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EDUCATION IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

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PREAMBLE

This paper follows on from the previous bulletin (Redford 2014), which covered the education remit of the Parliament's Education and Culture Committee between February and June 2014. The following bulletin covers the same remit of the Education and Culture Committee from August 2014 to February 2015.

SEPTEMBER 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015

The Education and Culture Committee had the following members during this period: Stewart Maxwell (Convener), Neil Bibby (Deputy Convener to 16.12.14), Siobhan McMahon (Deputy Convener from 27.01.15), George Adam, Clare Adamson (to 16.12.14), Jayne Baxter (to 16.12.14) Colin Beattie, Chic Brodie (from 16.12.14), Mark Griffin (from 13.01.15), Gordon MacDonald, Liam McArthur and Mary Scanlon. Full records of the Committee meetings, including minutes, official papers and transcripts of proceedings can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s4/committees/ellc/meetings.htm>

In this period the committee returned to Curriculum for Excellence to review the results of national qualifications. The committee considered the Draft Budget for 2015 – 16 through scrutiny of spending in primary and secondary schools and began their work on Science education. The committee met with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People to consider his annual report and closed Petition PE1470. The committee considered a range of subordinate legislation concerning school closure legislation, teacher's pensions and looked after children. The committee considered their work programme in private at their meeting on the 18th November and agreed their approach to specific items at the following meeting on 25th November.

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE: NATIONAL QUALIFICATION

The committee returned to Curriculum for Excellence at their meeting on the 30th September 2014 where they considered the implementation of the first exam diet of the new qualifications. The papers for this meeting included written submissions from all those giving oral evidence, plus written submissions from:

The Scottish Parent Teacher Council, Scottish Youth Parliament and Youthlink Scotland (EC/S4/14/22/1). They took further evidence at their next meeting on the 7th October when the committee considered two further written submissions; from the National Parent Forum of Scotland and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (EC/S4/14/23/1).

Date of Committee	Witnesses
30 September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terry Lanagan, <i>Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)</i> • Graeme Logan, <i>Education Scotland (ES)</i> • Larry Flanagan, <i>Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)</i> • Ken Muir, <i>The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)</i> • Jane Peckham, <i>National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)</i> • Dr Janet Brown, <i>Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)</i> • Richard Goring, <i>Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)</i>
7 October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Russell, <i>Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Scottish Government</i> • Bill Maxwell, <i>Education Scotland</i> • Fiona Robertson, <i>Scottish Government</i>

The Convener opened the discussion by asking witnesses for their opinion about the national examinations. Terry Lanagan responded first noting the successes but also that Scotland was, 'some distance' from, 'developing a truly progressive, coherent three-to-18 curriculum' (Lanagan 30.09.15, Col 3). Other members of the panel commented on workload issues for teachers in connection with the new qualifications and the need to match the broad general education phase with the senior phase of the curriculum. The meeting went on to discuss communications with teachers, the support offered to teachers to implement the first examinations. Graeme Logan referred the committee to the written submission from ES where an example from the sciences is used to illustrate, 'the extent of the support that is available, as well as web-based materials, local meetings, and joint events with professional associations and the SQA' (Logan, 30.09.14, Col 14). Richard Goring responded that evidence from the SSTA questionnaires suggested that:

Teachers are not happy with the way things are and feel that they need or support; they need more examples and things to look at on which they can model their own practice, (Goring, 30.09.14. Col 16).

Janet Brown responded to that the SQA had provided 'good support' and that it would, 'be more easily accessible' to teachers in the future (Brown, 30.09.14, Col 17). Larry Flanagan challenged this and agreed that in the amount of materials produced for 3- 18 there was a considerable amount of resources, but suggested that:

. . . if you look back at the resources that were devoted to other developments, such as standard grade, which concerned a two-year course in S3 and S4, and even higher still, which was about a fairly narrow range of qualifications, you can see that, proportionally, the resource allocation for curriculum for excellence does not deserve the accolade that it has been given (Flanagan, 30.9.14, Col 19).

