

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2016

Report by Director of Education

RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION:
EMPOWERING TEACHERS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES TO ACHIEVE
EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To seek approval from elected members for the proposed Council response to the Scottish Government Consultation *Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education, A Governance Review*.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to comment on and approve the Council's response.

BACKGROUND

3. In September 2016 the Scottish Government published a consultation on the governance of education in Scotland.

4. The consultation document and associated documentation informs stakeholders of the current bodies involved in education operating at a national, local and school level and seeks the views of all those with an interest in education to respond.

5. The consultation period is three months from September 2016 to 6 January 2017.

REPORT

6. To enable the department to reflect the views of East Renfrewshire stakeholders a number of forums were held including:

- Elected members
- A group of Head Teachers
- A group of class teachers, including representation from the LNCT
- Quality Improvement Officers

7. At its usual meeting with Parent Council Chairs, a presentation was made outlining the scope of the consultation and Parent Councils were encouraged to respond. The group decided to respond individually and collectively and as such will do so under separate cover.

8. It was felt that the specific questions set out in the consultative document would not always allow for the broad range of comments and opinions expressed. As such the department will submit the Council's response in answer to Question 17.

9. Views were collated from the meetings held and used to form the response by East Renfrewshire to the consultation, which is included as Appendix One.

CONSULTATION

10. The response reflects the views of East Renfrewshire stakeholders on the strengths of the current system and where there are opportunities to improve.

11. The Scottish Government has engaged and sought feedback from a wide group of stakeholders including ADES and CoSLA.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no financial implications relating to this paper.

RECOMMENDATION

13. Elected members are asked to comment on and approve the Council's response.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
December 2016

Convener Contact Details

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Background Papers

Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education: A Governance Review

East Renfrewshire Council: Education Committee

Response to Scottish Government Consultation

**Empowering Teacher, Parents and Communities to Achieve
Excellence and Equity in Education**

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper is submitted to the Scottish Government as East Renfrewshire Council's response to the review of governance of education in Scotland.
2. To make this response the Education Department has consulted with elected members, Head Teachers, officers of the Education Department, teaching staff, including representatives of the LNCT and parents. The response collates the views offered by these groups.
3. We issued papers published by the Scottish Government which outlined how Education in Scotland is run now and explained the role of each of the bodies with a stake in education in the country at present. We asked those consulted to consider what is going well at school, local authority and national levels and what needs to change to improve outcomes for all learners.
4. At a meeting of Parent Council Chairs we outlined the consultation and as a group they agreed to make individual and joint submissions. Some of the views expressed are included in this response.

REPORT

5. All respondees considered the questions set out in the consultation document and agreed that the Council's response should where possible / appropriate use such. As such the response below is headed under the following headings:
 - What is going well in Education in East Renfrewshire and its schools?
 - What needs to change to achieve excellence and equity?
 - Any other comments

What is going well in Education in East Renfrewshire and its schools?

6. Empowerment is a key question of the consultation and as such we sought the views of stakeholders on this issue. Generally respondees stated high levels of satisfaction with the current levels of autonomy, although they recognised that no change was not an option. They did, however, feel that other local authorities and national bodies, including the Scottish Government could learn from the success of education in East Renfrewshire Council.
7. All stakeholders considered a key strength of East Renfrewshire Council is its size, the intimacy of the Council, the involvement of elected members in schools and their support

for education more generally. They commented on the partnership relationships between elected members and officers; elected members and officers with Parent Councils; the officers and Head Teachers.

8. In essence they spoke about a unity of purpose to ensure the needs of all learners are met and particularly those who have barriers to achievement and attainment, whether that is poverty, additional support needs, ethnicity, etc. This was evidenced through the additional resources allocated to schools to tackle the lowest performing 20% of learners and the new staffing structures, based on needs such as poverty, BME, ASN, etc.
9. They described the governance structure in place at present as working very well. They felt the operating model was one of strategic leadership and policy making, clear vision and ambition for all schools, without operational interference, coupled with accessibility, responsive and proportionate support and an investment in leadership.
10. They were very clear that they wanted to retain local levels of accountability at elected member, departmental and individual school levels and saw the governance review as a threat to that. In particular parents saw this as diminution in local accountability.
11. Head Teachers in particular expressed their contentment with the present levels of autonomy. They felt they had devolved decision making in areas such as budget, curriculum design, and matters relating to staffing and securing and using resources to meet the needs of their schools and communities. The department's vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences* gave a very clear sense of direction, but they were clear that how they went about delivering this vision was entirely a devolved matter, although there was also clear lines of accountability through sharing the analysis of attainment data at all levels from 3 – 18 and quality assurance systems in place in the local authority.
12. Class teachers also expressed satisfaction with the current levels of autonomy in schools and classrooms. They feel that they are very well led by Head Teachers with a clear vision, well supported by the education department. They feel empowered to meet the needs of every learner through designing the curriculum and courses, ensuring transitions are of the highest quality at every level, opportunities to share practices and workload with colleagues across the authority and in clusters / school improvement partnerships.
13. They also commented on the partnership working within the LNCT where there was a transparent collegiate approach to matters of mutual concern. They feel supported to improve their skills to secure improvements in outcomes of all learners and feel involved in shaping school improvement plans to bring such to bear.
14. Class teachers also commented positively on the involvement of parents in their children's learning. They recognised that the Council's Early Years and Parenting strategies were having an impact on families and communities in some deprived areas but felt that more could be done to support parents to be more involved in supporting schools and, especially through family learning, could ensure the gaps seen in vocabulary before children start school could be lessened if not eradicated. They noted the role of health staff in supporting this ambition.
15. On a national level Head Teachers commented that HMIE inspections of schools continue to be a strength of the education system in Scotland.

