashire talked about the need to engage parents to them support their children to attend young engineers and science clubs and Kathryn Thomas of family-run STEM clubs. The convener asked about the role of the STEM strategy in supporting these developments. Matt Lancashire replied, 'The STEM strategy is very welcome, but our word is changing' (Lancashire, 26.06.19, Col 12). Nicola Dasgupta said, 'some areas are investing more than others in STEM and that is problematic' (Dasgupta, 26.06.19, Col 12). The meeting then considered the provision across schools and the role of the STEM ambassador network. Alison Harris (committee substitute) asked about the addition of arts and humanities to STEM to make it STEAM. The witnesses were all supportive of that approach and gave examples of interdisciplinary learning to illustrate their experience of teaching across the curriculum.

### **SUBJECT CHOICES INQUIRY**

The committee began hearing evidence on this inquiry at their meeting on 3 April 2019. The papers for that meeting included a SPICe briefing (ES/ S5/19/12/1) and submissions pack (ES/S5/19/12/2). They heard from a third panel of witnesses at their meeting on 24 April 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/13/1), the results of a survey of schools (ES/S5/19/13/2) and a submissions pack of written evidence (ES/S5/19/13/3). The committee heard further evidence at their meeting on 1 May 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing paper (ES/S5/19/14/1), additional evidence (ES/S5/19/14/2) and written submissions (ES/S5/19/14/3). They continued the inquiry at their meeting on 8 May 2019. The papers supporting this session were a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/15/1), a summary of teachers' responses to a subject survey (ES/S5/19/15/2), written submissions from those attending the meeting (ES/S5/19/15/3), notes from a focus group and additional submissions from teachers (ES/S5/19/15/4). Further evidence was heard at the next committee meeting on 15 May. The papers for this meeting were a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/16/1), focus group notes from a meeting with parents (ES/S5/19/16/2) and a submissions pack (ES/S5/19/16/3). The committee heard evidence from the Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and her officials at their meeting on the 22 May 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/17/40 and a written submission from the SQA (ES/S5/19/17/5). The committee heard a final session of evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and his officials, at their meeting on 29 May 2019. This meeting was supported by a SPICe briefing (ES/S5/19/18/2) and supplementary submissions from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Education Scotland (ES/S5/19/18/3). The committee considered a draft report in private at their meeting on 19 June 2019 and a revised draft report at their meeting on 26 June 2019. It was agreed to consider a further draft at their next meeting on 4 September 2019.

Date of Committee	Witnesses
3 April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gayle Gorman, Alan Armstrong, Joan Mackay and Jenny Watson, <i>Education Scotland</i></li> </ul>
3 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alastair Sim, Director, <i>Universities Scotland</i></li> <li>• Scott Harrison, <i>City of Glasgow College</i></li> <li>• Morven Cameron, <i>Highlands and Islands Enterprise</i></li> <li>• Dr Marsaili NicLeòid, <i>Sabhal Mòr Ostaig</i></li> </ul>
24 April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Alan Britton, <i>University of Glasgow</i></li> <li>• William Hardie, <i>Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE)</i></li> <li>• Professor Jim Scott, <i>University of Dundee</i></li> </ul>
1 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eileen Prior, <i>Connect</i></li> <li>• Joanna Murphy, <i>National Parent Forum of Scotland</i></li> <li>• Linda O'Neill, <i>Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS)</i></li> <li>• Magaidh Wentworth, <i>Comann nam Pàrant</i></li> </ul>
8 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Francisco Valdera-Gil, <i>Scottish Council of Deans of Education</i></li> <li>• Larry Flanagan, <i>EIS</i></li> <li>• Tess Watson, <i>Association for Science Education</i></li> <li>• Marjorie Kerr, <i>Scottish Association of Geography Teachers</i></li> <li>• Catriona MacPhee, <i>Comann Luchd-Teagaisg Àrd Sgoiltean</i></li> </ul>
15 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gerry Lyons, <i>Association of Directors of Education in Scotland</i></li> <li>• Dr Pauline Stephen, <i>Angus Council</i></li> <li>• Tony McDaid, <i>South Lanarkshire Council</i></li> <li>• Dr Mark Ratter, <i>East Renfrewshire Council</i></li> <li>• Vincent Docherty, <i>Aberdeenshire Council</i></li> </ul>
22 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Janet Brown, Dr Gill Stewart and James Morgan, <i>SQA</i></li> </ul>
29 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> <li>• Murray McVicar and Andrew Bruce, <i>Scottish Government</i></li> </ul>

