

EDUCATION GOVERNANCE EMPOWERING TEACHERS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Analysis of consultation responses



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- E.1. The Education Governance Review consultation (Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve Excellence and Equity – A Governance Review) ran from 13 September 2016 to 6 January 2017. The document contained 17 open-ended questions.
- E.2. A total of 1,154 submissions were received comprising 382 organisations and 772 individuals. Additionally, almost 700 people attended the publically held events.
- E.3. The aim of the analysis is to present the wide range of views offered. The responses were examined using a qualitative thematic approach and the key points from the analysis are summarised here.

Review of current governance system

- E.4. There was widespread support for the current governance system and an apprehension towards further change within the system – there is ‘no need to fix something that is not broken’.
- E.5. Current governance arrangements were not seen as a barrier for improvement and that changing them was not expected to address the deep-seated issues that get in the way of achieving excellence and equity for all. Overall, respondents tended to say that the case for significant changes in governance had not been made.
- E.6. Generally, respondents advocated for improvements to concentrate on processes rather than structures (often citing the OECD for support). Specifically, respondents thought that budget cuts and staffing issues were the two key barriers for improvement.
- E.7. In terms of governance, respondents highlighted the following as areas for improvement:
 - Promoting greater use of joined-up approaches at national, authority, schools and practitioner levels.
 - A lack of consistency in regards to school devolution across local authorities.
 - A desire for greater control at a school level over their staff.

National Functions and Bodies

- E.8. Respondents generally felt that the current breadth and depth of national functions was sufficient. This was emphasised by organisations in particular.
- E.9. Many respondents saw the current level of devolution to local authorities as positive. In fact, many saw it as a strength that current governance arrangements allow for a degree of local knowledge to be implemented.
- E.10. Organisations, in particular, saw the role of current national bodies as supportive and necessary.
- E.11. There was, however, a general sense that there is scope to clarify and align the roles of all agencies to establish whether they are all still ‘fit for purpose’.

Regional collaborations

- E.12. There was strong opposition against the uniform establishment of educational regions, particularly from local authorities, but also from schools, agencies, parent councils and individuals.
- E.13. The primary criticisms revolved around an increase in unnecessary bureaucracy and a loss of local accountability, as well as a general weakening of democratic representation.
- E.14. Overall, respondents would welcome greater clarity around the rationale for creating regions, in particular, what would the benefits be of the new structure.
- E.15. Should educational regions be created, the top three factors mentioned by respondents to consider when establishing those were: geography/distance, affluence and demographic distribution of the population.
- E.16. Should educational regions be created, there was overall agreement that the new regional arrangements could be used to address the differences between local authorities and their relationships with schools.

Cluster working

- E.17. There was a general sense that cluster working was being done proactively already by groups of schools who viewed this as helpful.
- E.18. There was recognition that a more formal process in the right circumstances could lead to efficiencies in the system.
- E.19. There was a wide range of possible services for clusters mentioned. The most common ideas referred to were support services (e.g. Additional Support Needs, English as an Additional Language, psychology provision), extra-curricular activities, and a bank of support staff.

School and teacher empowerment

- E.20. There was a general sense, from all types of respondents, that current levels of devolution of responsibility were adequate. The Devolved School Management (DSM) scheme was highlighted as a particular strength of the system.
- E.21. If change was to occur, the most frequent suggestions revolved around staffing and budgetary control.
- E.22. There was a strong emphasis on not increasing the workload and burden on schools and teachers. Governance changes were assumed to bring with them additional levels of bureaucracy.
- E.23. Overall, respondents agreed that some schools were already working collaboratively within and between schools. However, some believed that it was not enough.
- E.24. The issues hindering greater collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners were related to resource limitations, primarily lack of time and money.

Parental and community empowerment

- E.25. Across all responses, there was general agreement that parents on the whole were well engaged with their child’s school and that they were adequately represented under current arrangements, though a minority voiced issues around a lack of communication.
- E.26. The main barrier to improvement of parental involvement revolved around a lack of participation from some parents, with certain demographics traditionally avoiding involvement in parent council activities.
- E.27. A lack of diversity was cited within parent councils. Resolving this issue was seen as related less to governance and more to encouraging participation from under-represented groups.

Funding

- E.28. The balance of support was against devolving a greater range of responsibilities to schools, for fear this would create excessive bureaucracy, bring too much risk to school level and distract from leading teaching and learning. However, a minority of respondents did express the wish that schools should have more flexibility, particularly in the fields of procurement, and staffing.
- E.29. In terms of funding, there was a belief that funding should take account of Additional Support Needs (ASN), measures of deprivation and the particular challenges to provision in both rural and deprived urban areas.
- E.30. There was a lack of consensus in regards to the future direction of a potential funding formula. There was a significant group of respondents who stated that funding should follow the child, particularly in the case of ASN or personal circumstances (deprivation). Others cautioned against a total application of this principle, saying that less popular schools may lose out, and the result may be a transfer from deprived to affluent areas. It was also noted that each child has base costs which should be taken into account before additional funding was added. In addition, it was claimed that rural schools would have large costs for staffing and building relative to the number of pupils.

Accountability

- E.31. There were conflicting views around current accountability arrangements, with no consensus as to how the current system could be improved. Ideas provided for improvement were diverse.
- E.32. There was overall agreement, however, that paperwork should be reduced and some questioned the need for two bodies conducting inspections in regards to early learning.

Additional Support Needs

- E.33. There was a general consensus that ASN should remain at a higher level of governance than the individual school.
- E.34. If ASN provision was to be shifted to individual schools, respondents stated that specific challenges would need to be met in relation to budget, staffing, collaboration, skills proliferation and resourcing. There was a particular concern in regards to the loss of “economies of scale” that current arrangements provide.

E.35. With regard to ASN, respondents overall felt that the current education system would benefit from greater resourcing and joined-up working under current governance arrangements, rather than a change in responsibilities to individual schools.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The Education Governance Review consultation (Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve Excellence and Equity – A Governance Review) ran from the 13 September 2016 to the 6 January 2017.

The consultation paper contained 17 open-ended questions which sought opinions on the current Governance arrangements and the principles which should guide those arrangements. Additionally, it also invited views around community empowerment, the role of schools and teachers, funding, cluster working and regional collaborations.

The consultation was launched at a Ministerial event and promoted through various routes to help ensure it reached a wide audience. The Scottish Government organised 16 consultation events for parents, teachers and the wider public across Scotland.

Responses and respondents

A total of 1,154 submissions were received comprising 382 organisations and 772 individuals. Additionally, almost 700 people attended the public events.

Organisational respondents came from the public, private and third sectors, and included local authorities, schools/clusters, head teacher associations, national bodies/agencies, parent councils, universities and unions amongst others. Many of the organisation responses had been informed by discussion and debate within and between organisations and their own stakeholder groups.

Individual respondents included parents, teachers, educational leaders such as head or deputy head teachers, others working within the education sector, and the public. However, identification of respondent type was only possible within a small proportion of responses, so an accurate breakdown of individuals' responses by respondent type is not possible.

Unless specified, when referring to 'responses' and 'respondents' we mean both organisational and individual responses and respondents.

While the majority of responses followed the format of the consultation questionnaire, some respondents submitted non-standard responses (such as letters or stand-alone documents) which did not directly address the consultation questions. However, where possible, themes were identified for inclusion in the analysis. Amongst those providing written submissions to the consultation, not all provided a response to each question. Questions on the overall strength and weaknesses of the current governance system and the question around cluster working attracted the highest level of responses.

