

A Governance Review

General Questions

1. *What are the strengths of the current governance arrangements of Scottish education?*
2. *What are the barriers within the current governance arrangements to achieving the vision of excellence and equality for all?*
3. *We consider the following key principles should also underpin our approach. Should the above key principles underpin our approach to reform? Are there other principles that should be applied? Our education system must:*
 - *be focused on improving outcomes, and support the delivery of excellence/equity for children/young people;*
 - *meet the needs of all of our children and young people, no matter where they live or their family circumstances;*
 - *support and empower children/young people, parents, teachers, practitioners and communities;*
 - *be supported by a simple and transparent funding system to ensure the maximum public benefit and best value for money; and*
 - *support children/young people to make smooth transitions into formal learning, through school and into further education, training or employment.*

Empowering teachers, practitioners, parents, schools and communities

4. *What changes to governance arrangements are required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level?*
 - free Head Teacher time from having to sort out arrangements related to school maintenance and cumbersome recruitment admin system
 - reduce the paperwork required from teachers and stop changing the assessment methods, especially at primary, so that teachers can get on with teaching
5. *What services and support should be delivered by schools? What responsibilities should be devolved to teachers and head teachers to enable this? You may wish to provide examples of decisions currently taken by teachers or Head Teachers and decisions which cannot currently be made at school level.*
 - teaching, education and subject choices – this should be a strategy that schools have the autonomy to design to suit their pupils and circumstances (rather than being imposed due to budget cuts and opportune redundancy);
 - staff contracts should be centrally retained otherwise schools would find it hard to cover long term sick leave and maternity cover;
 - schools with their local knowledge should have a bigger say in how many support staff are required (rather than rely on staffing formula) and which pupils require additional support due to deprivation (rather than postcode and free school meal allocation only);
 - Schools should be able to manage their own energy budgets to incentivise energy savings. Janitors could be trained in this and the operation of Building Management Systems. Where there are shared supplies currently, Energy and Water consumption of HighLife Highland facilities should be measured in a similar way to the monitoring of the incoming power and/or water to the shared mains supplies. HLH should pay for their own energy and water bills (massive if there is a swimming pool in the school) as the school pays for all Highlife Highland usage and has no control over wastage.

Subsidy for using biomass should go to school not the Council, as biomass fuel can be more expensive than oil to use;

6. *How can children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others play a stronger role in school life? What actions should be taken to support this?*
 - use parent volunteers to support sports clubs and school trips where possible;
 - give parent councils a more formal role in school decision making and this would encourage engagement, but be realistic about day time availability as most parents work full time and are happy to leave decisions about their children's education to professional teachers;
 - encourage employers to link with schools via Chamber of Commerce to set standards and have easy access to work placements;
7. *How can the governance arrangements support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas?*
 - ensure community facility access
 - more formal recognition of pupil wider achievement skills and successes - SQA exam results are currently the dominant measure of attainment, yet ethos of Curriculum for Excellence demands much more.

Strengthening' the middle' – how teachers, practitioners, schools and other local and regional partners work together to deliver education

8. *How can effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners be further encouraged and incentivised ?*
 - currently sharing good practise is limited by resources and time especially in such a geographically dispersed area as Highland;
 - give teachers more non-contact time to allow collaboration;
 - teacher collaboration should count as CPD;
 - ensure robust and secure broadband connection across all schools.
9. *What services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners?*
 - head teachers and principal teachers should be well supported and allowed time to share ideas and resources;
 - procurement contracts , getting better deals locally and giving admin staff more responsibility;
 - daily overseeing and maintaining energy systems could be done more efficiently by a specially trained and enhanced janitor role working over the ASG, as currently 2 Council energy officers struggle to adequately service all Highland schools;
 - DYW using Chamber of Commerce for career's events, employment induction and work placements;
 - interschool sports events and shared transport;
 - extracurricular music and Arts events and shared transport;
 - gaelic medium education;
 - rural skills courses linked to UHI or other colleges;
 - subject-related field trips;
 - sustainability models (2.7 of HGIOS4).

10. *What services or functions are best delivered at a regional level? This may include functions or services currently delivered at a local or a national level.*
- quality improvement, curriculum development and collaborative working initiatives;
 - marketing to get more teachers, head teachers and supply staff up to Highland;
 - any services or functions put in place at a council or regional level needs schools to have the power and flexibility to apply them locally – should be a bottom up system where any council or regional function responds to school needs.
11. *What factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions*
- the Highlands has unique circumstances of rurality with small remote schools;
 - the logistical geographic size of the region needs to be realistic – could staff at a regional base realistically cover an area the size of the northern alliance; local knowledge is fundamental to getting it right at the school level.

A clear national framework and building capacity in education

12. *What services or support functions should be delivered at a national level?*
- more clarity on curriculum in Scotland. For example how many subjects pupils can take at S4 – the present system allows anything from 6 to 8 subjects which is inequitable education across Scotland.
 - the SQA and method of course assessments S4-6 requiring so much teacher time requires simplifying.
 - inspections, but some of the HGIOS4 quality indicators are totally beyond capacity of schools as they are currently funded, for example:
 - 1.1 all parents are fully involved in improving the life and work of the school;
 - 2.5 the need for schools to provide learning for parents and families (reality is schools struggle to have enough teachers and supply staff to cover basic school classes !);
 - 2.7 the school understands and plays a significant role in the local community and the parent council is representative of all parents/ carers and their social, economic and cultural backgrounds... (reality is parental engagement is very low and we have no choice which parents volunteer their time)
13. *How should governance support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity we need?*
- provide more resources and time for shared good practise between schools and regions
 - provide structured IT training and/or help line for all teachers and school staff

Fair funding – learner-centred funding

14. *Should the funding formula for schools be guided by the principles that it should support excellence and equity, be fair, simple transparent, predictable and deliver value for money? Should other principles be used to inform the design of the formula?*
- the funding formula and the staffing formula penalises Highland which has a large number of remote and rural and small schools;
 - the ASN formula doesn't cover individual pupil needs and individual school needs;
 - cuts to staffing end up being opportune rather than strategic,

15. *What further controls over funding should be devolved to the school level?*

-currently, bidding and short-term funding for special measures – a few months at a time – makes it hard to plan strategically, would be better to let schools have a bigger block of money, up front

Accountability

16. *How could the accountability arrangements for education be improved?*

-Education Scotland is both judge and jury; it develops the curriculum and inspects it and this has led to lack of trust;

-somehow ensure a greater consistency across the standard of teaching and leadership.

17. *Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the governance of education in Scotland?*

Many schools and parent councils struggle to increase parental engagement. With low numbers and poor representation there is a real danger that minority interest groups can have undue influence. If the government is serious about devolving more educational responsibility to parents then schools and parent councils need professional 'quality improvement' help in ensuring that parental input is representative and democratic.

Installing fast broadband connections to every corner of Scotland is fundamental to securing educational equality to all 'no matter where they live'. This is basic national infrastructure for all sectors that should be future proof and not be left solely to school IT contractors to deliver.