



Empowering Schools A Consultation on the provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
 No

Question 1

The Headteachers' Charter will empower headteachers as the leaders of learning and teaching and as the lead decision maker in how the curriculum is designed and provided in their schools. What further improvements would you suggest to enable headteachers to fulfil this empowered role?

Why do we need Regional Improvement Plans? It would be more straight forward and equitable for education across Scotland for all Head Teachers to be working from the same National Improvement Framework, rather than have a Head Teachers Charter working differently in the 7 different regions.

We do not agree that it Head Teachers should have a legal duty to collaborate with neighbouring schools. We believe that any notion of legal duty should be removed and replaced with '*collaborations with neighbouring schools should be encouraged and recognised in school inspections*'.

Question 2

The Headteachers' Charter will empower headteachers to develop their school improvement plans collaboratively with their school community. What improvements could be made to this approach?

Genuine engagement requires genuine language and we ask that School Improvements are written in plain English that staff, parents and pupils can easily relate to and understand.

Question 3

The Charter will set out the primacy of the school improvement plan. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

The School Improvement Plan has the advantage of being a reference document for all partners in school education and it is important that it is readable, without jargon and corporate speak in easily accessible language. The potential disadvantage is lack of ownership, not knowing who is it written for and ending up with a document full of jargon that no one understands or wants to read. Is a School Improvement Plan written for Government, the Region, the Council, or the school? It should be accessible to all parents.

Question 4

The Headteachers' Charter will set out the freedoms which headteachers should

have in relation to staffing decisions.

- a. What are the advantages and disadvantages of headteachers being able to have greater input into recruitment exercises and processes adopted by their local authority?

Head Teachers will be able to recruit teachers best suited to their school staffing and curriculum needs and to choose a management structure that works for their school circumstances. Head Teachers will also have the advantage of being able to manage their janitor staff again, re-integrating them as central to the school staffing, instead of having the changed system in Highland where janitors are line managed by 'Development and Infra-Structure department at the Council, which has no knowledge of the circumstances and needs of individual schools.

- b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of headteachers' ability to choose their teams and decide on the promoted post structure within their schools?

The potential disadvantages of this approach to staffing may be a lack of accountability and there should be a clear complaints procedure in place for school communities that are not happy with their Head Teacher.

Question 5

Should headteachers be able to decide how the funding allocated to their schools for the delivery of school education is spent? If so, what is the best way of doing this?

Yes definitely, Head Teachers know what is needed in their school and should be allowed to allocate funds. They should also be allowed to keep all savings from a year and carry over, rather than just the 3% currently. Head Teachers should be allowed to produce a 5 year plan that would accommodate fluctuations in pupil numbers and allow schools to retain teachers if they can afford it. Losing valuable staff who have considerable expertise or whom a school has invested in in training etc. due to inflexible financial constraints is frustrating and in the long term, not cost effective.

Question 6

How could local authorities increase transparency and best involve headteachers and school communities in education spending decisions?

By being transparent and communicating their spending decisions to Head Teachers for dissemination to school communities.

Question 7

What types of support and professional learning would be valuable to headteachers in preparing to take up the new powers and duties to be set out in the Headteachers' Charter?

It all depends what is in the Head Teachers Charter. Feedback from Head Teachers experience of carrying out the HT Charter should be compiled and fed up in a bottom up approach. This would be more effective than a top down pressure to conform along one particular route. This approach would also demonstrate a respect for the knowledge and understanding of any frustrations or difficulties which may become evident from applying the Charter on a day to day basis in individual schools.

Question 8

Are the broad areas for reform to the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 correct?

We do not agree that communicating with the wider parent forum and working in a collaborative way with Parent Councils should be made a legal duty on Head Teachers. Nor should it be a legal duty to enforce the engagement of 'parents who find it challenging to engage in their children's learning'. We believe that any notion of legal duty linked to collaborations with parents and Parent Councils should be removed.

Parental engagement has to be on a voluntary basis. No engagement is ever 100%. We do not agree that the Government can place any legal duties on Parent Councils that comprise volunteers. Any legal definition of parental involvement in learning will be impossible to enforce, even before expanding it to include learning in the home and family learning.

