

## **International Council of Education Advisers**

### **Minute of first meeting: 31 August – 1 September 2016 (Bute House and Holy Rood RC Secondary School)**

The following Council Members were present:

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP (Chair and attended 31 August only)

Deputy First Minister (Chair: 1 September)

Dr Carol Campbell

Professor Chris Chapman

Professor Graham Donaldson

Jayne-Anne Gadhia (31 August only)

Dr Avis Glaze

Professor Andy Hargreaves

Professor Alma Harris

Dr Pak Tee Ng

Dr Pasi Sahlberg

Dr Allison Skerrett

#### **Also present:**

Paul Johnston, Director General, Learning and Justice, Scottish Government

Fiona Robertson, Director of Learning, Scottish Government

Bill Maxwell, Chief Executive, Education Scotland

Donna Bell (31 August), Deputy Director, Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

Chris Mackie (1 September), Communications Manager, Scottish Government

Lorraine Sanda, Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

#### **Present for items on equity and governance (1 September):**

Clare Hicks, Deputy Director, Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

Audrey MacDougall, Deputy Director, Education Analytical Services, Scottish Government

Graeme Logan, Strategic Director, Education Scotland

#### **Purpose**

This note provides an overview of the key points arising during the first meeting of the International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA). The meeting took place over the afternoons of 31 August and 1 September 2016, and focused on the OECD Review of Scottish Education, closing the attainment gap, and the review of school governance.

### **31 August 2016 (Windygoul Primary School, Tranent and Bute House)**

On the morning of 31 August the Council members accompanied the First Minister to Windygoul Primary School in East Lothian where they met pupils, staff and community representatives. The school shared its work on literacy, numeracy and the National Improvement Framework.

#### Council session 1

The First Minister welcomed members to the first meeting of the ICEA and highlighted the importance of the Council in providing independent scrutiny of her Government's policies and approach, and ensuring that Scottish education was informed by the best international practice. The First Minister saw the Council as building on the OECD Review, which had been instrumental in highlighting where Scotland was doing well and areas where more could be done.

The Deputy First Minister confirmed that he was open to challenge and to confronting issues. He stressed the Government's commitment to making significant progress in the next five years to closing the attainment gap, and to eliminating it within ten years.

#### OECD Review

The First Minister asked Professor Hargreaves to give his reflections on Scotland's education system as informed by his involvement in the OECD Review team.

Professor Hargreaves described Scotland as a bold system, with clear vision and values. He went on to focus on the challenges and recommendations identified by the Review. The Review team found that the narrative of Curriculum for Excellence was not clear enough. The team had found that there were insufficient indicators of progress and that more evidence was necessary to inform whether improvement was being made across the full breadth of the CfE capacities. The importance of a well-run, comprehensive and integrated system of assessment was highlighted in order to avoid the unintended consequences of measurement. The Review team recognised that Scotland was trying to move from a culture of judgement to a system of judgement with accountability and transparency, and clear benchmarking and standards. The approach taken in the National Improvement Framework was to be welcomed.

The OECD Review team had agreed with the focus Scotland placed on equity, recognising the investment in early childhood and in strengthening the role of partners and communities. The focus on deprivation through Scotland's Attainment Challenge, and on encouraging more and better collaboration within and amongst schools, would help in picking up the pace of improvement and change. Encouraging and supporting greater collective autonomy of school leaders and teachers, in partnership with teacher organisations, was vitally important.

## Scottish education

Fiona Robertson and Bill Maxwell provided a brief summary of the current policy and evidence on Scottish education. A supporting background paper (ICEA (16) 01) was provided.