The first evidence panel began with a question from Jenny Gilruth about the responsibility for curriculum design. In reply Alan Armstrong said that schools designed course and the SQA the qualifications, adding that, ‘the notional period

of 160 hours is the learning required to reach a qualification' (Armstrong, 03.04.19, Col 5). Jenny Gilruth followed this by quoting evidence from the Royal Scottish Geographical Society who recommended a return to the curriculum model of two, two and two years in secondary school. In reply Gayle Gorman said that curriculum structure was not static, and the focus was on the empowerment of local schools and communities to decide what, 'the best option is for the young people they work and serve with' (Gorman, 03.04.19, Col 7). Alan Armstrong added:

The qualifications are the senior phase. The learning can progress through primary school and secondary school, but young people take their qualifications over S4, S5 and S6. The learning that takes place towards that can determine the course choices and levels that young people move into when they take their qualifications. However, we are not saying that schools cannot teach any element of national 5 courses until August of S4. (Armstrong, 03.04.19, Col. 6).

Tavish Scott asked what the role of Education Scotland was in relation to the curriculum and Gayle Gorman replied, 'it is to work in partnership with the system' (Gorman, 03.04.19, Col 7). The meeting then considered the importance of subject choice as an individual pathway for young people before Liz Smith asked about the evidence the committee had received about a reduction in subject choices for young people. Gayle Gorman replied, 'some of that is to do with curriculum innovation, choice and thinking about what young people want' (Gorman, 03.04.19, Col. 14). Liz Smith then asked about the reduction in the subject choice at higher and advanced higher. In reply Gayle Gorman described how some schools had consortia arrangements to share the teaching of some subjects:

There might be less choice in individual schools in some areas, but the collective offer to young people is wider, because subjects are offered across three, five or six schools, for instance (Gorman, 03.04.19, Col 15).

The meeting then discussed the situation in rural schools and the use of e-learning to support a wider curriculum. Alasdair Allan described the success of the E-Sgoil in the Western Isles, that was also available to, and used, by other local authorities. The committee spent some time exploring the use and equity of provision of subjects through school consortia with the panel. Iain Gray asked about the evidence that the committee had received about subjects 'being squeezed out of the curriculum' (Gray, 03.04.19, Col 27). In reply Alan Armstrong talked about schools working with young people in S4 to S6 as one year group, and subjects being taught to mixed year groups. Alasdair Allan asked about the drop of almost 20% in young people taking qualifications in languages in S4. Joan Mackay replied that work needed to be done to understand why young people were choosing to drop languages in S4. The session concluded with a discussion about the use of bi – and tri-level teaching in secondary schools.

The second session of evidence began with a statement from Alastair Sim about a reduction in opportunities in languages and sciences in the senior phase of the curriculum. The committee explored the widening of provision through college and foundation apprenticeships with Scott Harrison and Marsaili NicLeòid. Iain Gray

then asked about the University entry requirement for higher passes at a single sitting. In reply Alastair Sim said that universities generally looked for attainment across the senior phase and were now also considering foundation apprenticeships as equivalent to a higher. Alasdair Allan asked about the reduction in Gaelic passes and Marsaili NicLeòid replied that there was, 'a 40 per cent in pupils studying Gaelic higher for learners since 2012' (NicLeòid, 03.04.19, col 46). Johann Lamont followed this with a series of questions about the implications of reduced subject provision and university applications for schools in areas of multiple deprivation. The session ended with a discussion about joint work between further education and schools to offer a wider curriculum.

