

Fair Funding to achieve Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: Outcome of the Midlothian Council Survey

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education, Education, Communities & Economy

1. Purpose of the Report

Further to the Cabinet Report dated 15 August 2017, the purpose of this report is to present to Council the outcome of the Midlothian Council survey in response to the Scottish Government's consultation entitled Education Governance Review – Fair funding to achieve excellence and equity in education. The consultation was launched in June 2017 and closes on 13 October 2017. The full Midlothian Council Survey response is filed in appendix 2.

2. Background

2.1 Introduction

On 13 September 2016, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on Education Governance called *Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review*. The consultation closed on 6 January 2017 and a full copy of the Midlothian Council response was approved by Council on 20 December 2016.

In June 2017, the Scottish Government published the outcome of this national consultation in their report entitled Education Governance: Next Steps. In the same month the Scottish Government also launched the fair funding consultation and a copy of this is filed in appendix 1.

This consultation invites views on: the way school education is currently funded in Scotland, including early year's provision within school settings; the purpose of developing a new, more consistent approach to school funding; and the principles that should underpin any changes. It also sets out and seeks views on possible future funding approaches to support our vision of excellence and equity for all children and young people across Scottish education.

The Scottish Government are inviting responses to this consultation by **Friday 13 October 2017**. Individuals can respond using the Scottish Government's consultation platform, Citizen Space. You can view and respond to the consultation online at: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/empowering-schools/education-governancefair-funding>.

Appendix 2 contains the outcome of the Midlothian Council survey which, if approved, will be submitted to the Scottish Government.

2.2 The outcome of the Midlothian Council Survey

In total 122 responses were received as follows:

- 1.64% of respondents were learners,
- 52.46% of respondents were parents/carers;
- 35.25% of respondents were members of staff;
- 10.66% of respondents were replying as a group e.g. Parent Council or school.

It should also be noted that separate responses will also be submitted by a range of other bodies including SOLACE, COSLA, ADES, the individual Trade Unions and Religious Representatives.

Overall respondents reported that they did not understand some of the questions posed by the Scottish Government particularly when using more technical language e.g. devolved school management. This was similar to the previous report on the Governance Review which was presented to Council in December 2016 where we reported a number of concerns about the lack of detail stated in the consultation document which makes it challenging to answer the large number of open questions contained within the national survey. Therefore Midlothian, as part of their response, requests more detail and clarity on what is actually being proposed. Overall, this lack of detail in the consultation document and the complex open questions may have resulted in a low response rate to both the Midlothian consultation and consequently may be the same in terms of response rate to the national survey. It should be noted that more respondents started the questionnaire than fully completed the questionnaire with some answers stated as 'Don't know' or simply a question mark.

Another key theme in the responses was related to lack of funding or 'not enough funding' from the Scottish Government and reference was also drawn to the need for training in finance, budgeting and staffing in order to ensure that Head Teachers had the skills to undertake additional duties. However concern was also raised about the important role that Head Teachers undertake as leaders of learning and that, if new powers were devolved to Head Teachers, there would be a requirement for Business Managers or additional administrative support to assist at school level.

3. Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The launch of the Fair Funding Review in June 2017 alongside this Education Governance report examines the system changes required to deliver future funding to empower schools, decentralise management and the support through the encouragement of school clusters and creation of new educational regions and will implement any proposals arising from the Governance and Parental Involvement reviews at the earliest opportunity. In particular the Scottish Government will support the development and expansion of school clusters and increased regional working throughout 2017-18 as published in the Governance Review: Next Steps in June 2017.

3.2 Risk

The previous Cabinet report dated 11 October 2016, highlighted the following risks: we welcome the relentless focus on closing the attainment gap in Education but we recognise that this requires a total Midlothian approach; although the delivery plan clearly states in the opening ambition statement that in order to close the attainment gap “our efforts must also extend beyond the classroom and across our communities and wider public services if we are to succeed in our ambition” (2016: 4); the delivery plan then continues with a narrow focus on the school level leavers without recognition of the critical role that other services including the Community Planning Partnerships and the third sector play in supporting education to close the poverty related attainment gap.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

The ambition in the delivery plan to interrupt the cycle of poverty is already clearly embedded in the Single Midlothian Plan – reducing inequalities and is reflected fully in the Education Service Plan.

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

GIRFEC 5: Our people will be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

To close the gap by improving ‘attainment versus deprivation’ and ‘attainment for all’ outcomes for children and young people.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This report aims to take preventative action in order to close the attainment versus deprivation gap by implementing key policies and programmes which are designed to target support to children and young people from disadvantaged communities.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

This report presents the Midlothian Council survey response to the national consultation on Fair funding.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The recommendations in this report should continue to promote equity of attainment for disadvantaged children and support the steps being taken towards narrowing the attainment gap by imposing duties on education authorities and the Scottish Ministers in relation to reducing pupils’ inequalities of educational outcome together with a duty to report on progress.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

There are no impacts arising directly from this report.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues to consider within this report.

4 Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- Note the content of the report; and
- Agree that the Midlothian Council consultation response contained in appendix 2 be submitted to the Scottish Government before 13 October 2017.

13 September 2017

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1- Midlothian's Response

Appendix 2- Consultation

Supporting Papers for on-going reviews in Scottish Education:

Scottish Government Consultation: Fair Funding (2017):

<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/empowering-schools/education-governancefair-funding>.

Governance Review: Next Steps: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/2941>

Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000):

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/6/pdfs/asp_20000006_en.pdf

Statutory Guidance: Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000: Scottish Government Consultation: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-performanceunit/statutory-guidance>

Education (Scotland) Act 2016:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/8/pdfs/asp_20160008_en.pdf

Updated guidance on Chapter 3 of the Standards in Scotland Schools Act, August 2016:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/08/5386/4>

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 by the National Parent Forum of Scotland:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/148166/0039411.pdf>

Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: the current landscape

(Scottish Government; September 2016): <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506148.pdf>

Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/empoweringschools/a-governance-review>