Points made during the following discussion included:

- Endorsement of Curriculum for Excellence with a strong focus on equity as the right approach.
- Both excellence and equity are achievable but looking beyond schools to achieve equity was also important. A 'whole government' approach to tackling issues of equity and social justice was necessary. Schools alone cannot close the attainment gap.
- The need to refresh and re-emphasise the narrative around the values and aims of Curriculum for Excellence. The purpose of developing young people as successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens was felt to be forward thinking and progressive but needed to be communicated to stakeholders and the public more clearly.
- The need to ensure the right balance and range of indicators that would demonstrate whether progress was being made, whilst avoiding perverse incentives. The purpose of any measurement systems should be clearly defined in terms of how they will secure benefits and improvement for children.
- The importance of supporting teachers to reach out to families and to recognising the different contexts for learning for disadvantaged children, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.
- The need to continue developing the vision for Scotland's education system to ensure it equips learners for the future, giving more consideration to digital literacies, and to fostering entrepreneurialism in young people.
- The importance of building capacity and developing leadership. Releasing and empowering teachers, schools and communities could lead to improvement.
- A clear model of engagement to support collaboration and address variability and capacity was necessary. Building both formal and informal networks are important.
- The need to continue strengthening learning and teaching approaches, as intended by Curriculum for Excellence, including enhancing specific support on addressing issues of disadvantage.
- The need to ensure we have high enough aspirations for all children and young people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged by socio-economic background.
- Further programmes of leadership should be developed, not just for headteachers but to develop all teachers as leaders.
- The need for business to support education more and to value the diversity of the available workforce.
- The importance of increasing the flow of evidence on progress, including research evidence, and strengthening approaches to moving knowledge and evidence across the system.
- Consideration of the evolving nature of our schools and communities and the different characteristics and background of the children that they are serving.

On the evening of 31 August, the Council members attended a dinner hosted by Leslie Evans, Permanent Secretary, Scottish Government at Edinburgh College, EH15 Restaurant. Dinner was prepared and served by the catering students at the college.

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## **1 September 2016 (Holy Rood RC Secondary School, Edinburgh)**

The meeting resumed on Thursday 1 September following a morning of engagement at Holy Rood RC Secondary School, where the Council met senior management, teachers, parents and pupils to hear about their experiences and views. Over lunch, the Council members met with representatives of some of the main education stakeholder organisations.

In attendance at lunch were:

Fiona Dalziel, Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association  
John Edward, Scottish Council of Independent Schools  
Gillian Hamilton, Scottish College of Educational Leadership  
Jackie Killeen, British Council  
Terry Lanagan, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland  
Joanna Murphy, National Parent Forum of Scotland  
Ken Muir, General Teaching Council of Scotland  
Jane O'Donnell, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities  
Susan Quinn, Education Institute of Scotland  
Andy Smith, School Leaders Scotland

From Scottish Government, Clare Hicks and Audrey MacDougall also joined the meeting along with Graeme Logan from Education Scotland.

### Council session 2

The Deputy First Minister reconvened the meeting. There was a brief discussion sharing reflections on the meetings with teachers, parents, pupils and stakeholders which Council members found extremely valuable.

The meeting went on to consider two agenda items: the equity gap and the governance review.

### Equity gap

Graeme Logan and Audrey MacDougall gave a presentation on addressing the attainment gap. A supporting background paper was provided (ICEA (16) 02).

There followed a wider discussion among Council members. The following areas were discussed:

- Scotland's Attainment Challenge.
- The nature and characteristics of the attainment gap.
- Strategies and supports in place for teachers to address disadvantage and consider appropriate intervention.
- The data that is currently available.
- Ensuring that future data is used for improvement purposes.

### Governance review

Clare Hicks and Fiona Robertson then gave a brief overview of plans for the review of school governance. A supporting background paper was provided (ICEA (16) 03). Members shared their experience of working across a wide range of countries and education systems. Different models of governance, approaches and support were in place. No one model applied to Scotland. The Council covered the following key points in discussion:

- The importance of supporting collaboration amongst teachers.
- The importance of building capacity and leadership at school level.
- Building on the emerging regional collaborations and networks.
- The importance of being clear about where responsibility and accountability lie.
- The importance of identifying areas of consensus and building on them when considering the implementation of reform.

Following the Council discussions it was agreed that the Council would take forward work examining three key themes:

- Capacity building in educational leadership and professional learning.
- Building collaboration and collective responsibility in Scottish education.
- What works educationally to close the equity gap.

### Any other business

It was agreed that the Council would meet again in February and September 2017 and that further evaluation and discussion around the three identified themes would continue between meetings.

Background papers presented for the meeting are published at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/govscot>

Communique issued following the meeting