What needs to change to achieve excellence and equity?

16. Collaboration is another key aspect of this review, an area which East Renfrewshire has well established approaches and areas where collaboration can be strengthened.
17. Cluster working is a real strength in East Renfrewshire and has been recognised as such for many years. This has been an approach which has been encouraged and systematically improved and crucial to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. Clusters of associated prefive, primary and associated secondary schools plan improvements together, have an allocation of funding and time in working time agreements which allows joint in-service and CLPL (Career Long Professional Learning) activities to address areas for improvement identified from analysis of attainment across schools. This approach supports transition across sectors through a curriculum map jointly devised to ensure attainment, achievement and experiences are progressive and continuous.
18. Key partners are employers, whose involvement in the curriculum is key to the delivery of *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) and are vital links between schools and their wider communities. There is opportunity for such to be strengthened through regional DWY groups and FE colleges.
19. GIRFEC is a cornerstone of cluster working in East Renfrewshire. Clusters operate Joint Support Teams (JST) at key times of transition across sectors. At present schools are supported by Educational Psychologists on a cluster basis, with allocations based on need across the group of schools, supporting children with additional support needs and schools to raise attainment through collaborative enquiry. Campus Police Officers also work in clusters and support schools both pastorally and through the curriculum, and are also key to supporting links in the community.
20. There are further opportunities to deepen levels of collaboration through the allocation of resources on a cluster level to address the holistic nature of child development and support for families, such as Speech and Language Therapy, Health Visiting, School Nursing and Social Work.
21. School Improvement Partnerships (SIPs) is a more recent development in East Renfrewshire, devised to address the underperformance of groups of learners with similar characteristics, common across a number of schools, e.g. SIMD, ASN, Ethnicity, Gender, etc. Through SIPs, schools and class teachers supported by universities, undertake collaborative enquiry to address underperformance, try new learning and teaching approaches and test these to bring about improvement. In this way, learning and workload can be shared.
22. In responding to the consultation, Head Teachers and class teachers indicated a wish for more opportunities to share practice and learning with neighbouring authorities. There is opportunity to do so through the ADES Inter-Authority Improvement Partnerships. East Renfrewshire sits within the West Partnership (with Glasgow, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire) which has identified a number of areas for collaboration, including raising attainment, moderation of assessment of pupil progress in the BGE (Broad General Education), Early Learning and Childcare, to name a few.
23. Elected members were concerned that East Renfrewshire officers would become less accessible to our own schools through their involvement in the ADES Inter-Authority

Improvement Partnership, and as such, would dilute the offer of support and challenge in the Council area. However, they also recognised that the Council is not an island and there is opportunity for learning from good practices elsewhere.