Methodology

The aim of the analysis was to present the wide range of views offered. The responses were examined using a qualitative thematic approach and the key themes from the analysis are summarised in this report. Organisational responses were analysed internally by the Scottish Government Education Analytical Services Division. Rocket Science UK Ltd was commissioned to analyse the 772 individual responses, using a similar framework that ensured both analyses were comparable.

The analysis is focused on the volume and depth of the responses provided rather than the number of respondents. In other words, conclusions can only be drawn about the comments/information that respondents volunteered. If a respondent did not answer the question, or reference a particular topic, no conclusions can be drawn in regards to their opinions or stances on the issue discussed. This is particularly noteworthy in regards to topics that were outwith the questions asked (e.g. discussion of ASN).

When discussing the prevalence of certain views, either amongst all respondents or amongst a certain subset, the following terms are used to indicate relative prevalence:

- 'Few' means between 5 and 9%
- 'Some' means between 10 and 19%
- 'Many' means between 20 and 49%
- 'Most' or 'majority' means between 50 and 74%
- 'Large majority' means between 75 and 89%
- 'Consensus' means 90% or over.

The structure of this report covers all key topic areas of the governance review consultation as follows: Chapter 2 focuses on the **current governance system** (Questions 1-3); Chapter 3 looks at **national bodies and functions** (questions 4 and 12); Chapter 4 addresses **regional collaborations** (questions 10-11); Chapter 5 presents responses around **cluster working** (question 9); Chapter 6 concentrates on **school level governance** and school/teacher collaboration (questions, 4, 5, 8 and 13) and also covers cross cutting issues in regards to **additional support needs**; Chapter 7 revolves around **parental and community empowerment** (questions 6-7); Chapter 8 addresses **funding** related issues (questions 14 and 15); Chapter 9 presents responses around **accountability** (question 16). Chapter 10 draws out responses across the review questions that raised ASN.

Chapter 2: Review of current governance system

Key points

There was widespread support for the current governance system and an apprehension towards further change within the system – there is **‘no need to fix something that is not broken’**.

On the whole, respondents did not see current **governance arrangements as a barrier for improvement** and that changing them was not expected to address the deep-seated issues that get in the way of achieving excellence and equity for all. Overall, respondents tended to say that the case for significant change had not been made.

Generally, respondents advocated improvements to concentrate on processes rather than structures (often citing the OECD for support). Specifically, respondents thought that **budget cuts** and **staffing issues** were the two key barriers for improvement.

In terms of governance, respondents highlighted the following as areas for improvement:

- Promoting greater use of **joined-up approaches** at national, authority, schools and practitioner levels;
- A **lack of consistency** in regards to school devolution across local authorities; and
- A desire for greater control at a school level over their **staff**.

The consultation document asked respondents at the beginning of the process to state what they thought were the strengths and barriers of the current governance arrangements. The document also suggested a range of principles that should underpin the education system and asked respondents their views on the principles.

2.1 Strengths of the current governance arrangements in Scottish education

The analysis of the consultation responses showed that there was widespread support for the current governance system amongst both organisations and individuals. Respondents generally believed that the current governance system was well embedded and understood. The balance of responsibilities at national, local and school levels, and the partnerships between these levels, were seen by individuals as a key strength of the current governance arrangements.

Generally, respondents stated that governance arrangements support a common national approach with due regard to local circumstances. They felt that it enabled schools to reflect distinctive identities and ethos whilst remaining part of a common ‘family’ of public education across Scotland.

The role of local authorities, in particular, was highlighted by many respondents as a strength. Within this, strengths of local authorities mentioned by respondents were:

- Support and services provided to schools and headteachers;
- Level of autonomy, through DSM;
- Readily accessible staff; and
- Clear policies and procedures (specifically HR, payroll, and legal services).

Organisations highlighted the emphasis placed on education by the current Government as a strength. The focus on closing the attainment gap was particularly welcomed by most organisations.

However, many organisations and some individuals stated that schools alone cannot deliver systemic change in the way envisaged unless accompanied by changes in health provision, housing and employment and a more general ‘joined-up’ approach. Local government emphasised their role in co-ordinating a range of local services that can address pupil circumstances.

Some other strengths of the system highlighted by respondents were:

- The role of national bodies, particularly General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS);
- Accountability arrangements, particularly local democratic accountability through elected councillors;
- The role played by school leaders in general; and
- Some organisations named specific policies as a strength in the system, such as Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (DSYW).

However, it should be noted that while the above features were highlighted as strengths by some respondents, similar areas were raised as concerns by others. In particular, barriers around the role of national bodies were identified. These are explored further throughout the rest of the report.

2.2 Barriers within the current governance arrangements

When respondents were asked about the main barriers in the system, a large majority of organisations and individuals stated that current governance arrangements were not a barrier and that changing these would not address the deep-seated issues that get in the way of achieving excellence and equity for all.

There were, however, general governance issues within the system that came through strongly across responses:

- **Lack of a joined-up approach.** Specifically, some organisations felt that the principal barrier was ensuring whole-system cohesion at national, authority, school and practitioner levels, both within and between different levels. Organisations generally appreciated that the level of joined-up collaboration varied across local authorities. One organisation stated that: *Achieving a vision of excellence, inclusion and equity for all requires a consistent common purpose at all levels so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.*
- **Lack of consistency.** Overall, both organisations and individuals saw the role played by local authorities as a strength, however respondents felt that all 32 local authorities have their own policies and procedures and that there were significant disparities in what is provided for each child in Scotland and the level of devolved responsibilities to schools.
- **Staff management.** Many respondents criticised the lack of control currently available over their own staff. Most wished for greater powers in terms of staff management; especially the ability to recruit their own staff and to deal with under-performing members of the team.

- **Bureaucracy and administrative duties** falling upon teachers and head teachers as a result of inspection and assessment demands from various levels of governance. This was recognised by some individual respondents in particular. An example cited was the fact that early education has to respond to two inspection systems under Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.

The majority of barriers cited by both organisations and individuals, however, were outwith governance issues and related in particular to two key areas:

- **Limited budgets/austerity.** This point was raised by many individual respondents who, for example, would like to see more focus on limited budgets and large class sizes than on governance arrangements.
- **Other staff-related issues** such as workloads, lack of support staff, teacher shortages and lack of management staff. Although not referred to in the consultation, stress and workload issues amongst teachers came out very strongly in many individual responses.

2.3 Appetite for governance change

The analysis of consultation responses showed a lack of appetite for a governance change amongst both organisations and individuals. *‘There is no need to fix something that is not broken’* was a common theme across responses. Only a few respondents explicitly welcomed governance change.

Many respondents felt that the education system had gone through major changes in recent years, particularly around the introduction of CfE, and did not welcome any further changes. One organisation described the education system as suffering from *‘innovation fatigue’*.

Organisational respondents asked for improvements to be made through processes rather than structures, many mentioning the budget cuts that affected workloads and staff management the most. Many quoted the OECD paper *‘Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD perspective’* to stress the argument that structural changes were not needed and that improvements should be around the processes that underpin the system instead.

There was a concern, amongst organisations in particular, that decentralisation may result in an increased variation across the system, resulting in a reduction of performance across the system as a whole.

Respondents also felt that devolving further responsibilities to schools without a parallel increase in management staff would only exacerbate the current issues of staff shortages and excessive workload, burdening head teachers in particular. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

2.4 Agreement with principles

The consultation document suggested a set of key principles to underpin the Scottish education system. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the principles and which others should be applied.