Liz Smith opened the questions to the third panel of witnesses by asking if the reduction in subject choice in schools was intentional. In reply William Hardie said that the research carried out by the RSE indicated that the reduction in choice was, 'an unintended consequence fitting in the 160 hours of learning for national qualifications in a single year' (Hardie, 24.04.19, Col 1). In answer to a further question he said that the guidance issued by Education Scotland in 2016 about the connections between the broad general and the senior phase of the curriculum was not specific enough. Jim Scott added, that 'roughly half of Scotland's secondary schools offer six courses in S4' (Scott, 24.03.19, Col 2). He then explained that it was possible to offer seven choices in the time available. The meeting spent some time debating different ways to timetable a wider subject choice for young people before exploring the issue of multi-level teaching. Rona Mackay asked the panel where curriculum guidance and support should come from. Alan Britton replied that because of the governance of Scottish education through local authorities any guidance issued nationally was only guidance. It was for the local authorities and schools to implement the guidance. The meeting then spent some time discussing the outcomes of a reduction in choice for young people in deprived areas. Alasdair Allan asked about the reduction in young people choosing languages. Jim Scott replied with information about a similar drop in science subjects and Alan Britton to propose that there was a need to review the purposes of the curriculum in order to agree a way forward.

The discussions with the next witness panel focused on parental experience of the curriculum. In their answers the panel members identified a lack of communication from schools that led to a lack of understanding by parents of the curriculum structure. The meeting explored the options of studying some subjects in a nearby school and acknowledged the importance of digital provision, as led by the E-Sgoil from Stornoway. Magaidh Wentworth raised the lack of provision of Gaelic-medium provision at secondary schools saying, 'Gaelic's national priority is often not reflected in local decision making at school and local authority levels' (Wentworth, 01.05.19, Col 12). The meeting then discussed multi-level teaching and the option of taking highers over two years.

The panel on the 8 May 2019 began with introductions from each of the witnesses about their experience of the curriculum. Catriona MacPhee began by saying that the number of pupils studying Gaelic as a learner had fallen by 57%.

Francisco Valdera-Gil that there has been a 65% reduction in the number studying languages in S4. Marjorie Kerr raised concerns about the use of an assignment as part of the Geography exams and proposed the use of specialists to teach subject content in broad general curriculum. Larry Flanagan, 'That CFE was not meant to be about a change to qualifications. It was meant to be a pedagogical change about the way we facilitate learning for our young people' (Flanagan, 08.05.19 Col 6). The meeting then considered the ways that schools timetabled the senior phase and the number of subjects available to young people within those systems. Catriona MacPhee highlighted this as a challenge for Gaelic Learners because schools were saying that the number of young people selecting that as an option was too low to make the class viable. This led to discussion about the structure and length of courses across the senior phase. Larry Flanagan talked about the need to move the senior phase to a:

Two-year S4 and S5 course, because pupils are staying on. Using S4 and S5, we can retain subject choice in a much more meaningful way than we can with the hybrid system we have at the moment (Flanagan, 08.05.19, Col 33).

The proposal was supported by Liz Smith, who felt it would offer greater choice and individual attention in the curriculum. The session concluded with a discussion about the challenges of multi-level teaching and subject staffing in schools.

The next session of evidence opened with a discussion about the focus of the senior phase of the curriculum. Vincent Docherty proposed that planning the senior phase over three years allowed young people, 'to learn at a stage when they are ready' (Docherty, 15.05.19, Col 3). Gerry Lyon agreed and added that the curriculum gave schools, 'the opportunity to meet the needs of groups of young people and individual young people that previous models did not give us the chance to meet' (Lyons, 15.05.19, Col 3). The meeting explored the challenge of communicating the new structure of the curriculum to young people and their families. Rona Mackay asked about a reduction in subject availability in the senior phase. In reply each witness talked about individual school models to meet local need, balanced with joint provision with other schools and colleges, through a common timetable structure. Gerry Lyons returned to the issue of communication with young people and their families;

The approach should go beyond course booklets; it should be about encouraging parents to come into schools and have conversations not about the generality, but about the child and how we can best meet their aspirations and hopes. Doing that better and more regularly will lead to parents being more confident about what is happening in our schools (Lyons, 15.05.19, Col 14).

Iain Gray asked each witness about the number of subjects each local authority represented offered in S4 and why it varied between authorities. The meeting ended with a discussion about the role of colleges as partners in the senior phase.

The meeting on the 22 May 2019 began with a statement from Janet Brown in which she described the work of the SQA in the development of the curriculum and

current national examination structure. Jenny Gilruth then asked about the 160 teaching hours required for each subject. In reply James Morgan said;

The 160 hours allocation for national 4, national 5 and higher is not new. It was part of the previous qualifications—intermediate 1, intermediate 2 and higher. Those qualifications are the DNA of the current national 4, national 5 and higher (Morgan, 22.05.19, Col 150).