The meeting then discussed the report of the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board's short-life working group; with 36 short-term actions and 19 long-term actions. Mary Scanlon then asked a series of questions about piloting and implementation. In his reply to these Ken Muir noted that there were no pilots in the curriculum because, ' we are trying to get a notion of seamless learning throughout the whole of primary and secondary education' (Muir, 30.09.14, Col 29). Neil Bibby then asked a question about the voice of teachers in the development. Larry Flanagan responded that there were a number of ways in which the professional associations could present the views of their members. He then talked about the gaps between national policy and local discussions:

We have a body of evidence that we will take to the tackling bureaucracy working group, which will reconvene shortly under the convenership of Alasdair Allan, the schools minister, on how working time agreements and school improvement plans have to assess realistically the amount work that is required (Flanagan, 30.09.14, Col 34).

Committee members then asked about the differences between schools in the implementation of the new higher exams, with a number of schools offering a mixture of old and new qualifications. The meeting concluded with a discussion about the Wood Commission and implication of those recommendations for the senior phase of school education.

The Cabinet Secretary reviewed the development of Curriculum for Excellence at the beginning of the meeting on the 7th October, and reminded the committee that he had asked the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to review the impact of the curriculum in 2015. The meeting then considered the issue of communication with teachers and parents, and the 'culture change' (MacDonald, 07.10.14, Col 7) required to support the curriculum. In his reply Michael Russell referred to education in Finland and Ontario and the need for a, 'long-term approach to educational policy' (Russell, 07.10.14, Col 7). Bill Maxwell then added information about Teaching Scotland's Future (Donaldson, 2010) which he cited as, 'building teacher professionalism but also about strengthening leadership' (Maxwell, 07.10.14, Col 9). Colin Beattie then asked about additional workload for teachers from the new assessment structure. In response Michael Russell repeated remarks he had made in 2013, 'if we trust teachers to teach, there should be a reduction in workload, particularly regarding the unnecessary bureaucracy in the system' (Russell, 07.10.14, Col 9). Neil Bibby then quoted the Royal Society of Edinburgh, "who said that there has been, 'a lack

of a systematic strategy' for the implementation of curriculum for excellence" (Bibby, 07.10.14, Col 15). The Cabinet Secretary suggested that the Royal Society could discuss that point with the OECD review group. The meeting then considered subject choice in secondary and the way in which interdisciplinary learning had been implemented in schools. The Cabinet Secretary provided supplementary information in response to questions raised at this meeting through a letter about Employer Engagement in Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish Studies and Career pathways information on the 17th November 2014. This was followed with further information from the new Cabinet Secretary for Education, Angela Constance on the 28th November 2014. This correspondence is filed with the committee papers for the meeting on the 7th October 2014.

DRAFT BUDGET 2015 - 16

The committee discussed the draft budget 2015 – 16 in private at their meeting on 30th September 2014. At that meeting they agreed to focus their scrutiny of the budget on spending in primary and secondary schools. They took evidence at the following meeting on 4th November 2014: with written submissions from all those providing oral evidence (EC/S4/14/25/1) and a SPICe Briefing paper (EC/S4/14/25/2). The committee conclude taking evidence at their meeting on the 11th November 2014 and agreed to consider their draft report on the Draft Budge 2015 -16 in private at future meetings. The supporting papers for the meeting on the 11th November included submissions from the organisations represented on the panel and supplementary reports, tabled at a later date from ADES, COSLA and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. The committee discussed the Draft Budget in private at their meeting on the 18th November and considered a draft report at their meeting on the 25th November 2014. At that meeting they agreed changes to the report and delegated to the Convener the responsibility to finalise the draft for publication.