The discussion document stated that our education system must:

- be focused on improving outcomes, and support the delivery of excellence and equity for children and young people;
- meet the needs of all our children and young people, no matter where they live or their family circumstances;
- support and empower children and 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;
- support children and young people to make smooth transitions into formal learning, through school and into further education, training or employment.

66% of respondents agreed with the principles stated. However, a large majority of these respondents used the question about 'other principles' to qualify their agreement, or to challenge certain aspects of the proposed principles, as well as to suggest additional principles.

Some recurrent concerns expressed were:

- Organisations, in particular, stated that the principles were not new. Some thought that teachers and the system as a whole was striving towards these already;
- There was strong opposition amongst a number of respondents to the concept of 'value for money'. The general sense was that what is good value for a business might not always be applicable in a child or family-orientated environment; and
- Further clarity was requested around some concepts, specifically 'excellence', 'equity', 'empowerment' and 'transparency', which were found to be quite generic. Individual respondents focused particularly on further clarity and detail in the principles, with many of those who commented on them viewing them as being too high-level.

Chapter 3: National Functions and Bodies

Key points

Respondents generally felt that the **current breadth and depth of national functions was sufficient**.

Many respondents saw the current level of devolution to **local authorities as positive**.

Organisations, in particular, saw the role of current **national bodies as supportive** and necessary.

There was, however, a general sense that there is **scope to clarify and align** the roles of all **agencies** to establish whether they are all still ‘fit for purpose’.

The consultation document asked respondents to state what governance changes were required to support decisions being taken at a school level. The document also sought views on which specific services or support functions should be delivered nationally. This section summarises respondents’ views around national functions and bodies.

3.1 National functions

Respondents generally felt that the current coverage and breath of national functions was sufficient. Respondents felt that current national functions should remain at the national level, as one respondent put it, *‘everything we already have still needs to be delivered nationally’*.

Respondents felt that the following **functions** should be delivered at a national level:

- Leadership and vision in the form of high level strategic planning and funding to ensure equity;
- Inspection and qualification bodies to drive consistency;
- Workforce regulation, terms and conditions, salaries, teacher education, contracts etc.;
- Guidance on curriculum; and
- Infrastructures, such as SEEMIS or GLOW.

The current level of devolution to local authorities was seen by many respondents as sufficient. In fact, many saw it as a strength that current governance arrangements allowed for a degree of local knowledge to be implemented.

3.2 National Bodies

On the whole, respondents saw the role of the current national bodies as positive, supportive and necessary. As one organisation put it, *‘national bodies provide a consistent approach to the delivery of a range of services’*.

However, some respondents questioned the need for such a wide range of agencies and wondered whether these could be streamlined. Respondents agreed that there was scope to clarify and align the roles of all agencies to establish whether they were still ‘fit for purpose’. For some, there was an appetite for streamlining current roles and responsibilities to minimise what they felt was some degree of duplication. Others felt that certain agencies suffered from a conflict of interest in terms of their current remits.

Some of the specific ideas for change were:

- A need for a more coherent approach across all agencies. There was a general feeling that all agencies need to be much more coordinated and work together. For example, the dual inspection model for nurseries was criticised by many and most felt that this could be streamlined to minimise bureaucracy.
- There was also a strong appetite for greater collaboration between agencies and local authorities. Many respondents felt that the support provided could be better targeted. *'At present the information from organisations is of the spray and pray variety and adds to the burden of bureaucracy and workloads in schools.'*

While the consultation document did not ask any direct questions around specific national bodies, some respondents provided spontaneous comments on some agencies. Key highlights are provided below:

Focus on General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

Analysis of responses showed a very positive outlook on the role of GTCS. This positive endorsement was particularly strong among schools/clusters and head teachers' associations.

Respondents saw GTCS' key strength as supporting teachers and maintaining and monitoring the quality of the profession. GTCS was seen as an independent regulatory body, which *sets clear standards and promotes and enhances the teacher profession*. Many respondents saw the GTCS role as vital for maintaining the health of the profession.

Focus on Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT)

While there were only a few mentions of SNCT, organisations in general, but teachers in particular, saw SNCT as a clear strength in the system. Very few individuals commented on SNCT, but all comments made were positive. SNCT's tripartite nature, involving the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the teaching unions, was highlighted as a strength.

Focus on Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Most organisations that responded to the consultation described SQA as a key strength of the Scottish education system. This was not the case amongst individual respondents. Positive comments stated that having one single qualifications body provided consistency and clarity across the nation. Some organisations felt positively that SQA involved practitioners in the development and delivery of national qualifications.

However, a minority of organisations stated that SQA appeared to work in a silo. Furthermore, some of the individual respondents who commented on SQA felt that recent changes in SQA assessments had increased stress and workload for teachers.

Additionally, a few teachers described the messages provided by SQA and Education Scotland as conflicting. Specifically, they would have welcomed clearer advice in the wake of new qualifications and assessments.

Focus on Education Scotland

Many of the organisations that responded to the consultation commented on the positive role that Education Scotland plays in delivering a national picture of standards. Offering a wide range of resources, identifying and sharing best practice and providing external scrutiny and governance were mentioned as key strengths of the organisation. Only some of the individual respondents who commented on Education Scotland were positive about it; these positive comments highlighted the same perceived strengths as identified by organisations.

However, many respondents were critical of Education Scotland, in particular, individual respondents. The critical comments raised tended to focus around:

- Its dual role in providing guidance and carrying out inspections. Many respondents saw this as a conflict of interest and questioned how one body could handle both accountability and quality advice. One individual respondent described this as being both ‘poacher and gamekeeper’. Education Scotland, on the other hand, saw the ability to offer blended guidance and inspection as a strength;
- Duplication between the inspection role that both Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate play;
- A need for greater emphasis on support (i.e. better targeted support);
- Should Education Scotland keep the inspection role, agreement that it should be kept at a national level. A significant minority questioned whether other functions could be delivered through a regional model;
- A review of accountability. Some respondents queried who checked the work of Education Scotland; and
- Some individuals, in particular, thought that Education Scotland was too removed from the reality of schools and classrooms.

Chapter 4: Regional Collaborations

Key points

There was strong **opposition** to the uniform establishment of educational regions, particularly from local authorities, but also from schools, agencies, parent councils and individuals.

The primary criticism revolved around an increase in unnecessary bureaucracy and a loss of local accountability, as well as a general weakening in democratic representation.

Overall, respondents desired greater clarity around the rationale for creating regions, in particular what the benefits of the new structure would be over existing arrangements.

Should educational regions be created, the top three factors mentioned by respondents to consider were: geography/distance, affluence and demographic distribution of the population.

Should educational regions be created, some respondents felt that the new regional arrangements could be used to address the **differences between local authorities** and their relationships with schools.

The consultation document stated that Scottish Government is committed to introducing new educational regions to ensure best practice is shared more systematically and to ensure improvement is driven collaboratively, deliberately and continuously across Scottish education.

Respondents were asked what services or functions are best delivered at a regional level. They were also asked to provide ideas as to what factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions.

4.1 General appetite for educational regions

Despite not being asked directly, the majority of organisations were concerned about the establishment of educational regions and most opposed it entirely. The strongest sense of opposition came from local authorities followed by agencies/bodies, schools/clusters and parent councils. Equally, many individuals volunteered their views on educational regions in general, and, within these responses, the consensus was that they were not desirable. However, because the consultation did not ask for general views on educational regions, respondents with strong views were more likely to offer their opinion.