He went on to explain that all SQA qualifications follow the structure set in the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and that each award, at every level, requires 240 hours of learning, ‘160 hours is for directed learning in the classroom and similar environments, and there is 80 hours of self-directed learning’ (Morgan, 22.05.19, Col 15). Gil Stewart added that the senior phase was planned for young people to take a range of qualifications across one or two years, ‘It was never envisaged that everybody would do one set of qualifications in one year and another set in the next’ (Stewart, 22.05.19, Col 15). The meeting discussed the variation in the number of subjects young people were being offered in S4 before exploring the range of data held by the SQA.

The committee heard a final session of evidence at their meeting on 29 May 2019. That meeting explored the range of consultation carried out during the design of the curriculum, the drop in some qualifications for modern languages and the variation in subject choice available to young people. Iain Gray asked the Cabinet Secretary who held responsibility for the overview of the curriculum. In his reply, John Swinney acknowledged that he held overall responsibility but emphasised that, ‘it is a shared responsibility, because a school has to satisfy itself that it has a good educational rationale for its curricular choice’ (Swinney, 29.05.19, Col 18). Alasdair Allan asked further questions about the number of subjects available in S4 and if the Scottish Government would recommend a minimum number of subjects for pupils in that year. In his reply John Swinney talked about the changing provision in the curriculum:

Schools provide the anchor for the education of young people, but they draw on relationships with a range of other organisations, which also enhances the choice and opportunities that are available for young people (Swinney, 29.05.19, Col 24).

The meeting then turned to multi-level teaching in schools. John Swinney argued that multi-level teaching had existed in Scotland for a long time but agreed, ‘to look carefully at what the committee considers on that point’ (Swinney, 29.05.19, Col 29).

## **PETITIONS PE01694 AND PE01692**

The Committee considered two petitions at their meeting on the 29 May 2019. They returned to PE01694 on Free Instrumental Music Services (ES/S5/19/18/4) and agreed to close the petition, as the work of the committee on instrumental music tuition was complete. The convenor then introduced PE01692, a petition

submitted by Lesley Scott on behalf of the Tymes Trust and by Alison Preuss on behalf of the Scotland Home Education Forum, as a call for an inquiry into the human rights impact of GIRFEC policy and data processing (ES/S5/19/18/5). The committee noted the contents of the petition and agreed to write to the Scottish Government to ask about the working of the framework between independent organisations and to the Information Commissioner's Office to ask about the impact of recent legislation on information sharing.

## **SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION**

The committee took evidence on the Continuing Care (Scotland) Amendment Order 2019 [draft] from Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People and her officials, at their meeting on 20 February 2019. The committee then approved the draft order.

- S5M-15747—Continuing Care (Scotland) Amendment order 2019 [draft]

The committee took evidence on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification)(No. 1) Order 2019 (SSI 2019/draft) and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification)(No. 2) Order 2019 (SSI 2019/draft) at their meeting on 22 May 2019 from Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People and her officials. The committee then approved the draft order.

- S5M-17294—Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 1) order 2019 (SSI 2019/draft)
- S5M-17295—Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 2) Order 2019 (SSI 2019/draft)

The committee heard evidence on the Head Teachers Education and Training Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2019 [draft] at their meeting on 29 May 2019 from John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and skills, and his officials. The committee then approved the draft order.

- S5M-17293 Head Teachers Education and Training Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2019 [draft]

The committee considered and made no recommendations in relation to the following instruments during this period:

- The Education (Fees and Student Support) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) (Scotland) Regulations 2019 (SSI 2019/70)
- Teachers' Superannuation and Pension Scheme (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 (SSI 2019/48)
- The Teachers' Superannuation and Pension Scheme (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Amendment Regulations 2019 (SSI 2019/95)
- St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2019 (SSI 2019/144)
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (Modification) Regulations 2019 (SSI 2019/179)
- Abertay University (Scotland) Order of Council 2019 (SSI 2019/163)

## REFERENCES

Redford, M. (2019) Education in the Scottish Parliament, *Scottish Educational Review*, 50 (1), 71-80