Date of Committee	Witnesses
4 November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iain Ellis, <i>National Parent Forum of Scotland</i> • Eileen Prior, <i>Scottish Parent Teacher Council</i> • Louise Cameron, <i>Scottish Youth Parliament</i> • Susan Hunter, <i>Youthlink Scotland</i>
4 November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larry Flanagan, <i>Educational Institute of Scotland</i> • Jane Peckham, <i>National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers</i> • Jim Thewliss, <i>School Leaders Scotland</i> • Fiona Dalziel, <i>Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association</i>
11 November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Stodter, <i>ADES</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Douglas Chapman and Robert Nicol, <i>Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Russell, <i>Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Scottish Government</i> • Derek Mackay, Fiona Robertson and Bill Stitt, <i>Scottish Government</i>

The meeting on the 30th September opened with a question from Mary Scanlon about the budgetary pressures schools and how they were affecting pupils' education. In reply Iain Ellis talked about the need for materials for the new highers, and books being shared between three children. Eileen Prior then added, 'We are supposed to have a system of education that is free at the point of delivery' (Prior 04.11.14, Col 4). Gordon MacDonald then asked a series of questions about attainment before the discussion moved on to discuss the difference in spending on education between local authorities. Eileen Prior argued for more authority for Headteachers to act on their own budgets and Louise Cameron for the involvement of young people. George Adam then asked how communication with parents and young people could be improved. Iain Ellis replied with a number of examples of ways, 'to engage in early dialogue' (Ellis 04.11.14, Col 15). Liam McArthur then asked about the National Performance Framework (NPF) and Eileen Prior replied, 'Parents are not aware of what NPF means, or how it impacts on the way in which services are delivered' (Prior, 04.11.14, Col 23). Neil Bibby followed this with a question about the Scottish Government improving communication about the draft budget. In response Eileen Prior said:

In our submission, we point out that the budget is largely inaccessible. The information in it is opaque—it will not get through to the average parent, and it is simply not understandable to most people. I know, because I struggled with it (Prior, 04.11.14, Col 25).

The committee then asked the same questions of a second panel of witnesses. In reply to Mary Scanlon they commented on the differences between authorities, the challenges faced by teaching staff and school leaders. Jim Thewlis suggested there was a need to consider funding and staffing formulas in a way, 'that lets local authorities and schools better meet the needs of their own pupils' (Thewlis, 04.11.14, Col 39). George Adam followed this with a question about shared services, to which Larry Flanagan replied that there had been 'poor progress' (Flanagan, 04.11.14, Col 40), particularly where councils were led by different political parties. The meeting then discussed the challenges faced by those holding leadership roles in schools and the reduced availability of supply staff for schools. Colin Beattie then asked about the extent to which the Scottish Government should, 'intervene at local level in schools?' (Beattie, 04.11.14, Col 43). Larry Flanagan replied that the EIS thought that local councils were, 'a key part of the decision making process' (Flanagan, 04.11.14, Col 44). Jim Thewlis supported the role of the local authority in making decisions for their communities. The meeting considered the use of ring-fenced funds and the role of the Scottish Negotiating

Committee for Teachers. Liam McArthur then asked the panel to recommend areas for the Scottish Government to focus on. In reply Larry Flanagan talked about the decision making process in relation to budgets and concluded:

There are projects on the go in Scottish education that are worthwhile, but we have to ask whether they are realisable. For example, nobody has any real disagreement with the 1+2 language initiative, but has it got any chance of succeeding in the next five to 10 years? Absolutely not. The level of resource that is required to turn that into a reality flies in the face of the discussion that we are having about the context in which Scottish schools operate (Flanagan, 04.11.14, Col 50).