While concerns were quite broad, some of the recurring themes revolved around:

- The lack of clarity in the definition of educational regions;
- The danger of adding an extra layer of bureaucracy;
- The cost of establishing these regions;
- Whether the creation of these regions was a cost-cutting exercise rather than to drive benefits;
- The effective operation of such educational regions and whether 'local-level' intelligence would still be paramount; and
- The loss of local democratic accountability.

Many respondents stated that the creation of such regions appeared to contradict the OECD recommendation to focus on processes rather than structures.

A few individual respondents cautioned against a 'return' to previous Regional Councils, which they perceived not to have worked well. Other respondents pointed to the new police and fire service regions as something they did not wish to see emulated in education.

Amongst the few respondents who welcomed the idea of new educational regions, the main benefit they saw was a greater sense of consistency across the different local authorities. In particular, some respondents used the example of ASN and educational psychology provision in recognition of their specialised nature, their cost, and the significant variations in cost burdens on schools from year to year dependent of the placement of individual children.

Amongst organisations in particular, a few referred to a preferred idea of dealing with a smaller number than 32 different local authorities.

However, some respondents were of the opinion that greater consistency could also be achieved through more widely-spread partnerships rather than structural change.

4.2 Factors for the establishment of educational regions

Despite a lack of positive endorsement towards the idea of new educational regions, when the consultation document asked about which factors to consider when establishing them, respondents provided some ideas. The top three mentions from respondents related to:

- Geography/distance. In particular, the idea that rural areas do not become more isolated;
- Affluence of regions. The notion that more affluent local authorities should support less lucrative/smaller ones; and
- Demographic distribution of the population.

Other factors mentioned by fewer respondents were cultural differences, workloads and travel distances for staff, an integration with health service provision, educational attainment and best practice, and an alignment with college regions.

4.3 Services and support functions at a regional level

The consultation document asked specifically which services and support functions would be best delivered at a regional level. Ideas were offered from those who favoured a change and those who opposed it.

Overall, there was a sense, amongst organisations especially, that the new regional arrangements could be used to address the differences between local authorities and their relationships with schools. Many respondents mentioned that a role for the new regional arrangements could be around accountability of local authorities.

Beyond accountability, the range of services and support functions suggested by respondents was very broad. The most common ideas referred to were:

- Opportunities for continuous professional development;
- Provision of support services, such as ASN and English as an Additional Language (EAL);
- Training and professional development for teachers;
- Human Resources, such as workforce planning, payroll and the administration of recruitment (though not the recruitment itself which was advocated to be conducted at a school level);

- Other business support (such as health and safety, building planning, janitorial, catering or legal expertise);
- Data gathering;
- School inspections;
- Procurement; and
- Support in curriculum development.

Some individual respondents referred to services and support functions at local authority level when responding to this question, exemplifying the lack of clarity amongst many respondents about what 'regional' meant in this context.

Chapter 5: Cluster working

Key points

There was a general sense that cluster working was being done proactively already by groups of schools who viewed this as helpful.

There was recognition that a more formal process in the right circumstances could lead to efficiencies in the system.

There was a wide range of possible services for clusters mentioned. Most common ideas referred to: support services (such as ASN, EAL or psychological provision), extra-curricular activities and a bank of support staff.

Respondents were asked what services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners.

The responses were quite broad and beyond giving ideas on what services and support functions could be delivered, they also focused around the good work already taking place.

5.1 Perception of current cluster working

Many respondents stated that cluster working was being done proactively already and that it was an important feature of the Scottish education system. Positive examples of current cluster working identified by respondents included clusters of a secondary school and its feeder primaries, teacher collaboration and peer mentoring, working with other agencies – such as with councils' Social Work departments – towards the GIRFEC agenda, or with educational support services, and sharing resources such as transport.

Some of the positive comments included a warning that current good practice may be affected by governance change, with a few respondents suggesting an audit of current cluster working be conducted.

Some individual respondents wanted to see current developments in cluster working facilitated by additional capacity and resources, particularly by releasing staff for joint working. Some respondents also saw a greater role for employers in cluster-working, particularly in relation to the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) agenda.

Some organisations thought that there was no need to formalise cluster arrangements. They referred to the good work that already took place organically within the education system. On the other hand, some organisations recognised that a more formal process in the right circumstances could lead to greater efficiencies in the system. This was particularly mentioned in regards to administrative functions, educational support services (e.g. ASN, EAL), quality improvement and staff development provision.

A few respondents questioned what was meant by clusters and how to define these.

Some individual respondents also expressed concerns about clusters, namely:

- Scepticism that clusters are merely cost-cutting exercises with no other benefit;
- A recognition that clusters may be harder to put into practice in rural and remote areas where there are large distances between schools, and between schools and councils;

- Worries that clusters formed around catchment areas will perpetuate differences between wealthier and poorer areas; and
- Questions about to whom the cluster is accountable - whether local accountability through the local authority will be retained.

5.2 What services and support functions could be provided through clusters?

Under a quarter of organisations, and over a third of individual respondents, offered ideas on what services or support functions could be, and in some cases already are, provided at a cluster level.

A wide range of possible services/support functions were mentioned but there was a lack of consensus across respondents as to the type of service that should be provided by clusters. Some common themes emerged however, focusing on:

- Collaboration with health services, social services and children's services. Some believed that GIRFEC could only be delivered effectively through partnership working;
- Extra-curricular activities, such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, holiday camps;
- Transitional support between nursery, primary and secondary;
- Banks of support staff, teaching staff, ASN or EAL specialists (though it was noted that this may require managing by school leaders);
- Collaboration with employers, particularly in relation to DYW;
- Delivery of specific subjects;
- Pooling funding and sharing resources between schools; and
- Teacher collaboration and Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Chapter 6: School and teacher empowerment

Key points

There was a general sense, across all organisations and individuals, that the current level of devolution of responsibility at school level was adequate. The DSM scheme was highlighted as a particular strength of the system.

If change was to occur, the most frequent suggestions revolved around staffing and budgetary control.

There was a strong emphasis on the need to not increase workload and burdens on schools and teachers. Governance changes were assumed to bring with them additional levels of bureaucracy.

Overall, respondents agreed that some schools were already working collaboratively within and between schools. However, some believed that it was not enough.

The issues hindering greater collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners were related to resource limitations, primarily lack of time and money.

The consultation document asked respondents what changes to governance arrangements were required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at a school level. The document also asked what services and support functions should be delivered by schools and what responsibilities should be devolved to teachers and headteachers to enable this.

This section covers:

- Governance arrangements at a school level (section 6.1)
- Teacher collaboration (section 6.2)
- Teacher education and professional learning (section 6.3)

6.1. School level Governance

Strengths of the current system

The view of a large majority of respondents was that the current system of governance at a school and head teacher level was sufficient. With some exceptions noted below, there was a lack of appetite for the devolution of further responsibilities from local authorities to schools.

The main strengths of the current system of governance cited by respondents were:

- The DSM scheme; and
- The support and services currently provided by their local authority.

However, some organisations pointed to the variability and inconsistency between local authorities in regards to how the DSM scheme was applied. Others commented on whether the devolution of budgets was meaningful, as there are some national commitments that schools do not have any control over (e.g. staffing levels). Some respondents suggested that a more consistent application of the scheme across Scotland may be beneficial. Organisations did not comment on what specific changes they would like to see in order to ensure greater consistency. Due to the low number of spontaneous responses, it is not

possible to accurately break down the strength of feeling between subgroups (e.g. how local authorities feel about DSM vs headteacher associations). For example, local authorities referenced the scheme the most often of any group, however this only amounted to around a quarter of local authorities.