24. This collaboration is supported by Education Scotland and has had interest from a further four neighbouring local authorities (East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire).
25. Such a regional arrangement would allow further creativity, innovation, professional enquiry, sharing practices and learning and more variety in school improvement partnerships.
26. Officers are considering how this larger region can operate while maintaining local accountability. One way of doing such is to ensure good governance, using the OECD five key components set out on page 5 of the consultative document and the three themes of accountability, capacity building and strategic thinking. Using such to ensure improvement activities within this wider region of collaboration are well planned, visible to and scrutinised by local elected members within each council area, would ensure accountability of officers, schools and local councillors to their electorate, without the need for formal governance structures.
27. Respondee also stated a cautionary note about regionalisation. Because they appreciated the involvement of local members and the size of East Renfrewshire as a key strength, they were sceptical of the impact that a regional body might have. They used the nationalisation of Police Scotland as an example of where a public body had been centralised, but had not been beneficial to both the organisation and its stakeholders.
28. A number of other themes arose from the responses from stakeholders, which may have a bearing on national bodies.
29. Although Head Teachers felt that inspection of schools by Education Scotland was a strength of the current system, they felt that the support / improvement role of this body was not as effective, and certainly not as effective as the local quality improvement team and systems, which were much more responsive and accessible. Class teachers and Head Teachers felt there was duplication and a lack of clear strategy in the system with multiple quality assurance / regulatory bodies operating in isolation from each other, such as HMIE and Care Inspectorate, GTCS and SSSC and felt their respective roles could be streamlined, bringing consistency and efficiency.
30. Comments were also made about the impact of SCEL (Scottish College for Education Leadership) and felt that this was better delivered locally or jointly within the ADES Improvement Partnerships. They saw this as an opportunity to develop leaders and succession plan, especially for Head Teachers of the future.
31. Class teachers and elected members noted the increasing responsibilities and demands on Head Teachers and considered that these were a deterrent on those aspiring to become senior leaders in schools, as did Parent Council chairs. Although they would always want to see more resources allocated to schools, they would not want the key responsibility of Head Teachers as leading learning to be diluted by financial management.
32. In each of these there was consideration of the devolvement of resources from these bodies to ADES Improvement Partnerships to allow for local needs to be addressed,

while HMIE retained their inspection role and held schools and indeed local authorities to account.

33. Accountability of education functions of councils could also be strengthened by the re-introduction of inspection of education authorities (INEA), although it was recognised that this could be proportionate, ie where indicators suggest high performance, schools are being well led by elected members, officers of local authorities and head teachers, there would be no need for a full blown INEA, but close monitoring by Area Lead Officers would suffice. With the involvement of Education Scotland officers in ADES Improvement Partnerships, ALOs would have knowledge of what was being planned and delivered in each local authority, act as critical friends to each collaborative and would be able to look for the impact of actions in school inspections. As these reports are shared at Education Committee in East Renfrewshire Council, this would be a further opportunity for local scrutiny of regional collaboration.
34. The Scottish Qualifications Authority was another body whose functions were considered by stakeholders. Although there was agreement that there needs to be an independent qualifications body to oversee and ensure the veracity, validity and credibility of the examination system in Scotland, there were comments about the assessment regime, a lack of trust in teacher judgements, the amount of and changeable nature of guidance and processes related to the new qualifications. Although there was recognition that some change was imminent, there continued to be a need to keep this under review, especially in the context of teacher workload and the need to reduce bureaucracy.
35. Class teachers feel that the number and pace of new initiatives being introduced by the Scottish Government is having a negative impact on teacher workload. They feel that due to a lack of funding there are fewer people, yet the same expectations and this is having a negative effect on staff and their wellbeing. They also feel that if the National Improvement Framework is to be implemented fully, the current austerity measures would need to be reversed. Parent Councils also commented on the need for further investment in education, and not just in areas of multi deprivation.
36. As indicated above Head Teachers in East Renfrewshire feel that the levels of independent decision making at their disposal at present was sufficient. However, they did comment on the national targets relating to teacher numbers and the restrictions this put on them in terms of using the resources to meet the needs of their learners and communities. They feel this is limiting the range of staff they could deploy to meet the needs of their children and young people.
37. Head Teachers and class teachers commented on workforce planning at a national level and the recruitment and quality of teachers emerging from ITE institutes. Although newly qualified teachers were well versed in professional enquiry, existing school staff felt that many could be more “classroom ready” on a practical level. This suggests there needs to be more collaboration between schools, local authorities and universities. Although there is a partnership approach at present, this needs to be strengthened with perhaps local authorities / inter-authority partnerships taking more of a lead role, procuring the services of universities to do the underpinning knowledge and research on educational theory and allowing schools to do the in-house training of pedagogy.
38. This would support succession planning on a more local level, with student teachers jointly recruited to courses, whether that be PGDE, MEduc, etc, transitioning to NQT and then to full registration. This also has the capability of resolving the recruitment famine in some areas of the country.

39. Although East Renfrewshire Council has continued to support education and its schools financially, comments were made on how Head Teachers would be accountable for any additional direct funding made available to them to close the attainment gap. Questions were asked about whether or not they would be directly accountable to the Scottish Government for any additional funds.

Other Comments

40. Elected members asked whether or not Curriculum for Excellence was leading to improvements in attainment and the skills of young people when they leave school. There was agreement that in East Renfrewshire, CfE was leading to improvement as can be seen by the year on year increases in attainment in the BGE and the Senior Phase and school leaver destinations. Indeed there was agreement that closing the attainment gap and securing excellence and equity had little to do with the governance of the existing system, but given the suggestions outlined above, there is room for further improvement.