We struggle to recruit Parent Council members and despite years of trying our parental engagement is very low. We are seriously concerned that the additional responsibilities placed on Parent Councils will prevent even the few volunteers we do have participating. It is our opinion that engaging parents fully will require a fulltime parental participation officer in every school.

Question 9

How should the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 be enhanced to ensure meaningful consultation by headteachers with parents on substantive matters of school policy, improvement planning and curriculum design?

Consultation is only possible if parents are willing to engage. However, to facilitate engagement with substantive matters it should be presented in language which is readily accessible to all.

Question 10

Should the duties and powers in relation to parental involvement apply to publicly funded early learning and childcare settings?

Yes definitely, as parental engagement has been shown to be most beneficial in the early learning years, 0-3. Basic educational principles should be seamless through till 18.

Question 11

Should the Bill include a requirement that all schools in Scotland pursue the principles of pupil participation set out in Chapter 3? Should this be included in the Headteachers' Charter?

Yes, pupil engagement and participation in educational decision making is essential. Pupils should have a say in their own futures and not only a Pupil Council structure. Facilitators should be in place at school to allow effective pupil contribution to happen.

Question 12

What are your thoughts on the proposal to create a general duty to support pupil participation, rather than specific duties to create Pupil Councils, committees etc...?

Yes there should be encouragement to support pupil participation with a basic structure and format in place that allows this. Removing specific duties allows schools to be imaginative and creative in their approach to pupil participation. Perhaps it should be monitored to ensure that changing the status of this duty from specific to general does not mean that the place of pupil participation in schools is lost. However, making it a legal duty is unrealistic as participation can only ever be given as a choice to pupils and cannot be made compulsory.

Question 13

Should the Bill include provisions requiring each local authority to collaborate with partner councils and with Education Scotland in a Regional Improvement Collaborative?

Collaborating with partner Councils holds the promise of sharing expertise, support and challenge with the possibility of improving the whole system.

Question 14

Should the Bill require each Regional Improvement Collaborative to maintain and to publish annually its Regional Improvement Plan?

The National Improvement Framework should be a public document and we do not see the need for Regional Improvement Plans which we are concerned could lead to inequality in education across Scotland.

Question 15

If we require Regional Improvement Collaboratives to report on their achievements (replacing individual local authority reports), should they be required to report annually? Would less frequent reporting (e.g. every two years) be a more practical and effective approach?

Yes definitely, a 2 or preferably 3 year cycle of School Improvement Planning, utterly aligned in timing with National Improvement Framework guidelines would be more practical allowing time to actually carry out the recommendations. In our Head Teacher's experience, School Improvement Plans take at least 6 months to write and that leaves little time for change before the next one is due for writing.

Question 16

In making changes to the existing planning and reporting cycle, should we consider reducing the frequency of national improvement planning and the requirement on Ministers to review the National Improvement Framework?

Yes, reduce frequency of reviewing National Improvement Framework to 2 or preferably 3 years and have School Improvement Plans aligned with this.

Question 17

Are the proposed purpose and aims of the Education Workforce Council for Scotland appropriate?

Yes, and we welcome the inclusion of guidelines and recognition for the work that PSAs do.

Question 18

What other purpose and aims might you suggest for the proposed Education Workforce Council for Scotland?

Question 19

Are the proposed functions of the Education Workforce Council for Scotland appropriate?

Question 20

What other functions might you suggest for the proposed Education Workforce Council for Scotland?

We would like to see the centralised data of the Performance Ratings document used during School Inspections shared with Head Teachers. The Head Teachers Charter could include a clause that compels them to use data in a professional manner. This would allow Head Teachers to use centralised data as a calibration tool and via the Regional Improvement Collaborative to contact schools who demonstrate better practise for advice.

Question 21

Which education professionals should be subject to mandatory registration with the proposed Education Workforce Council for Scotland?

Of course teachers but also in time support staff and youth workers.

Question 22

Should the Education Workforce Council for Scotland be required to consult on the fees it charges for registration?

Question 23

Which principles should be used in the design of the governance arrangements for the proposed Education Workforce Council for Scotland?

Question 24

By what name should the proposed Education Workforce Council for Scotland be known?

“Scottish Educators Council” or “Scottish Education Workforce Council”