The committee met with representatives of ADES and COSLA at their next meeting on the 11th November 2014. In response to a question from Jayne Baxter about expected cuts, John Stodter said, 'Not a single budget in the education service is not being considered somewhere for a potential reduction' (Stodter, 11.11.14, Col 3). Douglas Chapman added, 'Ultimately, each local authority needs to come to a conclusion about what savings will look like' (Chapman, 11.11.14, Col 3). The meeting then considered the ways in which Directors of Education were asked to plan for budget reductions and the way in which national decisions were acted on locally. Neil Bibby then asked about the likely impact of either a decrease or increase in teacher numbers. John Stodter replied that with reduced teacher numbers there would be larger classes in primary schools and reduced subject choice in secondary, beyond broad general education. Robert Nicol added that the panel should remember that it was not just teacher numbers which had an effect on education. Liam McArthur asked about the possibility or sanctions for a local authority which did not maintain teacher numbers and Robert Nicol responded that there was, 'any clear argument for sanctions' (Nicol, 11.11.14, Col 13), as councils tried to invest in education in other ways. Mary Scanlon then asked how she as a committee member could, 'know that you are cutting back in the right places and that that will lead to better outcomes?' (Scanlon, 11.11.14, Col 18). In reply Robert Nicol talked about the local scrutiny of budgets and the responsibilities of local education authorities. Clare Adamson then asked about the role of the NPF, and John Stodter said that the framework, 'had encouraged local authorities to look in a much more focused way at what we are producing as a result of the investment in education' (Stodter, 11.11.14, Col 20). He concluded his remarks by reminding the committee to separate national high-level outcomes, 'and the detailed operation day-to-day progress tracking of teachers' (Stodter, 11.11.14, Col 21).

The second panel of witnesses on the 11th November included the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, the Minister for Local Government and Scottish Government officials. The Convener invited the Cabinet Secretary to make an opening statement. In this Michael Russell listed the progress made in education since 2007 and outlined the Scottish Government aim of 'closing the attainment gap and creating greater equity' (Russell, 11.11.14, Col 23). Jayne Baxter asked the Cabinet Secretary directly if he expected to see 'significant cuts to local authorities' school budgets in 2015 -16?' (Baxter, 11.11.14, Col 25). Michael Russell answered no, and went on to outline an increase in funding from the Scottish Government to local authorities for 2015-16. Derek Mackay then reminded the committee:

On average, approximately 40 per cent of total budgeted net revenue expenditure by local government is on education, in large measure due to staffing costs. You have to consider the education budget in the context of the overall financial picture. If there were no reductions at all in the education budget, you can imagine the impact that that would have on other services (Mackay, 11.11.14, Col 27).

Neil Bibby then asked Michael Russell about his commitment to maintain teacher numbers. In his reply the Cabinet Secretary talked about the resource the Scottish Government had provided to maintain teacher numbers. Neil Bibby and Michael Russell then debated the availability of funding to support current teacher numbers before the Convener intervened and moved the discussion onto the issues of sanctions for local authorities, should they not maintain teacher numbers. The meeting then considered the lack of correlation between spending and outcomes in education and the NPF.

SCIENCE

The committee held their first evidence session in a series focusing on science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) at their meeting on 27 January 2015. The session focused on barriers to pupils studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) at school, college and universities and the extent to which employers' STEM skills needs were being met by schools, colleges and universities. Paper for this meeting included the Report of the Learned Societies' Group on the resourcing of science in Scottish schools (EC/S4/15/2/2).

Date of Committee	Witnesses
27 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Sally Brown, <i>Learned Societies' Group</i> • Stuart Farmer, <i>Institute of Physics and the Association for Science Education</i> • Bill Beveridge, <i>Royal Society of Chemistry</i> • Liz Lakin, <i>Council of the Society of Biology</i> • Kate Farrell, <i>Computing at School Scotland, Learned Societies' Group</i>

The meeting on the 27th January began with a question from Chic Brodie about the way in which each society promoted careers in STEM subjects to parents. In reply Bill Beveridge talked about an initiative the Royal Society of Chemistry was funding, 'speaking not just to the audiences we traditionally speak to, such as school pupils, but to the families' (Beveridge, 27.01.15, Col 5). Mark Griffin then asked about the number of schools sampled in the survey carried out by the Learned Societies' Group. Stuart Farmer replied for the group; 'the sample is small, but the findings from it bear remarkable comparison with the study that was done between 2001 and 2003' (Farmer, 27.01.15, Col 6). Colin Beattie followed this with a question about the groups' recommendation for additional resources to be available for STEM subjects. Stuart Farmer said that this was in response to information in the survey that teachers demonstrated experiments to class, 'because there is a shortage of equipment' (Farmer, 27.01.15, Col 8). This was