Suggestions for improvement

There was general consensus amongst respondents that increased powers for schools, with current levels of staffing, would bring an increase in bureaucracy and workload, which in turn would distract from the staff's primary goal of teaching and children's overall education.

When respondents did express a desire for a change within the system, these changes most often fell under the broad headings of:

- increased budgetary control (particularly procurement); and
- increased control over staffing.

It should be noted that, within the consultation, there was an overwhelming emphasis placed on not increasing levels of responsibility and workload for teachers and head teachers. This is relevant, as respondents may have simultaneously indicated a desire for control over staffing, but did not wish to take on responsibility for human resources or finance due to the perceived increased workload. Respondents did not provide a means of resolving this conflict.

Other concerns expressed about further devolution of powers to schools include:

- The implication for equality and inclusion, for example, if schools were in charge of admissions;
- A lack of consistency arising from head teachers pursuing different approaches;
- A loss of oversight and control by elected councillors.

Necessary measures in the event of further devolution

Both organisations and individuals felt that any increased responsibilities that may arise from governance changes would require a series of adjustments in order to not exacerbate current workload issues.

The main suggestions provided by the majority of respondents revolved around:

- The recruitment of budgetary managers for each school who could help deal with any newly acquired administrative responsibilities around staffing and procurement.
- A shift in the nature of the training provided to head teachers, as some respondents felt that the change in the nature of the work meant that the role would shift away from teaching and more towards management, and that current training left them ill-suited for the new role.

Although some respondents suggested that schools would currently benefit from support from a budgetary manager, it was seen as a prerequisite moving forward if governance changes moved current responsibilities from local authorities to individual schools.

Many respondents felt the increased responsibilities would have a negative impact on head teacher recruitment. They speculated that this would be due to a mixture of increased workload, increased need for training and a shift away from in-class involvement.

The following sections look specifically at the two key suggestions for change regarding budgetary control and staff.

Budgets/procurement

a) General budgetary control

Opinions were split amongst respondents in regards to increased budgetary control. Whilst the majority of respondents expressed their belief that head teachers should focus on educational matters, rather than becoming ‘accountants’, others were more open to the idea of increased control in the allocation of funds within a school.

The few suggestions on how to achieve this were mixed between:

- Greater co-operation between headteachers and local authorities in relation to how budgets are allocated.
- Funding going directly to individual schools.

However, even amongst those who welcomed increased budgetary influence, this typically extended only to what was seen as ‘educational’ matters, rather than general managerial responsibilities such as HR or building maintenance.

b) Procurement

Although there was a mixed response to increased budgetary control, the consensus amongst respondents was in favour of an increased level of autonomy in regards to procurement.

Many respondents (particularly amongst parent councils) felt that schools would be well served by being able to go outwith the local authorities’ lists of approved providers when attempting to procure resources. School Leaders Scotland made specific reference to desiring control over commissioning services or entering service level agreements. However, they did not provide additional information beyond those specific references e.g. what areas of procurement they were not interested in.

Many respondents felt that the current arrangements and channels were too slow, inflexible and provided poor value for money. They complained that local authorities had a limited list of suppliers, which prevented them from finding better deals elsewhere. Most comments referred to classroom materials and ICT equipment.

Some respondents felt that schools would benefit from being able to arrange individually tailored service from local providers. However, a few respondents, namely local authorities, noted that there were inherent risks in accountability should head teachers have total control over procurement contracts.

In addition, a few individual respondents highlighted that central bulk buy can ensure economies of scale.

Staff

Along with procurement, the other change that had relatively prominent support was for a greater degree of ‘control’ and ‘power’ over staffing choices. This idea was more contested by individual respondents although, on the whole, the general feeling was that more control over staffing would be desirable.

Specific examples tended to revolve around:

- The ability to retain good teachers and remove underperforming ones.
- A desire to promote/reward exemplary teachers.
- The flexibility to respond to needs as they arise – particularly in relation to ASN staff and supply teachers.

This type of arrangement was seen as being preferable to having teachers assigned from a wider authority-level pool of candidates. The Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland and School Leaders Scotland mentioned a desire to have control over the appointment of staff and the filling of vacancies but made no comment about other areas of staffing e.g. HR.

In addition, it was felt schools should have the ability to control the level and type of support staff they could employ, as well as the accompanying resource required to maintain them. However, groups representing support staff (namely the trade unions, GMB, Unison and Unite) were concerned that they could be isolated within schools if employment and management were transferred from the local authority.

A few individual respondents, mainly teachers, were concerned that devolving recruitment decisions to school level might expose teachers to discretionary behaviour by head teachers and reduce their job security.

Risk

There were concerns raised by some respondents that devolution of full staffing powers to schools may expose some schools, particularly smaller establishments, to heightened risk in managing long-term staff absences if they were required to cover costs for a replacement. It was noted by a few respondents, that in smaller schools single members of staff may represent a large proportion of the budget.

6.2 Teacher Collaboration

The consultation document asked respondents how effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners could be further encouraged and incentivised. A broad range of views and ideas were provided.

Effectiveness of current arrangements

Overall, both organisations and individuals agreed that some schools were already working collaboratively within and between schools. Examples of existing practice were Professional Learning Community approaches, already in place in some schools or across schools. However, some respondents believed that current collaboration was not enough.

Many felt that effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners did not need to be specifically encouraged or incentivised, as most teachers want to collaborate and learn from one another. It was imperative instead to enable collaboration through greater resources – time and money.

Challenges faced currently to enable collaboration

As stated above, most respondents felt that the two greatest challenges hindering greater collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners were time and money. Beyond resources, other challenges mentioned by respondents include:

- **Teacher supply.** Many schools reported that they could not release teachers to work collaboratively because there would be no one to teach the class.
- **Accountability and competition.** Current accountability systems were cited by some organisations as creating unnecessary competition between schools, for example through the release of published information or the potential creation of league tables. It was believed that competition between schools generated a powerful disincentive to co-operation across the system.

Any specific ideas on incentives for collaboration

Individual responses, in particular, primarily focused on providing more funding to facilitate collaborative work – either through extra pay or through additional staff, which would reduce contact hours for teachers.

However, some of the ideas provided by respondents to incentivise collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners included:

- Having greater opportunities to rotate around areas, sectors and regions.
- More secondment opportunities.
- Shared training and in-service days, for example between clusters.
- A non-negotiable clause on collaboration, making it an obligatory requirement as part of Career-Long Professional Development.
- Providing guidance on best practice in collaboration.

6.3 Teacher Education and Professional Learning

The consultation document asked respondents how governance should support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity needed.

Continuous Professional Development

Analysis of the consultation responses showed that CPD was highly valued by the profession. In order to further encourage CPD, some issues were identified by respondents:

- **Greater opportunities and resources** to enable CPD. Many respondents requested a more coherent and effective system of releasing staff and that adequate time and resources should be made available for CPD to happen.
- **Budget.** A call for an allocated budget to be set aside for CPD at a school level.
- **Consistency.** Some organisations mentioned that CPD is currently delivered in a variety of ways by a variety of providers. Some called for greater co-ordination between the different bodies (e.g. Education Scotland or Scottish College for Educational Leadership). Respondents did not specify how this co-ordination could improve the current system.
- **Adaptability.** CPD to support teachers who want to concentrate on teaching, as well as those who want a more managerial role.
- **Self-evaluation.** Scope for adding a component of self-evaluation and reflective practice as part of CPD. For example, conducting peer reviews within clusters or being accountable for the impact CPD has had on pupils.

A valued profession

Many respondents referred to the profession as a whole when answering this question. There was a general desire for the teaching profession and wider workforce to be highly valued, to be held in higher esteem, to be attractive, to offer a competitive salary and a career pathway people are drawn into. As would be expected, these comments were often made in relation to teachers, however greater focus on support staff (both in and out of the classroom) was highlighted throughout the consultation responses when discussing this topic.

As part of this, some respondents suggested that there should be an ongoing review and audit of the teacher education provision and how fit for purpose it is.

Initial Teacher Education

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was a highlighted area of concern for many respondents. Some respondents suggested that schools should be more involved in the design of ITE programmes and that schools should feel a greater sense of responsibility for the training of future teachers. It was suggested by some that more dialogue between schools and universities should take place to plan appropriate ITE.

There were several specific areas of concern in regards to ITE:

- **Discrepancies.** There was a sense amongst respondents that greater uniformity was required, that the ITE offering across universities should have the same 'core'.
- **Teaching to teach.** There was a sense amongst organisations that the current ITE framework would benefit from a greater emphasis on teaching how to teach. No further detail was provided.
- **Raising standards.** The main issue raised by individual respondents was the need to raise the standards of newly qualified teachers. Respondents saw it as the responsibility of universities and colleges to act as gateways for good applicants. Some respondents mentioned a need to focus on the areas highlighted by the OECD report – for example, assessment and evaluation.
- **Better planning.** Some individual respondents believed there should be better planning of ITE across Scotland to meet staffing requirements, with a recognition that many people on ITE want to train locally.
- **Focus on early years.** A few individual respondents mentioned the need to ensure that teachers can qualify as early years practitioners in Scotland.

Chapter 7: Parental and community empowerment

Key points

Across all responses, there was general agreement that parents, on the whole, were well engaged with their child's school and that they were adequately represented under current arrangements, though a minority voiced issues around a lack of communication.

The main barrier to improvement of parental involvement revolved around a lack of participation from some parents, with certain demographics traditionally avoiding involvement in parent council activities.

A lack of diversity was cited within parent councils. Resolving this issue was seen as related less to governance than to encouraging participation from under-represented groups.

The consultation document stated that the Scottish Government's objective is to devolve decision making and funding to teachers, schools and communities in order to open schools up. Respondents were asked how children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others could play a stronger role in school life.

Respondents were also asked how the governance arrangements could support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas.

7.1 Attitudes towards current system

Many respondents felt that parents were already well engaged with their schools, and that parents (either directly or through representatives) were taken into consideration when making decisions that affect their schools. This came through from both parent councils and schools/head teacher associations, as well as from many individual respondents commenting on parental empowerment under current arrangements.

The feeling was that the current governance arrangements already provided adequate opportunity for parents to engage with schools and head teachers. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act and the National Improvement Framework were cited as existing frameworks already supporting parental involvement. It was believed that barriers to increasing that engagement had little to do with governance structures and more to do with participation rates of parents, particularly parents from specific demographics.

A minority of parent councils felt that there were issues with the current relationship between themselves and schools particularly around communication and consultation.

The main issue for parents who responded individually to the consultation was poor communication by schools. Some parents would welcome regular communications as well as being automatically sent test results alongside an explanation of scores. Some parents also mentioned a need to review complaints procedures.

7.2 Role of parent councils

The consensus amongst organisations was that parents wished to have a voice and influence in their child's education and play a role in the workings of their school. The degree and scope of that role varied depending on the respondent, with most referencing generic "engagement" rather than providing examples of direct parental involvement.

Many respondents stated that they specifically did not believe parent councils wanted to run schools but that their involvement was important. The majority of these responses were from headteachers and parent councils themselves.

On the whole, individual respondents did not want more power and responsibilities to lie with parent councils either. Some individuals saw more powers for parent councils as irrelevant given a 'culture of apathy' amongst parents. Others were strongly opposed to parent councils having more responsibility in schools, arguing that this will favour schools in more affluent areas.

A few individual respondents did want more 'teeth' in governance terms for parent councils. No detail about what these responsibilities would look like was offered, beyond a general role in 'overseeing teaching and learning' and 'moving beyond fundraising'.

7.3 Issues/barriers for greater community empowerment

The main issues raised within the current system by organisations and individuals were:

- The importance **of clear lines of communication** between schools and parents;
- Increasing levels of **parental participation** (particularly amongst those from disadvantaged backgrounds);
- Increasing the **diversity of parental councils** (again, paying particular note to those from disadvantaged backgrounds);
- **Time pressures amongst parents** acting as a barrier to further parental involvement;
- **Time pressures amongst teachers** acting as a barrier to greater collaboration with the community.

Multiple respondents commented that they felt that changing current government arrangements to give parents more control could inadvertently have the effect of decreasing parental participation rather than increasing it. Respondents noted that this would be due to the perceived increased level of responsibility acting as a barrier for entry (a lack of confidence amongst parental groups was cited as a reason for this).

Decreased participation, it was noted, could exacerbate differences in participation rates between parents of children from deprived and less deprived backgrounds.

Finally a minority of organisations pointed out the potential issues of simultaneously wishing to increase teacher/school power and parental influence. It was felt that providing greater power to one could in turn decrease it from the other. This was particularly highlighted with reference to parental councils controlling the actions of schools.

7.4 Children and young people's voice

A number of organisations (not all of whom were specifically concerned with children's welfare and advocacy) also stated that pupils should have a voice in the development of their learning and schools. However, there was some variation about what kind of decisions pupils should be involved in.

A few individual respondents believed children and young people should be empowered to have an active role in schools and be consulted more often. Some of these individual respondents mentioned a greater role for pupil councils.

7.5 Community-led early learning and childcare provision

The consultation document asked respondents how governance arrangements could support more community-led early learning and childcare provision, particularly in remote and rural areas. This question attracted the fewest number of responses, with only 57 per cent of respondents commenting on the topic. Many answers, however, stated the lack of knowledge on the area or questioned the relevance of the question within the context of a governance review.

Confusion about this question was particularly clear for individual respondents, where most responses were about general early learning and childcare, rather than community-led early learning and childcare specifically. Some respondents wished to see more council-provided early learning and childcare as a first step.

Several individual respondents pointed to the Finnish model as an example of best practice in this area.

Governance related issues

Amongst respondents who answered the question, there was consensus that greater emphasis should be placed on early learning rather than childcare. A few respondents specifically stated that they would welcome the re-introduction of teacher-led early learning.

Integrating models linking early years to schools was another area mentioned in many responses. The most recurrent idea was to include nursery provision within the primary school setting. However, some potential issues were highlighted in that respect, namely that:

- Some schools do not have the capacity or infrastructure to take early learning on board; and that
- Childcare should not be the responsibility of head teachers.

Regulatory compliance and quality provision was an area of concern for many respondents. There was consensus that the regulatory regime was demanding for community volunteers who may not have the appropriate training. Some highlighted that there might be scope to review the expectations of qualifications required for managers in community-led early learning. Others asked for greater support from local authorities to ensure compliance and quality provision across the board.

Practical ideas

Many respondents offered practical ideas on how to improve community-led early learning and childcare provision in remote and rural areas. The most recurrent themes related to:

- **Greater usage of current** facilities/access to school or community buildings;
- **Provision of free transport** to tackle reported high levels of fuel poverty;
- **Better broadband provision** to prevent parents from becoming isolated; and
- **More funding** was requested as not all community-led services were financially viable.

A few respondents stated that in some rural areas it could be challenging to increase community-led provision due to the small number of parents or community members available to take on key roles.