supported by Liz Lakin, who added, ‘there is evidence from across the UK that science students are coming into employment and higher education without (the) fully developed skills’ (Lakin, 27.01.15, Col 10). The meeting then considered the data available from higher and advanced higher passes in STEM subjects to 2014. Bill Beveridge expressed the concern of the Learned Societies’ Group that in 2015, for the group of young people who had followed curriculum for excellence, that there would be a drop in passes, ‘of almost 9 per cent for biology and chemistry [and] a little less for physics’ (Beveridge, 27.01.15, Col 12). The meeting then spent some time considering the reduction in the number of computing teachers in schools. Kate Farrell quoted data from surveys carried out by the Learned Societies’ Group in 2012 and 2014 which indicated, ‘that 12 percent of our secondary schools in Scotland do not have a computing teacher at all’ (Farrell, 27.01.15, Col 15). She ended with a plea to the committee to recognise the position Scotland held in relation to computing teachers:

We are one of the few countries in the world that asks its computing teachers to have a degree in computing. We have had that for a long time now. We are one of the few nations that provides teacher training in computing. We are one of the few countries in the world with a curriculum for computing at primary level. I really hope that we do not squander that and that we build on it (Farrell, 27.01.15, Col 17).

Liam McArthur then asked the evidence the group had gathered in relation to the ‘roll-out’ of curriculum for excellence for STEM subjects. In reply Professor Brown said that they had not collected data relating to that, but that the Learned Societies’ Group was aware of, ‘concerns from a number of different sources, including parents and teachers’, (Brown, 27.01.15, Col 19) and hoped that the Government would begin to address these areas of concern. The meeting then considered a number of initiatives being run by the various societies represented on the panel to develop the links between education and industry through STEM subjects. The meeting then turned to discuss the teaching and funding of science in primary schools. Gordon MacDonald asked in particular about the funding of safely equipment and Stuart Farmer replied that the survey data indicated that was a problem in some schools. The meeting then considered Government funding of SERCC (Scottish Schools Education Research Centre) to provide support for primary teachers in science. Stuart Farmer explained the operation of the project and the way that clusters of primary schools in 15 of the 32 local authorities took part. The evidence session ended with series of questions from Mary Scanlon about the comparative spend per pupil for science between Scotland and England.

SCOTLANDS’S COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: ANNUAL REPORT

Tam Baillie, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) attended the committee meeting on the 28 October 2014 to present his annual report on his work as Commissioner during 2013 -14. In his opening remarks Tam Baillie talked about a culture change in schools, ‘in relation to children’s rights and the curriculum’ (Baillie, 28.10.14, Col 2). He noted that 40% of schools were engaged in the rights respecting schools programme; the publication of *7 Golden Rules for Participation* (SCCYP, 2014) and the Government response to their

report on the impact of poverty on education. The committee asked a series of questions about the impact of the work of SCCYP and the role of the commissioner in supporting children and young people in relation to their rights.

PETITIONS

The committee considered PE1470 (EC/S4/15/2/1) at their meeting on the 27th January 2015. This petition was made by Lauren King, on behalf of the Scottish Youth Parliament, and called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish a Young Carer's Grant for carers in full-time education or under the age of 18. The committee congratulated the petitioner and the Youth Parliament on the outcomes of their efforts and agreed to close the petition.

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

The Committee took evidence on the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2015 [draft] S4M-12017 and Secure Accommodation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2015 [draft] S4M-12018. After debate, the committee approved the instruments.

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

- Teachers' Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014/217)
- Convener of the School Closure Review Panels (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014/262)
- Members of a School Closure Review Panel (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014/263)
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Order of Council 2014 (SSI 2014/268).
- Teachers' Pension Scheme (Scotland) (No 2) Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014 292)
- Looked After Children (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014/310)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Ancillary Provision) (No 2) Order 2014 (SSI 2014/315)
- Education (Disapplication of section 53B) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (SSI 2014/318).

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