Chapter 8: Funding

Key points

With respect to the funding questions, the balance of support was against devolving a greater range of responsibilities to schools, for fear this would create excessive bureaucracy, bring too much risk to school level and distract from leading teaching and learning. However, some respondents did express the wish that schools should have more flexibility, particularly in the fields of procurement and staffing.

In terms of funding, there was a belief that funding should take account of ASN, measures of deprivation and the particular challenges to provision in both rural and deprived urban areas.

Several respondents stated that funding should follow the child, particularly in the case of ASN or personal circumstances (deprivation). Others cautioned against a total application of this principle, saying that less popular schools may lose out, and the result may be a transfer from deprived to affluent areas. It was also noted that each child had base costs which should be taken into account before additional funding was added.

The consultation document briefly explained the current funding system and suggested a core set of principles to support a new funding formula. Respondents to the consultation were asked their opinion on the principles suggested and what further controls over funding should be devolved to schools.

8.1 Principles

Organisations who commented on the principles did not have any significant objection to the principles of excellence and equity and the large majority of individual respondents who commented on the principles agreed with them in general. However, respondents raised a number of issues regarding the meaning of these principles and how they can be measured and put into practice:

- Calls for transparency on how allocations were made (though some claimed that they were already being transparent in their area);
- Additional principles for adaptability, affordability and ease of administration were asked for;
- A need to ensure GIRFEC principles were taken into account in the provision of local services;
- Various responses alternatively supporting universality and targeted services;
- Concern that “one size does not fit all”, both for individual pupils and schools, and failure to account for needs specific to local areas;
- Some disagreement with simplicity, as one respondent in particular put it, ‘It may be that we should be prepared to compromise simplicity in favour of fairness’;
- Certain organisational respondents stated “value for money” should not be the criterion for determining funding. Similarly, some individual respondents felt that the criterion ‘value for money’ relates to a business context and should not be applied in the context of education because educational outcomes cannot be quantified in the same manner as monetary gains; and
- The charitable status of independent schools was criticised.

8.2 Formulae

Among organisations, there was frequent support for the concept that “funding should follow the child”, with the belief that this would ensure that a child would bring sufficient resources to the school for their education. However, the concept was not universally supported, with some concern that less popular schools would lose out and find it difficult to meet their obligations.

There was no clear consensus as to what ‘funding should follow the child’ meant to respondents; for example whether money would be held at a local authority level or allocated to the school.

Organisations and individual respondents put forward a number of factors for consideration in designing a formula.

- Taking account of **additional support needs** (both generally and with specific mentions of blind and deaf children, forces children and mental health);
- **Deprivation.** There were a variety of views on what should be used with criticisms of allocations using both Free School Meals and SIMD¹. Principally the criticism of SIMD was that it did not favour deprived children who lived in affluent areas. Schools in “good areas” may suffer. A few individual respondents argued that Free School Meals do not accurately track disadvantage because some of those who are eligible do not take them up due to a perceived stigma attached to them;
- **Rurality/islands.** It was pointed out that staff and buildings in smaller schools were relatively expensive as a proportion of costs. A few individual respondents also noted that schools in rural areas might need extra funding for transport;
- **Age and state of school buildings.** Some individual respondents felt that the age and state of school buildings should be considered. Older buildings are more expensive to maintain or might need to be renovated or replaced;
- Some respondents stated that certain children should attract **additional premiums** that might follow them. This would include poorer children, or children with ASN, so that they would bring resources that might otherwise be withheld due to the affluence of the area. A number of other respondents disputed this, with a claim that more affluent areas would benefit compared to poorer areas, both because of a move from existing formulae and more “successful” schools doing better with placing requests;
- A group of respondents claimed that, without incentives, heads would be unwilling to take children with additional needs (e.g. ASN, EAL). Others wished that local authorities would continue to manage resources for ASN so that economies of scale could be utilised;
- Payment by results or attainment was criticised as it was believed this would create a range of perverse incentives and unnecessary competition between schools.

¹ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small-area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way.

8.3 Functions at differing levels

Responses on what further financial responsibilities should be devolved to schools yielded a similar range of responses to questions in the wider review.

A large number of organisational respondents and around half of the individual respondents who commented on this issue were against any further devolution to schools, as creating further bureaucracy for headteachers, who should concentrate on leading, teaching and learning. Individual respondents were also concerned that headteachers do not have the required level of proficiency in accounting.

However, a few organisations and roughly half of the individual respondents who commented on the issue wished for schools to have greater flexibility and devolution over matters such as staff recruitment, procurement and a very small number who wished for schools to make decisions about ASN. Some of these individual respondents highlighted, as an advantage of more control over funding at school level, that head teachers know the individual needs of their school.

Conversely there were a number of responses who felt that HR, payroll, procurement and other support functions should be held at a higher level than the individual school. Economies of scale might be available to wider areas and some respondents suggested this could be done at a local authority while others that certain functions could be held at a regional level.

In particular, devolution of certain large expenditures was seen as creating an element of risk for schools, particularly in the cases of long-term sickness or the mix of long-serving staff, who might be more expensive, as well as capital, building and maintenance costs.

Local authorities were alternately supported for having knowledge over a wide range of support and wider social services that could help schools and individual children. However, others saw local authorities as encumbering school initiatives or pursuing varying policies at an inconvenience to other stakeholders or with patchy success.

8.4 Transition issues

The following issues with transitioning to a new system were noted:

- Existing legal responsibilities – including whether the school would be the employer (not the local authority) and how VAT would still be reclaimed to avoid a 20 per cent uplift in purchasing costs;
- Clarity would be required on the status of existing PFI liabilities and ownership of the school estate;
- Borrowing powers would need to be clarified, as mostly these lie with local authorities;
- Several respondents required assurance that they would not lose funding under a new system;
- Heads would require training in financial management, or resource within their schools, should they take on new responsibilities.

Chapter 9: Accountability

Key points

There were conflicting views around current accountability arrangements.

There was no consensus as to how the current system could be improved. Ideas provided were diverse.

There was overall agreement, however, that paperwork should be reduced and some questioned the need for two bodies conducting inspections with regard to early learning.

Respondents were asked how the accountability arrangements for education could be improved.

On the whole, both organisations and individuals had polarised views on how well current accountability arrangements were working. One respondent's perceived systemic strength was often another's systemic failing. Analysis of responses revealed a balance of positive and negative comments around current accountability arrangements.

Looking first at the positive mentions, it was felt that current accountability arrangements were sufficient and that no more layers were needed. Of those that provided positive comments, organisations and individuals alike thought there was a clear line of accountability that was well understood. Individuals cautioned against changing accountability arrangements for fear of creating opacity within the system. Many individuals who felt positively about accountability arrangements attributed the strength of these to local or "democratic" accountability. Of those that felt this, most thought this stemmed from the unique position of local authorities, who respondents saw as both directly accountable to the electorate and a connector to national policy. Concerns were raised within this group about the prospect of either greater autonomy for schools and parents, or greater centralisation.

On the negative side, general criticisms revolved around:

- the time spent evidencing accountability and the strenuous bureaucratic arrangements around it;
- a requirement for two different inspection bodies, particularly in respect to early years provision;
- a conflict of interest when policy and advice was being delivered by the same body which was responsible for its quality assurance.

Of those who felt negatively about current accountability arrangements, some individuals felt that current arrangements allowed complete unaccountability to exist in the system. Strong negative comments towards local authority accountability were doled out in equal measure to positive ones. For those who felt there was a lack of accountability, the majority stated that this was due to the ability to 'pass the buck' between national government, local authorities and other agencies, with no one claiming responsibility. Individuals expressed a specific frustration at a lack of accountability regarding additional support needs, with a few individual mentions of no one being answerable to the complaints of parents.

Many individuals that mentioned accountability in a negative light felt that there was a problem of 'over-accountability', as one person put it. An unhelpful culture of blame was mentioned multiple times, with the brunt of this felt by teachers. Part of this problem was attributed to accountability, at present, being equivalent to attainment and inspection. Individuals believed this to be an inadequate way of measuring the success of schools, and thought the inspection system needed to change.

Furthermore, there was a palpable concern from organisations as to what it would mean for accountability arrangements if greater powers were given to schools and teachers. Further clarity was requested by respondents around expected levels of accountability and transparency at a school and a regional level.

Respondents to the consultation provided a wide range of possible solutions to improve the current system. No single idea came through particularly strongly across the responses provided, with most getting one or two mentions. Additionally, there were many examples of conflicting ideas. Some examples are provided below:

- One organisation suggested that accountability should recognise individuality and that perhaps a more traditional route is not the best option for learners;
- Another organisation desired standardisation in accountability across the board, with clear guidelines and scores;
- One organisation, and a few individuals, asked for more regular inspections and no notice for all HMIE inspections, described by one individual as "on the spot" inspections;
- Many organisations and some individuals felt that current arrangements should be streamlined (i.e. minimised) and that more trust should be placed in professionals;
- Another respondent asked to avoid league tables so as to minimise competition between schools and teachers. Some respondents suggested that league tables and school accounts should be produced and published to offer greater transparency;
- A few individuals wanted to see greater parental accountability and engagement in their children's education.

All organisations agree, however, that paperwork should be reduced and some questioned the need for two different bodies to conduct the early years inspections.

Chapter 10: Additional Support Needs

Key points

There was a general consensus that ASN should remain at a higher level of governance than the individual school.

If ASN provision were to be shifted to individual schools, respondents stated that specific challenges would need to be met in relation to: budget; staffing; collaboration; skills proliferation and resourcing. There was a particular concern regarding the loss of the “economy of scale” that current arrangements provide.

In relation to ASN, respondents overall felt that the current education system would benefit from greater resourcing and joined-up working under current governance arrangements, rather than a change in responsibilities to individual schools.

The consultation document did not ask respondents directly about ASN or the implications a governance change may have on the ASN sector. Nonetheless, this was a recurrent theme that was raised by many respondents throughout the range of questions, with almost a third of individuals mentioning this topic. Concerns with the implementation of suggested changes typically revolved around access to the necessary support and services required for full participation in the education system. Individuals felt overwhelmingly negative about current arrangements, as well as the likely repercussions of proposed changes to governance.

Organisations and individuals highlighted that ASN brings with it a collection of unique challenges that any changes to school governance would need to adequately met. The issues revolved around:

- **Budgetary considerations:** i.e. that providing ASN support was costly and affected different schools in different ways (e.g. small vs. large schools, urban vs. rural);
- **Staffing considerations:** ASN requires access to staff trained in both general practice and in particular niche subjects, specifically in supporting those with more severe forms of ASN;
- **A need for collaboration:** Organisations noted that ASN requires a multi-agency collaborative approach. This collaboration was both between bodies, as well as between parents and the school. For individuals, it was not general collaboration desired so much as a specific need for better engagement with health professionals. Several individuals mentioned a need for a “clear interface” between schools and the health sector, such as with CAMH² professionals and educational psychologists. The main reason behind this was the recognition of a growing mental health crisis. There was a suggestion that greater emphasis might be placed on the social and emotional needs of children within the umbrella of ASN;
- **Parental knowledge/involvement:** That certain types of service required parental buy-in, as head teachers/local authorities require the parents to apply for particular types of interventions/programs. Any changes to school governance would require schools to be able to provide the parents with the necessary support and education to allow them to make informed decisions;

- **Lack of resources:** Many respondents felt that current ASN provision was under-resourced, and that changes to school governance would only exacerbate the situation.

Issues with proposed governance changes

The consensus amongst all respondents was negative towards the idea of shifting ASN provision from local authorities to individual schools. Indeed, it was one of the most often cited arguments against the proposed governance changes.

Respondents felt individual schools were currently ill-equipped to tackle the challenges highlighted above, and that to move responsibilities away from local authorities to individual schools would only serve to worsen access to provision and general quality of services. Amongst individuals there was, in fact, an appetite for greater centralisation of ASN provision to ensure coherence and consistency. Individuals, in particular, stated that the present structure was too loose and “vague” and that ASN provision would benefit from clear, national direction.

The main issues raised were:

- **Lack of adequate training** amongst staff/headteachers. Respondents felt that teacher training would need to dramatically change in order to adequately tackle responsibility for ASN;
- **Lack of knowledge:** That individual teachers/schools/parents do not have the adequate knowledge around all the specific challenges necessary to make the correct appraisals. That it would create too much variability between schools, as judgments (e.g. for referrals, type of support etc.) would be greatly influenced by the individual head teachers;
- **Increase in workload** for individual schools;
- **Lack of value for money:** Many organisations felt that “economies of scale” would be lost, which was one of the main benefits of local authority level provision;
- **Difficulty in accessing necessary services.** There was concern that individual schools would not have equal access to necessary services (e.g. educational psychologists), which may create discrepancies across schools;
- **Funding:** Lack of funding was one of the most recurrent themes throughout the consultation, but particularly with regard to ASN. There was felt to be a “postcode lottery of provision”, with stringent criteria leaving many undiagnosed students without any funding at all. There was a clear desire from both organisations and individuals for ring-fenced and protected funding to alleviate this issue, targeted specifically at those schools with greatest ASN, regardless of the deprivation level of the area. It was speculated that even greater resources than currently available would be required if schools were to be individually responsible;
- **Lack of evidence** to support benefits of devolved responsibility: some organisations stated that devolving responsibility to individual schools in England had led to a fall in standards and a decrease in service;
- **Schools should focus on teaching:** Some organisations and individuals complained about the high expectations placed on teachers to be ‘jacks of all trades’. This point echoes sentiments expressed elsewhere in the review that schools are already overloaded, and that increase in the diversity in their area of responsibility further moves them away from their primary focus on teaching and education; and

- **Mainstreaming:** Many individuals who commented on ASN mentioned this issue specifically. There was general agreement with the principle of inclusion and the presumption of mainstreaming. However, whilst agreeing in principle, most individuals who commented on mainstreaming thought this was not working in practice. Lack of resources was cited as one of the main barriers to successful inclusion, with an overarching message that mainstreaming could only work if the issues of lack of funding, staff and resources were all resolved. Individuals believed that mainstreaming was an unrealistic ambition, and that in the current circumstances was proving detrimental for teachers and students alike. A similar opinion emerged in terms of the GIRFEC principles.

Support

Although, overall, respondents were against the suggestion of devolving responsibility for ASN to individual schools, a few organisations and individuals were open to the idea of having clusters of schools take responsibility for ASN provision, as it would still allow for access to the necessary support staff and still provide some “economy of scale”. However, the overall sentiment was that governance arrangements should not be changed, and instead current support systems would benefit from greater resourcing. Many individuals asked for there to be specialist support in every classroom, with one to one support from pupil support assistants, where required. Earlier intervention was wanted, as was earlier diagnosis of conditions, with fewer “hoops” to jump through. Both autism and dyslexia were mentioned by individuals as requiring specific, targeted training for support staff.



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